

CHRIST Being
THE BURDEN OF
the Gospel

Witness Lee

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

CHRIST BEING THE BURDEN OF THE GOSPEL

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

On September 20 through 25, 1959, the church in Taipei held a gospel conference in a rented stadium. During this conference six messages were given by Witness Lee, and over the course of the conference more than four thousand three hundred people filled out name cards to indicate that they had received the Lord. Three weeks prior to the conference the entire church gathered several times. During these service meetings Witness Lee gave messages to help the saints to be proper persons to preach the gospel. In the week following the gospel conference four additional meetings on the truth of the gospel were held.

The first section of this book, chapters 1 through 13, is composed of notes from various messages related to the gospel conference. Chapters 1 through 3 consist of fellowship given in preparation for the gospel conference, chapters 4 through 9 contain the six gospel messages spoken during the conference, and chapters 10 through 13 contain the messages given after the conference on the truth of the gospel. The second section of this book, chapters 14 through 28, is composed of a series of gospel messages and of messages on perfecting the believers. The dates of these messages are unknown. Based on references included in chapters 17 and 24, this series of messages was probably given in 1949 or 1950. Since the messages in the second section are similar in nature to those in the first section, they have been compiled and published together.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GOSPEL BEING A BATTLE

Scripture Reading: Matt. 12:29; Eph. 6:11-20; Phil. 1:27

THE KIND OF PERSON WHO PREACHES THE GOSPEL

In this chapter we will consider the kind of person who preaches the gospel. The gospel is preached not merely with words but mainly through persons. In the book of Acts, when the church preached the gospel for the first time on the day of Pentecost, the words spoken were secondary, whereas the persons who spoke were primary. In other words, the gospel had a mouthpiece not merely after the apostles spoke but as soon as the apostles were gained. Thus, the voices of the apostles and the words they spoke were secondary, but the apostles as a group of persons were primary. As soon as this group of men stood up, the gospel had a mouthpiece. The apostles themselves were the mouthpiece of the gospel.

The words of the gospel spoken by the apostles on the day of Pentecost had authority and power because the apostles were persons of authority and power. If they had not been such persons, the result of their gospel might not have been the same, even if they had spoken with more words and with more gravity on that day. On the surface it seems that the gospel preached by the apostles on the day of Pentecost was effective because of their words. Actually, the support and the power behind their words issued from the kind of persons that they were. It is often said that the words of a person of low estate carry little weight and that his words are light. This indicates that the weight behind a person's words depends on the weightiness of the person. If we are weighty persons, we will be able to stand and speak words of authority not only before God and men but also in the face of the enemy. However, if we are of little weight before God, we will have problems before men and will be unable to stand before Satan, and our words will lack weight and authority even if we speak loudly and with many words.

The kind of person we are determines the kind of words we speak. Therefore, if we mean business with the Lord to preach the gospel, the first

thing that we need to pay attention to is what kind of person we are and where we stand before the Lord. Regarding the preaching of the gospel, we need to see gospel preaching from two perspectives.

Toward Satan, Gospel Preaching

Being a Spiritual Battle

First, we need to see that toward Satan the preaching of the gospel is a spiritual battle. According to the situation of the church today and according to the surrounding environment and the condition of people's hearts, there is a need for a gospel move. In speaking concerning this need, we have no intention to stir up any excitement among the saints for the preaching of the gospel. Such work of stirring up has little spiritual value. However, the Lord has afforded us an opportunity to preach the gospel. Therefore, we need a proper realization of what God is doing, and we need to allow the Lord to do something through us. If we would meet God's need today, we need to see that God's preaching of the gospel through His people on the earth is a matter of engaging in spiritual warfare. Thus, a person who preaches the gospel must be a soldier.

The gospel of God is a spiritual gospel, and to preach this gospel is to fight a spiritual battle. Such a battle is not in the physical realm but in the spiritual realm, because the preaching of the gospel is to plunder from under Satan's hands, from under Satan's authority, and from under Satan's usurpation those whom God predestinated and desires to save. To preach the gospel is not merely a matter of evangelizing but a matter of fighting a battle. As the gospel is being preached, God is plundering through His church those who are being usurped by Satan.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 12:29, "How can anyone enter into the house of the strong man and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will thoroughly plunder his house." This indicates that when we preach the gospel, we engage in spiritual warfare. First, we need to bind the strong man, Satan, and then we can rescue those who have been seized by him. This is carried out mainly through prayer. Only when we pray fighting prayers to bind Satan can we enter into his house, that is, into his power and influence, into the domain of his rule, to plunder the souls whom God intends to save from being under his usurpation.

Preaching the gospel is altogether a matter of fighting a battle. As persons fighting this battle, we need to have severe dealings before the Lord. We need to deal with our motives, thoughts, inclinations, and standing, because we may have within us a little room that is connected to the enemy or a little ground that is attached to the world. Whenever we have anything inward or outward that remains attached to the world or is joined to the enemy, we will fall under Satan's authority and have no way to fight the spiritual battle. In order to engage in spiritual warfare, we must have strong dealings before the Lord both inwardly and outwardly. We must have nothing that is under the enemy's hands and nothing that is joined to the world.

The power for fighting this spiritual battle comes from severe dealings before the Lord. This does not mean that we will not have failures or that we have attained to perfection. If this were so, we would have no need for the covering of the blood when we rise up to do something for the Lord. Although we may have many weaknesses and repeated failures, we can prostrate ourselves before the Lord under the covering of His precious blood and can declare to the enemy, "Enemy, even though I have failures and weaknesses, my failures and weaknesses are not of my will but have come about only because I am still in the old creation and still walk in this world. Although I may have been defiled and I may have failed in certain matters, I have received the Lord's visitation and still have the desire to stand on God's side to oppose you." By standing on the basis of the Lord's precious blood, we can have such dealings before God and such declarations to the enemy (Rev. 12:11).

We must repeatedly show the enemy by the blood that although we are weak in the old creation and may have been defiled by the world, we are willing to stand on God's side, and we are standing on God's side by the power of His grace. We do not want to have any ground within that is connected to Satan, nor do we want to have any room in us that is attached to the world. Thus, we need to have deep and thorough dealings and strong declarations before the Lord. Only then will we be able to fight the spiritual battle and preach the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Toward God, Gospel Preaching

Being the Outflow of Life

We also need to see that toward God the preaching of the gospel is the outflow of life. The gospel is the flowing out of the life of Christ from within us. It is the overflowing of God's life for the purpose of bearing spiritual fruit. The fruit of a tree is the overflow of the life-juice in that tree. When the life within a tree has reached a certain level of maturity, the tree will spontaneously bear fruit. In the same way, the preaching of the gospel to lead people to salvation is spiritual fruit-bearing. Thus, it does not depend on our inward enthusiasm, excitement, and determination, nor does it depend on our outward toiling or activity. Although these matters have their place and value, the real preaching of the gospel depends on the overflow of the life within us. When the life within us overflows, there is a spontaneous producing of gospel fruit (cf. John 15:5).

If we would be those with the overflow of God's life in order to bear fruit, we need to go to the Lord to have proper dealings with Him and a renewed consecration before Him. Many saints have consecrated themselves in a strong way at least once. This is especially true of the co-workers, elders, deacons, and responsible ones in the districts and groups because of their desire to fervently preach the gospel and their service to the Lord. Nevertheless, we need to take every new situation or encounter as an opportunity to renew our consecration to the Lord. Thus, we should renew our consecration to the Lord and have deeper dealings for our purification before the Lord in order to participate in this gospel move. This is similar to offering a burnt offering.

According to the Old Testament, when a burnt offering was offered, it was presented before God, washed, and completely burned to ashes, and its ashes were placed beside the altar toward the east (Lev. 1; 6:10). This shows that after consecrating ourselves anew to God, we need to come before God to be enlightened by Him so that we can see where we have made mistakes and are defiled and where we need to deny the self and have deeper dealings in order to be cleansed. In addition, we need to prostrate ourselves before the Lord and let Him burn us so that He may rise up within us as life and gain more of our being. Whatever the Lord consumes, He gains, accepts, and replaces with Himself.

Therefore, we need to consecrate ourselves anew to the Lord by waiting for His shining, by confessing and receiving His cleansing, and by saying to Him, "Lord Jesus, everything I consecrate is for You. May You receive and gain

every item.” We need to consecrate into the Lord’s hand item after item and turn everything over to Him. Through such a transfer of ownership, we will be thoroughly purified and will have room to be filled with the Lord.

The result of this consecration and dealing is the Holy Spirit’s filling. Whether or not we feel that the Holy Spirit has come upon us makes little difference; the value of our consecration remains the same. If we have genuinely consecrated ourselves to the Lord, received a strong shining and experienced a thorough cleansing, and allowed the Lord to gain us in every item, we must see that His gaining is a spiritual burning and that this burning is the pouring out and the filling of the Holy Spirit. The intense fire of the spiritual burning is the Holy Spirit coming upon us (cf. Exo. 3:2).

Whether we feel that we have been filled by the Holy Spirit or not, we need to believe that if we are consecrated persons who have received God’s shining and cleansing and have allowed the Lord to gain us item by item, God’s burning fire will burn us and purify us. Then we will be able to say before the Lord, “Lord, I give myself to You with no reservation. Although I have consecrated myself to You many times, I am here again strongly consecrating myself to You. Whatever sin, defilement, evil, or corruption You have found in me and would enlighten me to see, I will confess before You and seek the cleansing of Your precious blood. I believe that through my confession and the application of Your blood, all my uncleanness will be cleansed away. After being cleansed, I will present myself again under the shining of Your face without any reservation to allow You to consume and gain me item by item.” If we do this, we should believe that the Holy Spirit will come and fill us. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit as a burning fire will consume us, and on the other hand, the Holy Spirit as the ointment will fill us (Rev. 4:5; Exo. 30:23-25; 1 John 2:20, 27). When we have this kind of faith, we will be in a condition of overflowing and will be able to allow the gospel to flow out through us.

Gospel preaching has different levels. The preaching of the gospel that is the issue of having been dealt with by the Lord and having passed through the effort of spiritual battle is different from the gospel preaching that has not. There is also a great difference between a person who has been dealt with by the Lord and gained by the Holy Spirit and one who has not. Although we may be zealous and may make up our mind to exert our effort and do our best

to lead people to the Lord, we need to realize that there can be much difference in the results of our leading people to the Lord.

If we are not persons who have been gained by the Lord, it will be difficult to lead others to be persons who are gained by the Lord. If we do not fight the spiritual battle, it will be difficult to plunder people out of the authority of Satan in a thorough way. We may be able to bring someone to the Lord, and he may believe and be baptized, but a great part of his being will remain under Satan's authority because no one has prayed fighting prayers for him before the Lord. However, if we pray fighting prayers before the Lord, those whom we bring to salvation will not only receive the Lord but will also be thoroughly plundered from the hands of Satan. The outcome of these two kinds of gospel preaching will be very different.

In the same principle, if we have consecrated ourselves to the Lord, forsaken the world, are living for the Lord and allowing Him to gain us, are putting ourselves on the altar for the Lord to consume us, and are willing to let the Holy Spirit touch us item by item, our preaching of the gospel will be the flowing out of life from within. When someone hears our speaking and does not believe, it will be his decision. However, if he hears and believes, he will be a person gained by the Holy Spirit. The kind of person we are is the kind of child we will produce. Thus, the persons whom we bring to salvation will be the kind of person we are. This shows that preaching the gospel is a matter of our being. It requires us to be fighting persons and persons who flow out life.

ITEMS OF PRAYER FOR A GOSPEL MEETING

Whenever there is a gospel meeting, all the saints should pay more attention to prayer and should intensify their prayers. Prayer for a gospel meeting can be divided into three important categories. First, the saints should pray for the gospel meeting. This kind of prayer is general, and all the saints should participate in general prayer for the gospel meeting. Second, the saints should pray concerning those whom the Lord is leading the saints to invite to hear the gospel. We need to bear such persons on our shoulders (Exo. 28:7-12) and pray for them by mentioning their names repeatedly and continually before the Lord (Rom. 1:9). Third, the saints need to pray for the gospel messages that will be spoken during the meeting. We must ask the Lord not only for a powerful word with authority but also for a fresh word

that is able to penetrate men's hearts, touch their feelings, and shine within them thoroughly to expose their actual human condition.

Ephesians 6:19-20 says, "That utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel...that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak." This shows that we need to pray particularly for the utterance of the gospel message. *Utterance* in this verse is not mere eloquence. According to the Greek text, the word rendered "utterance" not only indicates a fluent, eloquent speaking but also denotes the word that gives expression to the content of the gospel. In other words, *utterance* refers to a word that can speak God into people, a word that is able to open men's hearts and make manifest their inward condition, a word that can make their actual situation understood clearly. This is the utterance that can fully reveal the mysteries of the gospel.

When a person speaks with such utterance concerning the lake of fire, his speaking will impart a vision of the lake of fire and will make it vivid to the listeners. When he speaks concerning the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, his speaking will portray in a living way how the precious blood of Christ flowed out for sinners. When he speaks concerning sins, his speaking will touch the inward feeling of sinfulness in his listeners and cause them to feel as if they were presently sinning. It will touch their conscience so deeply that they will not be able to help but condemn themselves before God. Such utterance cannot be generated in man's mind. It requires the revelation of the Holy Spirit, who searches all things, even the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:7-13). The giving of such utterance requires the saints to pray specific and thorough prayers before the Lord.

We need much individual prayer and much prayer in smaller groups. We need to devote ourselves to prayer and to pray desperately. When we pray individually, we need to have a burdened spirit and always have the attitude that we are not coming before the Lord alone. We should prostrate ourselves before the Lord and say, "Lord, even though I am an individual kneeling here at this time, I am not praying alone. The brothers and sisters in the whole church are praying. Due to the limitation in time and space, I am unable to be with them, but in spirit I am joined to them. I am not here praying alone; rather, I am praying in the church and declaring the church's prayer in my prayer. My prayer is not an individual's prayer but the church's prayer." If the

time and environment allow, we should pray together in this way with two to five others.

THE ENTIRE CHURCH FASTING AND PRAYING

Two or three weeks before a gospel meeting, many brothers and sisters should take the lead and have the burden to pray with fasting. The entire church should fast and pray at least one day a week during this two- or three-week period in order to touch the throne of God, asking God to rise up from His throne and to issue His command and exercise His authority to work for His church. Our fasting and praying should be focused on general prayer for the gospel meeting, specific prayer for the gospel friends by mentioning their names, and thorough prayer for the utterance of the gospel message during the meeting.

In our general prayer we should ask the Lord not only to save a great number of people in a general way but also to save and bring in some who are weighty and have a spiritual future, some who can be the continuation of the church. The earth needs the Lord's testimony, and the Lord may not keep us on the earth for a long time. Furthermore, even if our spiritual development before the Lord and our usefulness in His hands have advanced greatly, we still need some high-quality new ones who can afford the Lord a continuation. Hence, we should pray earnestly not only that the Lord will bring in many new ones but also that many among the saved ones will be able to surpass our generation in their usefulness to the Lord, in their spiritual capacity and weight, and in the power of the testimony of the Lord that they bear.

Our prayer should be of this standard, and our faith should match our prayer. We should pray that the Lord would not only save a group of people from the lake of fire and deliver them from sin and death but also that from among the many saved ones the Lord would gain some who have a spiritual future and even gain some like Saul of Tarsus, some who may be opposing at present but will be useful to the Lord in the future. Although Saul took the lead in Judaism to oppose the Lord, after the Lord called him and saved him, he was greatly used by the Lord and eventually became a leading apostle (Acts 9:3-6; Gal. 1:15-16; 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Tim. 1:12-16).

Many of the saints need to pray in this way and to pray often. We should pray in our homes, in our cars, and even while walking. Whenever and

wherever we have the opportunity, we should stretch out our hands of faith to touch the throne of God. Our prayers should not be ordinary prayers but prayers of faith that touch the throne of God. We may pray, “O Lord, You must release Your authority from Your throne to cast out the enemy and reclaim Your possessions that have been captured and usurped by him.” We should have such definite prayers before the Lord.

THE ENTIRE CHURCH PREACHING THE GOSPEL

In addition to strengthening our prayers, we all need to have a turn in our concept concerning the gospel meeting. In traditional Christianity every time there is a revival meeting or an evangelical meeting, the success or failure of every activity, including the meeting, depends on the preacher, the one who serves as the mouthpiece. However, we need to see that in our gospel meetings, we do not and should not have only one person who evangelizes or conducts some kind of meeting. Rather, the whole church should take spiritual action before the Lord. The gospel meeting is the move of the Body, not the work of an individual. Therefore, each one of us needs to be dealt with by the Lord and to have a part in the meeting. We should never put all our trust in the brother who speaks at the podium.

In the past, when holding a gospel meeting, we printed the name of the speaker on the gospel tracts, invitations, advertisements, and banners that were prepared for the meeting. I was always troubled within concerning this practice because it is a common, worldly practice of traditional Christianity that regards one person too highly and disregards the position of the Body of Christ. I was troubled also because placing an individual in an obvious position in a purposeful and deliberate way will easily invite the attack of the enemy. Hence, I cautioned the elders to do everything possible to remove from the printed materials the name of the one who was going to speak.

We all need to see that gospel preaching is an action of the whole church and a move in the Body and of the Body. My earnest desire is that we would have a situation where thousands of people come to hear the gospel at our gospel meetings, and yet no one notices the one who is speaking in any of the meetings. Such a situation will be a strong testimony to all the people that the whole church is preaching the gospel, and it will allow the Lord to speak words of grace through the church. This is altogether not according to man's

natural concept, which is that the gospel is preached by a particular preacher or evangelist.

Among us there is no renowned evangelist or preacher; there are only members one of another in the move of the Body. We should not put our eyes on one person; rather, we should see the Body of Christ, the church. We must believe that the Lord uses the church today more than He uses individuals.

THE SAINTS BEING PERFECTED THROUGH THE GOSPEL MEETINGS

Finally, we all need to realize that our endeavor and labor before the Lord to preach the gospel are absolutely different from that of the evangelical gatherings and revival meetings in traditional Christianity. Thus, instead of spending our time trying to stir others up, which has no spiritual value, we need to realize that we have received a burden from the Lord to grasp the opportunity that He has given to us to preach the gospel to many sinners through the gospel meetings. If many among us have such a realization, sinners will be saved, and we who preach the gospel and serve will be edified and perfected.

My desire in the Lord during this gospel move is that, whether many or few are saved, the brothers and sisters will be gained in a deeper way and perfected in a more thorough way by the Lord. If the Lord has no way to gain more of our being and we have no real dealings before the Lord, we will have only activities and excitement. The result will be that even if thousands are saved, we will be unable to keep the newly saved ones because our condition will be abnormal. However, if we have the proper dealings before the Lord and allow the Lord to perfect us and to make our condition normal, people will surely be saved, and we will have the capacity to bear and keep the newly saved ones. Such a result will be glorious, and it will cause God to gain the praise among us.

CHAPTER TWO

CHRIST BEING THE BURDEN OF THE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:14; 2:1-4, 14, 32-42

THE REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL BEING GOD'S COMMISSION TO MAN AND NOT MAN'S ENTHUSIASM FOR GOD

The work of the gospel is not an activity produced out of incitement. It is not the result of stirring up the saints in their natural man to become fervent for the preaching of the gospel. Any result produced by such incitement has no eternal value because it is not of the Holy Spirit. Our gospel work should be the result of receiving a burden from the Lord. Thus, we all should allow the Holy Spirit to impart this burden into us so that we all can bear this burden together in one Body before the Lord.

Although we have no desire to compare ourselves with others, we need to admit that in traditional Christianity many gospel meetings and revival meetings are supported by little spiritual reality. They lack a spiritual base, spiritual weight, and spiritual content.

According to the book of Acts, the church preached the gospel for the first time on the day of Pentecost. For the preaching of the gospel on that day, the believers had a strong and weighty spiritual base. This base was so strong that it enabled them to accomplish God's desire. If the believers had merely held an outward activity by being stirred up in their natural man, it would have been impossible for them to have the result that they had. Therefore, we need to see that if the church's preaching of the gospel today is to be full of spiritual weight and is to have authority over people for the accomplishing of God's desire, we must have a spiritual base as strong as the one that the disciples had on the day of Pentecost.

We realize that all activities produced by stirring up the natural man not only lack eternal value but also do much damage to the practical service of the church. Thus, in the past we did not stir up any kind of zeal or excitement in

the saints through incitement or promotion. At the present time, even though we desire to have an enlarged work of preaching the gospel, we have no intention to stir the saints up to do something out of their natural zeal. Therefore, we all need to abandon the excitement that comes by the stirring up of our natural man.

We need to see that the church's preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost was based on the burden that the disciples received from the Lord. Thus, we too should receive a burden from the Lord. At that time the disciples may not have had the words to describe this burden. They may not have known that the burden they had received was that the Christ who was in their spirit would be discharged and released into thousands of people. Although they had received this burden, they may not have had this realization.

After the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, a multitude came together, and Peter, standing with the other disciples, testified and led thousands of people to salvation (Acts 2:6, 14-21). After this, the disciples must have realized that their burden was to release Christ, whom they had known, followed, experienced, and gained, from within them into many people. The burden that they received was Christ the Lord, and they had to impart Him into others. They may have had such a realization only after preaching the gospel and leading thousands to salvation.

Concerning the gospel meetings, we should not be stirred up and excited or enthusiastic in a natural way. Rather, we all need to go before the Lord to receive a burden from Him inwardly. Such a burden is not merely for us to be zealous concerning the salvation of sinners but for each one of us to be filled with the Lord Jesus and to bear Him to others. In order to impart the Lord Jesus into others, we need to be filled with Him as our burden, and we need to be able to discharge Him as our burden into others.

If we have received nothing from the Lord, we will have no burden to discharge into others. A cargo ship or aircraft must first be loaded with various goods as its "burden" before it can transport and unload the goods at its destination. Therefore, we need to receive the Lord as our burden, to be loaded with Him as the heavenly cargo, before preaching the gospel.

We need to see that the burden we have received is not what most people consider to be the burden of the gospel. The burden of the gospel that we have

received is Christ the Lord Himself. Jesus is the gospel (Acts 5:42; 17:18), and without Him the gospel amounts to nothing. Therefore, to preach the gospel is to preach the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 4:4-5). Such preaching is carried out not merely with words but by persons. Hence, our preaching depends on the kind of person we are. In order to be those who bear the Lord Jesus to others, we must be filled with the Lord Jesus. Our desire is to impart into others the Lord Jesus with whom we have been filled.

Our work of the gospel is not merely a work of being stirred up or being zealous to save sinners for the Lord. Our work of the gospel is to receive the Lord Jesus as our burden from God, to be filled with Him, and to bear Him in our spirit and discharge Him to others so that we can impart Him into them. The Lord Jesus whom we impart is the gospel that sinners need, and whoever receives Him receives the gospel and receives salvation. We all need to have this revelation. Unless we receive the Lord as our burden, we cannot have a weighty gospel work.

THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL
BEING ALL THAT CHRIST IS, ALL THAT HE HAS DONE,
AND ALL THAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED

According to the record in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost the one hundred twenty disciples had no thought of giving a message or preaching the gospel. They had no burden out of themselves. It was not that they desired to save sinners and rescue them from the lake of fire because they had seen that sinners would perish. What the disciples had received and were filled with was the Lord Jesus Himself.

The burden that the disciples received consisted of the Lord Jesus and the various processes He passed through. The disciples knew of the Lord's incarnation, for they were with Him for three and a half years of His human life on the earth, and they saw how the Lord Jesus died on the cross. On the cross the Lord suffered God's judgment on our behalf, accomplished God's redemption, and dealt with Satan, God's enemy (1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 9:12; 2:14). After He was raised from the dead, the Lord Jesus left the tomb empty and manifested Himself to the disciples. He came into their midst and breathed into them the Holy Spirit (John 20:19-22). Thus, they knew the resurrected Christ.

The disciples also saw the Lord Jesus ascend into heaven (Acts 1:9), and the angels said to the disciples as they were watching, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven” (vv. 10-11). Thus, they knew not only of the Lord’s resurrection and ascension but also of His second coming.

The disciples, having seen so much concerning the Lord, must have been filled with all that they had seen concerning Him. Their thoughts, concept, and mood were completely saturated with the Lord. Ten days before Pentecost these one hundred twenty disciples, after witnessing the ascension of the Lord Jesus, came to an upper room in Jerusalem (v. 13). They were filled with Christ even before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The word *occupied* most adequately expresses the inward condition of the one hundred twenty disciples prior to the day of Pentecost. They were thoroughly occupied with the Lord Jesus. They had nothing else besides Him. Thus, they were able to remain in the hostile environment of Jerusalem. They were not people of the land of Judea or the city of Jerusalem but were Galileans from the northern region of Israel. In the eyes of the priests and the rulers of the people, they were uneducated men and laymen (4:13). However, they listened to the Lord’s word and stayed in Jerusalem. This indicates that only the Lord Jesus had ground in them.

In Jerusalem, at the time when the disciples were waiting for the promise of the Father, there was much opposition to the followers of the Lord Jesus. They were considered to be the “sect of the Nazarenes” (24:5). Thus, those who had a Galilean accent, especially an accent from Nazareth of Galilee, would have suffered hostility and difficulty. Nevertheless, these one hundred twenty people left their hometowns and their families and stayed in Jerusalem under an atmosphere of opposition to pray in one accord (1:14). This proves that they were filled with the Lord Jesus inwardly.

They were filled not only with the Lord Jesus Himself but also with all that He had done. They were filled with His incarnation as God who became flesh, with His living as a man on earth, with His death on the cross, with His burial and resurrection from the dead, with His manifesting Himself to them after His resurrection and His breathing into them the Holy Spirit, with His ascension into heaven before their eyes, and with the angels’ speaking to them

concerning His return. All these matters were vividly portrayed before their eyes and imprinted into their being. Each of the one hundred twenty was filled with all these matters.

Furthermore, before His ascension and departure, the Lord Jesus charged the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so that they would receive power and become His witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:4, 8). They received the Lord’s commission and remained in Jerusalem. On the one hand, they were filled with Christ, and on the other hand, they were waiting earnestly for the power from on high. However, while they were waiting, they were focused on praying in one accord to God. Their prayers may have been filled with praise and thanksgiving for their experiences of the Lord Jesus, and they may have prayed that they would receive power from on high.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GOSPEL BEING THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND THE FORSAKING OF THE WORLD

From the experiences and the attitude of the disciples prior to the day of Pentecost, we have seen what kind of persons they were. In addition to this, we need to see what their inward condition was. After the Lord’s ascension the disciples knew that the Lord Jesus had borne their sins on the cross and that their sins were forgiven (1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7). They had assurance, the peace of forgiveness, and the pleasant sensation of being reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1, 10). They knew that there was no problem between them and God because they had been forgiven of their sins.

Second, the disciples had forsaken the world. Thus, the things of the world had no power over them. They knew that the Lord Jesus was rejected and crucified by the world but was accepted, raised from the dead, and received into heaven by God (John 19:18-20; 15:18, 20; Acts 1:9-11; 2:24; 4:10-11). They also knew that their Lord was no longer in the world and that they too were rejected by the world. Hence, their heart was not in this world, and the world had no place in them. This was displayed in their actions after the Lord’s ascension and before Pentecost. They left their homes and their families, remained in the hostile environment of Jerusalem, and gave

themselves completely to prayer in the upper room. This shows that they had completely forsaken the world.

These one hundred twenty were neither entangled by the world outwardly nor condemned by their conscience inwardly. They had abandoned the world and were forgiven of their sins. Thus, they had the boldness to approach God. Furthermore, their hope was in heaven because the Lord Jesus was there. The One whom they followed and worshipped and into whom they believed was not only the incarnated Jesus, who lived a human life on the earth and was crucified, but also the resurrected and ascended Christ (Acts 2:23-24, 36). His resurrection speaks of His power and victory, and His ascension speaks of His position and authority.

The disciples had a full realization that the One into whom they believed was not only the Savior among men on the earth but also the Christ who had resurrected from the dead, ascended to the throne in the heavens, and obtained the highest position with all authority and glory (Phil. 2:9). They were filled with the resurrected and ascended Christ.

Although they may not have been able to speak of their experience as clearly as we can today, the disciples experienced and were one with the resurrected and ascended Lord. They had never experienced resurrection personally, but because they believed into the resurrected Lord, they were in resurrection. They were not only separated from the world and forgiven of their sins; they were also in resurrection.

According to our experience, in order to be free from the defilement of sin and the entanglement of the world, we need to be absolutely in resurrection. Whenever we are not in resurrection, we are entangled by the world and damaged by sins. Only when we are in resurrection can sins and the worldly things be under our feet.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL BEING A LIVING IN THE RESURRECTED AND ASCENDED CHRIST

Ten days before Pentecost the disciples apparently were in an upper room in Jerusalem, but actually, they had ascended into the heavens with the Lord Jesus.

The disciples had been with the Lord Jesus for three and a half years. They had followed Him wherever He went. They had seen how the Lord Jesus was crucified and buried and how He resurrected and ascended. In a real sense, the Lord Jesus brought them along with Him through His death, resurrection, and ascension into the heavens. Although they were physically on the earth in Jerusalem, their hearts were in the heavens with Christ. Through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension the disciples had become a group of heavenly people.

Thus, the disciples' sins were forgiven, they were separated from the world, they were in resurrection, and their hearts were in the heavens. They were a heavenly people living in the heavenly realm.

**THE LIVING OF THE GOSPEL
BEING A LIVING OF PRAYER
AND A LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

The disciples also lived a life of prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:24; 6:4). That is, they lived before God, they lived in God, and they lived in the light of God's face. In order to have a proper understanding of the life of prayer, we need to understand what prayer is. Prayer is not merely man coming before God and asking God for certain persons, things, or matters. This understanding is shallow and superficial. In a deeper sense, prayer is man entering into God and living in the shining of His face.

Many Christians can testify according to their experience that they often begin their prayer by coming to the Lord. However, after praying for some time, they sense that they have entered into God. Whenever we pray in this way and have the realization that we are in God, we touch the reality of prayer. We enter into God, and we touch His heart's desire.

During the ten days before Pentecost, the disciples "continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer" (1:14) in the upper room in Jerusalem. The Greek word rendered "continued steadfastly" means "continued persistently." The living that the disciples had was a life of prayer, a life of entering into God's presence and even into God and of living in the shining of His face. For at least ten days they lived a life that was not only in the heavens but also in God

and in His countenance. Only this kind of living can receive the commission of the gospel and generate the power of the gospel.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ECONOMICAL FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The one hundred twenty disciples had five characteristics. First, they had received the forgiveness of sins. Second, they were separated from the world. Third, they lived in resurrection. Fourth, their hearts and their entire being were in the heavens. Fifth, they lived a life of prayer as their practical living. They were before God, and they entered into God.

Anyone who has these five characteristics will be filled outwardly, economically, with the Holy Spirit. Many Christians earnestly seek the outward filling of the Holy Spirit. However, we need to see that as long as a person has the five characteristics of having received the forgiveness of sins, of being separated from the world, of living in resurrection, of living in the heavens, and of living a life of prayer, he will surely receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Whoever has reached such a state will be filled economically with the Holy Spirit.

Those who desire the economical filling of the Holy Spirit for the preaching of the gospel need to experience the forgiveness of sins based on the shedding of the Lord's blood on the cross. They also need to be severed, separated, from the world through the resurrection of Christ. The world should have no place in them. Rather, they should be weaned from the world. They must know resurrection and what it means to live in resurrection. They should have an inward realization that the One into whom they have believed is not only the incarnated Savior who became a man, lived a human life, and was crucified for redemption but is also the resurrected Christ who was raised from the dead and became the life-giving Spirit to enter into them. In addition, they should know what ascension is and know that the life they have received is a heavenly life. They should be aware of the fact that they have ascended into the heavens with the Lord and are thus heavenly persons (Eph. 2:6). Outwardly, they are still living on the earth, but inwardly, with respect to their inner life and mood, they are in the heavens. Finally, in their practical living on the earth, they must be persons who pray continually by coming before God, entering into Him, and living in the light of His face. If this is our condition, we must believe that the Holy Spirit has come upon us to fill us

outwardly. This is a fact whether or not we have the feeling that the Spirit has come upon us.

My burden is neither to describe the feeling of being filled with the Holy Spirit nor to help others seek this feeling. Although we may have a feeling when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we should not care for this feeling. Rather, we need to believe that if we have the five characteristics of the experience and living of the one hundred twenty, the Holy Spirit will come upon us. This economical filling of the Holy Spirit will result in the overflowing of life from within us. No matter what the manifestation of this filling is, once we are filled, we will be full of power and burden to the extent that we cannot help but flow out what is within us. This is the gospel, and this is the power of the gospel.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we receive an inward burden, and this burden is the Lord Jesus Himself. The Spirit with whom we are filled is the Lord Jesus Himself (2 Cor. 3:17). At such a time, what fills our entire being is the Lord as the Spirit. We are filled with Him to the extent that others may think that we are drunk with wine (Acts 2:13). However, we will not be full of wine but full of Christ, full of life, and full of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we cannot help but overflow.

**THE EXERCISE OF THE GOSPEL—
BEING FILLED INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY
WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

This is the normal situation required of everyone who would preach the gospel. Our gospel is the overflow of life, the discharging of Christ as our burden from within. It is neither the issue of being stirred up in the natural man nor the result of our enthusiasm. We do not preach the gospel merely because we see the urgency of tens of thousands of souls who need to be saved and the misery of people in bondage. This is not the focus of our work. Our gospel issues from the need to unload Christ, to impart Him into others, because we have been filled with Him inwardly. We preach the gospel because we have experienced Christ in the forgiveness of sins and in being separated from the world. Furthermore, we have experienced Him as the resurrection life and as the ascended Savior. Because we have experienced Christ in such a way, we live before God and in God. Because we are in such a condition, all

that is in the Holy Spirit has come into us and overflowed upon us. Inwardly and outwardly we are filled; what is in our mind, our concept, our mood, and everything related to us is entirely Christ and entirely the Spirit. Thus, we cannot help but rise up and preach the gospel.

Stirring others up is useless, and our natural enthusiasm is in vain. Every one of the saints needs to have dealings with God concerning the five characteristics of the one hundred twenty disciples, until each one is able to declare, “I know that my sins have been forgiven; I am a saved person, and my sins have been dealt with. The earthly things have no place in me, and I have no worldly entanglements. All the earthly things are under my feet, and I have left the world behind me forever. I can testify that the One into whom I have believed is not only the incarnated and crucified Savior but also the resurrected Christ. I live in Him, and He lives in me. I know the resurrection life, and I also know the power of Christ’s resurrection and ascension. Just as the Lord is in the heavens, I also am in the heavens, and my disposition is altogether heavenly. There is nothing between God and me. I am living before God and in God, and my practical life on earth is a life of prayer in the shining of God’s countenance.” Then we will be able to preach the gospel. Some may say that in order to have the power of the gospel, we need to have the outpouring of the Spirit. However, if we take care of these five characteristics and meet these five conditions, we can have the assurance that the Holy Spirit has already been poured upon us, without any other requirements.

If the Lord’s blood has washed away our sins, if His cross has separated us from the world, if we have experienced resurrection and ascension, and if we are living before God, it will be difficult for us not to have the outpouring of the Spirit when we pray. When this is our situation, we will be filled with an inward burden, which is nothing less than the Lord Jesus, and we will bear Him to others by preaching the gospel.

In our preaching of the gospel, our desire is not to have a great gospel move. Rather, it is that many saints will go before God to pursue and to have dealings until their condition matches that of the one hundred twenty disciples on the day of Pentecost. In this way the saints will have their sins forgiven, the world will have no place in them, and they will be people in resurrection and ascension, living before God and in God so that they may receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and be mingled with God as one. When this is their condition, they will be manifested as a testimony of the

gospel. When they speak concerning sin or forsaking the world, they will not speak mere doctrine. Rather, they will stand as a living testimony of the reality of what they speak.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE GOSPEL

On the day of Pentecost, when Peter stood up with the eleven and began to speak, he was very bold (Acts 2:14). Later, he went to the temple, healed a lame man, and took the opportunity afforded by the healing to speak a strong word to many in the temple (3:1-26). He said, “You denied the holy and righteous One...whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses” (vv. 14-15). According to verse 14, Peter used the word *denied* in referring to the Jews’ rejection of the Lord. Although about fifty-three days earlier Peter had denied the Lord three times, he condemned the Jews for denying and rejecting Jesus. Someone listening could have said, “On the night that the Lord Jesus was taken away, did you not also deny and reject Him three times?” We need to see that on the one hand, Peter had failed because he had denied the Lord. However, on the day of Pentecost Peter became a different person, for he had received the Holy Spirit inwardly and outwardly.

Both the disciples and the Jews had committed the sin of denying and rejecting the Lord. However, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter seemed to say to the Jews, “You denied Jesus; you committed this sin.” Peter had the boldness to say this because he had experienced the forgiveness of his sins. He realized that his sins were forgiven and that his conscience was no longer under condemnation. He knew the meaning of the cross and the effectiveness of the precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19). He recognized that he was forgiven before God and reconciled to God. He knew that his denial of the Lord did not cause the Lord to disown him but that, through his repentance and the cleansing of the Lord’s blood, his sins were forgiven by God. Thus, on the day of Pentecost he and the others could receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and he could later speak boldly in the temple, telling the Jews that they had committed the sin of denying the Lord Jesus and that their sin still remained.

Someone among the crowd could have said, “Peter, you also denied the Lord,” but Peter would have been able to reply, “Yes, over fifty days ago I denied Him, but He did not disown me. I have repented, and now my sins are forgiven. I am no longer denying the Lord but preaching Him. In the past I

was like you, but now I am different from you. If you want to be like me, you must confess your sins and repent.”

Suppose a person, prior to his salvation, enjoyed gambling, drinking, and smoking, but one day after receiving the Lord he speaks to unbelievers, saying, “You are sinners. You like to gamble, dance, smoke, and drink. You are wallowing in sins.” A friend of his who hears him may sneer at him and ask, “Were you not also like me some time ago?” However, the truth is that the one preaching is not the same person anymore. Prior to his salvation he was like his friends, wallowing in his sins, but after his salvation he became different from them. Before receiving the Lord, he could join his friends in gambling and drinking. However, after he received the Lord, he could no longer do such things. While his friends are indulging in sin, he remains in Christ. When they gamble, he remains in God’s presence. He is greatly different from what he formerly was. His sins have been forgiven, and he is separated from all the worldly things. Thus, when he speaks concerning the forgiveness of sins, he is not giving a message on the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. Rather, he, the person speaking, is standing as a living testimony of the forgiveness of sins. This is the gospel.

Such a person will be able to say, “Previously, I loved the world just like you. I did not know Christ’s resurrection and ascension, but now I have been separated from the world. If Christ were not raised from the dead, I would have no power to overcome sin and death. If He did not ascend to heaven, I would have no way to be severed from the entanglements of the world. Without His resurrection and ascension, I would not have the boldness or the utterance to preach the Lord Jesus to you. I can speak to people because my sins have been forgiven, and I have been separated from the world. I am one with God in resurrection and ascension. Thus, I am not afraid, because I have boldness before God, and I am in God when I speak to you. I am standing before you as a testimony of Christ’s resurrection and ascension.” This is the real gospel.

THE FOCUS OF THE GOSPEL

In the past, before any gospel campaign many saints were occupied with making outward preparations, including the preparation of gospel vests, advertisements, tracts, hospitality arrangements, the obtaining and setting up of a meeting place, and many other things. Although we need these outward

preparations, even more we need a genuine preparation in spirit before God. We need to deal with the sins that hinder our fellowship with God, with the affairs of this world that entangle us, and with the things that hinder us from living in resurrection and ascension. Not only a few of the leading ones but also all the saints should have dealings concerning these matters in a detailed way.

This does not mean that we do not need the outward preparations. The outward preparations are necessary, but they are secondary. We need to invite people to the gospel meeting, to pray for the ones coming, and to make all the various practical preparations. If we did not invite people, labor in prayer, or prepare practically for the meeting, we would be unbalanced. However, some things are more important than others. Thus, everything should be taken care of in an orderly way and at the proper time. We must see and care for the most important matters by taking care of them in a thorough way. Then, we can care for items of secondary importance in an orderly manner.

Our primary concern before a gospel meeting is that all who are burdened for the gospel and all who have a part in the gospel meeting would come into God's presence to deal with every aspect of their inward condition. We must deal with our sins, the world, our realization of the Lord's resurrection, our experience of the ascended Lord, and our practical living before God. If we have thorough dealings concerning these five items, we will immediately see that we are joined to God and mingled with God and have become one with God. After these dealings the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will spontaneously be ours. We will be filled with the Spirit outwardly, and inwardly we will be filled with the Lord Jesus as our burden. Thus, we will be able to declare Him and be a testimony of Him.

When we have thorough dealings before the Lord with matters such as sins, the world, our living in resurrection and ascension, and our living before God and in God, we will be full of Christ and full of the Holy Spirit within. Then our inviting people to the gospel meeting will be living, and our interceding for others, distributing gospel tracts, putting up gospel posters, and singing of hymns also will be living. Whatever we do related to the gospel meeting will be living, including our service during the meeting, our speaking to our gospel friends and leading them to pray at the end of the meeting, and our visiting them after the meeting.

I am afraid that many brothers and sisters are enthusiastic toward the gospel but have not had sufficient dealings before God concerning their sins and concerning the world. They also do not live in resurrection, have not touched the position of ascension, and do not live in God. They have only been stirred up in their feelings and influenced by the excitement in the atmosphere. Thus, when they see others preaching the gospel, inviting people to the gospel meeting, and serving in the meeting, they desire to do the same things. If this situation continues, all our activities will be man-made, and even though we may be able to bring many to the meeting, our efforts will be of little spiritual value.

The fruit of a tree tells what kind of tree it is. The children we bear tell what sort of persons we are. If we are shallow, have little weight and authority, and rely merely on excitement and enthusiasm to preach the gospel, those whom we bring to the Lord will be like us—shallow and without much weight before God.

THE REALITY OF THE GOSPEL

We need the Lord's mercy to see that the preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost was not a result of man's stirring up and enthusiasm but of God's gaining a group of people as His testimony. This group of people had dealt with the problem of sins before God. Within them the world had lost its place. They knew that Jesus had been raised and that He was living in them. They realized that He had ascended into heaven and that they were people in the heavens. Their hearts were in heaven, and they were on the earth to testify concerning Christ. They were a group of people living in God. In them heaven and earth were connected, and God and man were joined as one. As a result, they were full of Christ as the Spirit. Thus, He became their burden, and they could not help but impart Him into others. It was a small matter whether or not people perished, but it was a great matter whether or not they gained Christ.

On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached the gospel, he did not mention the matter of perishing or of going to the lake of fire or to heaven. Rather, he spoke concerning Jesus Christ, a man shown by God to be approved, who was rejected and crucified by the Jews yet resurrected by God, exalted to the right hand of God, and made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:22, 24, 32-33, 36). Peter's gospel preaching was to present Christ as the Savior to

all the people and to have them receive Him. This Christ had ascended to heaven and had sent down the Holy Spirit as the promise of the Father. Because the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, the apostles appeared to the people to be drunk with wine. Because they were full of Christ within, they were burdened to overflow Christ to others through their speaking. This is the real significance of Pentecost, and this is the real gospel.

The disciples practiced the proper way of preaching the gospel on the day of Pentecost. They were full of Christ within and were burdened to impart Him into others. They did not decide to hold a great gospel meeting because they were full of natural enthusiasm. I hope that many of us will enter into God's presence by praying together in groups of three to ten people. However, this should not be done in a legalistic way. For various reasons, some may not be able to gather together with other saints, but they should still go to God on their own.

Instead of caring first for the salvation of others, including our relatives and friends, we should go to the Lord first to have dealings concerning sins, the entanglement and usurpation of the world, our living in the Lord's resurrection and ascension, and our living before God and in God. After such dealings, the Spirit of God will fill us within and clothe us outwardly. Then we will know whom we should pray for, whom we should invite to hear the gospel, and whom we should bear as a burden. In this condition, whatever we do will be living, including our inviting people, interceding for others, bringing people to hear the gospel, speaking with others, passing out gospel tracts, or putting up gospel posters. Everything we do will be living.

THE RESULT AND TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH'S PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

We all need to go before God to practice dealing with each of the five points mentioned earlier. Only then will it be easy for us to come together and pray for the gospel in one accord, just as the disciples prayed for ten days before Pentecost. As a result of our dealings and our prayer, when the day of the gospel meeting comes and the gospel is preached, the meeting will be full of Christ.

Christ is salvation, life, power, authority, and everything (Luke 2:27-30; John 11:25; 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:10; 3:11). When we are filled with such a

Christ and He is released from within us into others, they will be saved because they will gain the Christ who has been imparted into them. Once they contact Christ in this way, they will be thoroughly saved, and they will be in a position where their usefulness to the Lord in their service, function, and coordination to build up the church can eventually surpass ours.

May the Lord speak to all of us so that, on the one hand, our outward enthusiasm and excitement can be reduced, but on the other hand, the fire in our spirit will be actively kindled so that we can deal with sins and the world, with our living in the Lord's resurrection and ascension, and with our living before God and in God. This will result in the Holy Spirit's coming upon us and filling us outwardly so that the burden of the gospel may be released from within us.

Gospel preaching is not merely an outward activity. It is a matter of allowing the divine fire to burn within us. It is not a matter of outward excitement but of allowing God to gain our inner being. It is not motivated by something outward but is an inward rising up because we are filled with the Lord as our burden inwardly and with the Holy Spirit outwardly. Thus, the gospel is preached by a group of people who are the testimony of the gospel. What we bear is what we are filled with. When we sing, speak, contact others, lead others to pray, or visit others, we are full of Christ, and we allow Him to flow like an electrical current out from us and into others. This is the church's preaching of the gospel.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PREPARATION

FOR THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:20-22; 10:36; 1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 1:16

The preaching of the gospel is a significant matter. Some people, however, may regard it merely as an event full of excitement. When they meet their friends, relatives, schoolmates, and colleagues, they may mention the church's gospel campaign as a topic of conversation and may invite people to come to the gospel meetings. However, we need to see that in preaching the gospel, there should be no human excitement.

PAYING ATTENTION

TO THE SPIRITUAL BURDEN WITHIN

In our consideration of preaching the gospel, we need to pay attention to the spiritual burden within. On the negative side, we are fearful that in preaching the gospel we may have only outward excitement and pay little attention to the inner spiritual burden. Although we desire that many will have a heart for the gospel and offer themselves for this, their offering of themselves should not be the issue of outward excitement. We can never give the Lord's life to others through excitement. If we preach the gospel out of excitement, we will bring others only into excitement, and it will be difficult for them to have a thorough repentance and receive the Lord Jesus. Preaching the gospel out of natural enthusiasm and excitement cannot stir up the sense of sin and the emptiness of human life within people. It will not help them to sense their need to gain the Lord Jesus and to have God in them as their satisfaction and life.

The Holy Spirit has done some amount of work in people's hearts. However, we often frustrate the work of the Holy Spirit because of our natural enthusiasm and excitement. Whenever the Holy Spirit has led a person to sense his need for God and feel the heaviness of sins, the emptiness of life, and the longing for a Savior, we need to cooperate with the work of the Spirit by denying our natural excitement and by speaking in the spirit by faith a few

sentences that can touch the person's inner being. This will open to him a new and living way to touch God, to gain God's salvation, and to receive the Lord Jesus as his Savior. To cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work in this way is a very difficult lesson that we need to learn.

All natural enthusiasm and excitement comes from and flows out of the self, and whatever issues from our self cannot cause others to gain life or receive salvation. The more we exercise to deny our self and whatever issues from the self, the more we will exercise our spirit to speak the gospel.

NEEDING TO BE FILLED WITH CHRIST

When we preach the gospel, we need to be filled with Christ. As we consider and wait before the Lord, we should sense a special spiritual need concerning the preaching of the gospel. This spiritual need is Christ as the burden of the gospel. We should not only have Christ as our burden, but our inner being also needs to be filled with Him. When we go out to contact people, we should not boast about our gospel meeting, nor should people sense our natural zeal or excitement. Rather, after being contacted by us, people should have the impression that we have nothing but Christ within us. They should sense that we are full of the element of Christ and that Christ is in us as our spiritual weight. The people whom we contact should never have the sense that we are zealous or excited or that we are religious people. Instead, they should sense that there is something special that fills us inwardly and that this special thing is Christ.

Christ our Savior died for us on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven (Rom. 5:6, 8-9). He shed His blood on the cross and washed away our sins (Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7, 9). Hence, we can have peace in our conscience. Today He is in us as the Spirit (Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:9-10), and we have joy and satisfaction in our human life because He fills us inwardly. When we give Him the ground in us, He as our life and our strength delivers us from the world and every sin that entangles us. Hence, we preach the gospel by contacting people not because we are zealous or excited but because the Lord has filled us inwardly. He is our spiritual weight and our unique burden. He fills us to the extent that we need to overflow and unload Him into others. When we speak the gospel to others, they should not have the sense merely that the lake of fire is horrible, that a life of sin is miserable, or that salvation will bring peace and joy. That kind of gospel is shallow, low, and light. When we contact

people, they should sense only the Lord Jesus and contact Him. We need to give people a gospel that is high, deep, and weighty. When we contact people, they should sense that we are filled with Christ.

Our being filled with Christ within is not a matter of pretense. If a person has no joy inwardly yet pretends to be joyful, it will be apparent that his joy is not real, and his false joy will be short-lived. Whatever a person is and whatever he is filled with inwardly will eventually be expressed. Therefore, if we are filled only with excitement and are eager only to see many people come to our gospel meeting, those who come to hear the gospel will sense only our excitement when we contact them. However, if we are filled with Christ inwardly, we will spontaneously and naturally express Him in our behavior and speaking when we contact others. When we contact unbelieving people with Christ as our content, satisfaction, inner weight, and outward expression, they will sense that there is something special within us that is not religion or excitement. They may not be able to say what this special thing is. Nevertheless, as we converse with them, they will gradually realize that we have something within us that they do not have. This something is Christ. We should help them to see that they need to open their hearts to receive Jesus as their Savior and their Lord.

In Acts, although the apostles spoke concerning sins, perdition, God's judgment, and God's righteousness, these things were not their focus when they preached the gospel. Rather than stressing these things, they emphasized the Lord Jesus Himself. They preached the Lord Jesus not only as the Savior but also as Lord of all (Acts 2:36; 2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Tim. 6:15). Their central topic was Christ, because they were filled with Him inwardly.

Some Christians pay much attention to being filled with the Holy Spirit. However, they may not realize that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). Thus, to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Lord. Some people say that when a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, he should shake, experience a burning sensation, or feel that he is being electrified. Others say that in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit, a person must jump and speak in tongues. However, the genuine, valuable, and weighty experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the experience of being filled with Christ within. When Christ fills us with Himself in our spirit and in our mind, emotion, and will, we love Him, follow Him, and live for

Him. In addition, we learn to live in Him and allow Him to possess every part of our being. This is the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

After the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter stood with the other eleven apostles to preach the gospel (Acts 2:14). We can tell from his speaking that the one hundred twenty disciples were full of Christ inwardly. The disciples had followed Christ for three and a half years. They were in contact with Him every day. When the Lord was betrayed, they were there. When He was crucified, they were there also. They knew of the Lord's resurrection, and they saw the Lord's ascension into heaven. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, their hearts, including their thoughts and feelings, were full of Christ. If anyone had asked them the way to have life, the way to have peace, or the way to be saved from perdition, they might have responded that life is Christ and that peace also is Christ. They might have said that a person can have real life and be saved from perdition only by gaining Christ and that a person can have true peace only when he has given Christ all the ground in his being. At Pentecost the disciples were full of Christ within.

Before he was saved, Saul of Tarsus was a person altogether in Judaism (Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6). He was filled with the Old Testament teachings and the Jewish law, and he opposed the Lord. However, when Saul was on the road to Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared to him, called him by name, and revealed Himself to him (Acts 9:1-5). After the Lord's appearing, Saul had a complete turn. Previously, he was filled with Judaism, and his mind was filled with the law. After the Lord's appearing, he was thoroughly filled with Christ. Christ was the subject of his speaking. Christ was his center, life, strength, and power. We may say that Saul was "crazy with Christ." He was full and even "drunk" with Christ. In his Epistles, although Paul, who was Saul, spoke concerning sin, judgment, and God's righteousness, his center, content, and focus were Christ. We may say that when Paul interacted with others, he spoke only concerning Christ. Only Christ is the unique and real gospel. If God is to have a way through us to flow out Christ and impart Christ into others so that they may gain Him, we must be filled with Christ instead of being filled with excitement.

PREPARATION FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL

Being a Person Who Is Consecrated

and Who Honors Jesus as Lord

In order to preach the gospel, we must be persons who are consecrated to the Lord and who are filled with Him. However, if we are to be filled with Christ, we need to give Him the ground to be the Lord in our being. We have received Christ as our Savior, but is He our Lord? How much ground does He have in us? If we cannot say that Jesus is Lord in the universe and that He is Lord within us, we will have little demonstration of the power of the gospel. The gospel is not spread by natural zeal or excitement. Rather, the gospel is Christ overflowing out of us. It is not sufficient only to receive the Lord Jesus as our Savior. We need to enthrone Him as our Lord. We need to yield to Him all the ground in our being. Only He must be the Lord and have the full ground and the complete authority in us. This is not the same as having an overcoming life or a life of consecration. It is a life that honors Jesus as Lord, a life that allows Him to have the ground in us and the authority over us. Although the Lord is meek, He must be Lord over all our affairs. We need to give Him all the ground and authority in our being.

On the negative side, we need to cast away any natural excitement. On the positive side, we need to receive Christ and give Him the ground in us so that He can gain us and fill us with Himself. The more ground we give to the Lord, the more He will fill us and occupy us. This will be our power and our gospel. Therefore, in order to preach the gospel, we must be persons who are consecrated to the Lord and are given to Him by accepting Him as Lord of all and giving Him all the ground in us. We all need to consider and receive this fellowship in a thorough way before the Lord.

Having Proper Prayers before the Lord

Second, we must have proper prayers before the Lord. We should not only have much prayer but also have proper prayers before the Lord. A proper prayer is a prayer in which we touch God and God touches us. It is not merely to go before the Lord and to ask Him to do things. Such prayers do not touch God and cannot touch His throne. So that our prayers may touch God and His throne, we need to let Him touch us first. We need to be persons who are consecrated, who allow the Lord to be our Lord, and who allow the Lord to touch us. When we pray, the Lord will first touch us. He will touch our feelings, and He will touch matters that we have not completely surrendered to Him, matters in which we have not allowed Him to gain the ground in us,

and matters that we have reservations about. When He touches us, we need to open to Him and let Him win. Otherwise, our prayers will be annulled. We should respond by saying, “Lord, I open to You and allow You to touch everything that You desire to touch in me. I want You to win. Whatever You touch, I turn over and surrender to You.” When the Lord touches us and we surrender in this way, we will be able to stretch out our hands of faith in prayer to touch God and His throne. Such prayer will be a proper prayer. When we open to the Lord, allow Him to touch every matter that He desires to touch in a thorough way, and turn over to Him every matter that He touches without reservation, our prayers will touch God Himself. Then our prayers for the gospel will ask the Lord not only to save souls but also to pour out the Holy Spirit from the throne upon thousands of sinners so that they may repent.

We sometimes pray long prayers without touching God or His throne. Such prayers, although zealous, are empty and improper because we have not allowed God to touch us. If we do not allow God to touch us, it will be difficult for us to touch God, and God will not easily let us touch His throne. Only when we surrender to the Lord and allow Him to touch our inner being will we be able to receive a burden from Him and stretch out our hands of faith in prayer to petition Him to carry out His burden and to issue a command from His throne. This is a proper prayer, and this is the kind of prayer that we need, which is based on our consecration to the Lord.

Needing to Have Faith

Third, we need to learn to be full of faith when we go out to preach the gospel. However, if we do not have a thorough consecration, if we do not enthrone the Lord as our Lord, and if we do not have proper prayers, it will be difficult for us to have faith. In order to have faith when we preach the gospel, we need a thorough consecration and proper prayers. If we have these two things, we will be full of faith no matter what our outward circumstances are. It is easy for the brothers who give messages to be affected by the outward environment. If a speaking brother sees that the meeting hall is only half full, he may become disappointed. If he notices that some people are falling asleep, his spirit may become suppressed. Satan may cause some of those listening to shake their heads so that the speaker will be unable to continue to release the word. Those who release the word of the gospel need to be full of faith in their spirit when they speak (2 Cor. 4:13). However, we need to realize that faith

comes by enthroning the Lord and allowing Him to touch us thoroughly. If we are consecrated persons who allow the Lord to gain us and who pray proper prayers, we will speak not according to the environment but out of faith when we preach the gospel. When we see someone in the audience shaking his head, our faith will not be shaken; rather, we may say, “The first one to repent will be this person who is shaking his head.” When we notice that a few people are falling asleep, the faith in us may say, “If only a few words of God can enter into them, it will be sufficient to cause them to be saved.” Actually, some who fall asleep through the entire meeting may wake up for a moment, hear the words “Jesus is Lord,” and call on the Lord to receive salvation. This is not a hypothetical situation but a true story of faith.

We should never consider that those who speak highly of Christianity, who admire our meeting hall, or who appreciate the content of the gospel message will be saved easily. Many who say such things are not saved. Some others may have doubts about believing in the Lord or may not agree with what is spoken. They may even criticize our meetings. However, we should never put our trust in any of these things. Rather, we need to believe in God’s power. We need to be full of faith and be able to work without being affected by an opposing outward situation, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). We do not need to care about people’s reactions; we only need to have faith in God.

Not Debating with People

Fourth, when we preach the gospel, we need to avoid debating with people. If someone has doubts about Jesus Christ, we do not need to argue about how good Jesus is. We do not need to argue or contradict what people say. We only need to relate to them in a simple way the Christ whom we have gained. Although people may speak many words contrary to what we have said, we simply need to give a testimony concerning ourselves in plain and simple words, presenting to them our condition before we were saved and the change we experienced after we believed in the Lord. We do not need to speak for a long time. Rather, we need to speak the words of faith and authority, which come from our being persons who are consecrated to the Lord and who pray proper prayers. Prior to a gospel meeting, we all need to pray proper prayers and have thorough dealings before God concerning our person. Then, from the beginning of the meeting to its end, we need to exercise to do everything by faith. Particularly, when we contact people after the meeting, we need to

exercise to speak to them in faith. If they respond with opposing words or are proud, we should neither be angry nor anxious, and we should not argue with them. Rather, we only need to speak into them some words of faith in a calm way.

D. L. Moody, a great evangelist in the United States, led many people to believe in the Lord. He was not highly educated but was a lowly shoe salesman. Nevertheless, he was full of the burden to preach the gospel. On one occasion, after he preached the gospel, one of his listeners came to him and criticized his grammar. In response to this criticism, Moody said in a polite manner, “Your grammar is correct. So please go up and speak, and see if anyone will be saved.” Moody’s word to this listener indicates that whether people receive the Lord or not does not depend on our grammar. A person who speaks with correct grammar may not be able to lead anyone to be saved. Although Moody was not highly educated, he led almost a million people in Europe and America to believe in the Lord and be saved. He was a person who preached the gospel in power.

On another occasion, after Moody preached the gospel, a person came up to him as he was leaving the meeting. Immediately, Moody said to this person, “My God said that the wicked man does not have peace,” and then he asked him, “Friend, do you have peace?” That person responded angrily and said, “I have peace.” Then Moody said to him again, “My God said that the wicked man does not have peace,” and then he said goodbye. On the following evening, after Moody finished his speaking, that same person came to Moody, held his hand, and said, “Mr. Moody, please forgive me. I lied to you last night. I really do not have peace, and your words last night kept bothering me. I understand that I am a wicked person, and it must be that I do not have peace because I have certain sins from which I have not been delivered.” Moody’s simple words worked inside this sinner. On the one hand, this was due to the power of the Holy Spirit, but on the other hand, it was due to the fact that Moody was full of faith while he spoke.

When we preach the gospel to people, we do not need to speak for a long time. Sometimes, the longer we speak, the more we quench the work of the Holy Spirit, and the weaker others’ faith becomes. This does not mean that we should not say anything. Rather, it means that we need to remain under the ruling of the Holy Spirit when we speak. We need to be persons who are consecrated, who pray in a proper way, and who work together with God. If

we are such persons, when we contact people, God will speak in our speaking. When we speak to others, we are not merely passing on knowledge to them about philosophy, science, or biblical doctrines. Those things will only keep people in their mind; they cannot touch people's spirit. Our unique message is the gospel of God, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). Every word that we speak should demonstrate that the gospel is the power of God. This is the faith that we should have.

On one hand, we only need to speak simple words in faith. On the other hand, we should not expect immediate results. We should speak the words of the gospel by faith and believe that the Holy Spirit will operate in people through our words. We may not see the fruit of our speaking immediately after we speak. The time when the fruit will be manifested is entirely in the hands of the Holy Spirit. We only need to be full of faith in speaking the words of the gospel.

Not Being Proud

Fifth, although we need to have faith, we should not be proud. Sometimes, after being strengthened by faith, we become proud in our speaking. If we are overconfident in our preaching of the gospel, it will be difficult for those who listen to us to believe in the Lord. We should be full of faith and should also be humble. When we preach the gospel, we should never look down on people. We should have no intention to criticize people or judge them. We need to realize that our condition might have been more pitiful than theirs if we had not believed in the Lord. Since our words are not of ourselves but of God, and since our power is not of ourselves but of the Spirit of God and the gospel of God, we should be humble when we contact people. On one hand, we should be confident and not discouraged. On the other hand, we need to be humble before men.

Many times when we preach the gospel, we either become excited when people receive the Lord or become discouraged when they do not receive Him. This should not be the case among us. Another problem is that we sometimes become proud and begin to condemn others in our preaching of the gospel. Some people preach the gospel to others by telling them that God is a severe God, that man cannot escape from His hand, and that He will judge all those who oppose Him. But God is not "severe" in this way. Therefore, we need to be confident yet humble in our preaching of the gospel. We need to have a

thorough consecration, we need to pray proper prayers, and we need an appropriate measure of confidence, but we should not be proud.

Having Timely Utterance

Everyone who participates in preaching the gospel should ask the Lord for timely utterance, that is, instant words to speak according to the need. Whether we are giving a message or participating in other activities, such as inviting gospel friends to the meeting, ushering them to their seats, speaking to them after the meeting, writing down their names, or praying with them, we should learn to ask God for instant utterance. We should never repeat the same old things to people. Too often we have repeated the same thing in our preaching of the gospel: “There is one God in the universe. He created all things, including man. However, Adam, the first man created by God, sinned, and thus the entire human race became sinful and came under God’s condemnation. Therefore, God sent His Son to die on the cross so that we might be redeemed. After His death on the cross, He was resurrected, and He ascended to the heavens to become our living Savior. Today in order to receive eternal life, joy, and peace and to be saved from perdition, man only needs to repent. Oh, believing in the Lord Jesus is the greatest blessing!” We may repeat these words time after time so that they become old. Although these words are words of the gospel, our speaking may no longer be fresh. When we preach the gospel, Jesus should be our unique subject. However, we need to speak this unique subject with fresh utterance.

The unique subject of the apostles’ preaching in the book of Acts was the Lord Jesus. However, every word that they spoke concerning this One was fresh, because they spoke not only the written words of the Bible but also the instant words from the Holy Spirit. We must learn to pray and look to the Lord for instant utterance. Before attending a gospel meeting, we should begin to pray from our homes so that we will not only have feeling for the people whom we contact but will also know their inward condition and have the instant words to speak to them. Although the people we speak to may not have a full understanding of doctrines such as God’s creation, Jesus as the Savior, and man’s fallen condition, we can ask the Lord to make known to us their inward condition and give us living words that speak to their condition.

A brother once preached the gospel to some college students in Nanking. After his speaking, a bright young student said to him, “Sir, I really want to

believe in Jesus, but I need to wait for a little while. My parents are over seventy years old, almost approaching the end of their lives. I need to wait until they have passed away before I can believe in Jesus.” Although this brother did not have much experience in preaching the gospel, he did not argue with the student. Instead, he received the Holy Spirit’s instant utterance and said to the student, “What a loving son you are! You want to send your parents to the lake of fire, and then you will enter into the heavenly kingdom.” After hearing these words, the student asked, “Sir, what do you think I should do?” Then the brother responded by telling him that the best way was for him to receive salvation first, and his salvation would open the way for his family members also to be saved. Immediately after hearing this, the student knelt down to pray and received the Lord Jesus. The simple words spoken by this brother completely subdued that student and led him to the Lord. Although the words spoken by the brother sounded like words of rebuke, at that moment they were crucial to the salvation of that student because his words were the instant utterance from the Holy Spirit.

In preaching the gospel, we should not merely rely on the doctrines that we know. Rather, we need to have instant utterance from the Holy Spirit. On one hand, we need to prepare certain words to speak concerning the gospel. On the other hand, we should never use the words of the gospel in an inflexible way. Rather, we need to speak according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If we have no feeling inwardly and merely recite words from the Bible to others, our speaking will have little effect. Therefore, we should not recite the words of the gospel to others in a rigid way. If we merely recite to others, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), “The wages of sin is death” (6:23), and “It is reserved for men to die once, and after this comes judgment” (Heb. 9:27), they may have no response. We need to speak such words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These portions from the Bible show that according to God’s plan, sin leads to death, judgment follows death, and perdition follows judgment. Sin, death, judgment, and perdition are all connected. These are heavy words. When we speak these words, we should not speak them rigidly, repeating them in the way that we did in the past. Rather, we should use these words flexibly, according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We should not only speak the word of the gospel from the Bible but also receive the living utterance from God.

It is important when preaching the gospel that we do not argue with others. Someone may respond to our preaching by saying that it is not necessarily

true that there is only one God in the universe. Although we do not agree with him, we do not need to argue with him. We only need to speak the facts in a positive way. We may simply say to him, "There is only one God." We should do everything in our power to avoid arguments. Arguing can never subdue people. On the contrary, it causes resentment and stirs up the flesh. The more we argue with someone, the more points of argument we will create, the more that person's fleshly nature will be stirred up, and the less possibility there will be that he will receive God's salvation. We need to speak the truth in a positive and calm way and avoid all arguments.

In order to have good results in our preaching of the gospel, we need to earnestly care for all the points that we have covered. We need to be persons who consecrate ourselves to the Lord, who pray proper prayers, and who are full of God as our faith. When we preach the gospel, we need to have faith because we are speaking God's words, and God's words will never return to Him vainly (Isa. 55:10-11). Also, we should never offend people by speaking argumentative words. Rather, we should speak positive words in a polite and humble manner. When we contact people, we need to ask the Lord to give us the proper feelings and the instant leading so that we can speak timely and living words rather than merely repeat what we have spoken in the past. Man cannot teach us how to speak living words. Only God is able to give us the timely words that match a person's condition and mood, touch his inward feelings, and satisfy his inward need. God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). We need to be those who spread the gospel. For this reason we need to practice all these points faithfully in our preparation to preach the gospel.

CHAPTER FOUR

A LIFE OF VANITY TURNING INTO A SONG

Scripture Reading: Eccl. 1:2-3; Eph. 2:12

GOD'S DYNAMIC SALVATION

In this chapter and the five subsequent chapters we will consider God's salvation from various perspectives. I hope that the words in these chapters will help those who have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus to make the best choice, that is, to receive the dynamic salvation of the Lord and thus obtain satisfaction in their human life.

The Bible is not merely a classical writing; it is the clearest and most definite record of God's salvation. The Bible says concerning salvation that the gospel of God "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). Our experience also testifies that the Lord's salvation is marvelous and powerful. This salvation not only saves people out of death into life (John 5:24) but also becomes everything to man so that man may receive God's many blessings (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:3). The Bible shows also that the Lord is able to save to the uttermost and guard from stumbling all those who come forward to Him by believing (Heb. 7:25; Jude 24). Those who have received the Lord can testify that He has delivered them out of a life of misery so that they may have peace and joy in His life (John 16:33; Rom. 14:17).

THE VANITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Everyone who has had some experience in the human life knows that this life is full of suffering and misery. However, the most unpleasant thing about the human life is that its end is vanity. No matter how great a person's accomplishments are, what position he has attained to, and how much enjoyment he has had in the world, the end of his life is still vanity of vanities. Some people may seem to be satisfied after they have become successful or famous. However, as soon as their situation changes, they will sense the vanity of human life. Others seem to be interested in what they are doing as long as they are busy. But after what occupies them is completed, they quiet down and then sense vanity of vanities. Some others may find meaning in life

when they are striving to accomplish something. However, once they have accomplished what they are striving for, they sense the vanity of human life. Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 14 say, “Vanity of vanities...I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and indeed, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.” Everyone who has not received the Lord has in the deepest part of his being a sense of emptiness and a longing, a desire, that cannot be explained. The human life without God is empty and void, and everything that is done to fill this void ends with a greater sense of emptiness. Thus, there is a deep longing within human beings. This longing is a longing for God, and in simple words, people feel empty because they do not have God within them. None of the things in the human life can satisfy man. They only leave him with a sense of emptiness, because none of these things are the meaning of human life. God is the true meaning of human life. Thus, when people do not have God, they sense that their life is meaningless and that it is vanity of vanities.

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

There is a saying in Chinese that means “everything has its unique function and purpose.” Whether an electric fan, a microphone, an organ, a piano, a lamp, or a chair—everything has its unique function and purpose. We need to ask what the function and purpose of man is and why human beings exist in the universe. We know that people are on the earth not merely to exist and be satisfied by wearing nice clothes and eating good food. We have an inward realization and an inexplicable feeling that the human life should have a higher meaning than this. However, we may not know what this higher meaning is. Many philosophers have spent their entire lives studying the meaning of human life. Although they have written many books trying to explain the meaning of human life, our experience tells us that the answers they have given do not satisfy the longing within man.

Man Being a Vessel to Contain God

We can find the answer to the meaning of human life when we come to the Bible. The Bible tells us that human beings were created for God. The purpose and meaning of our human life is to be a vessel to contain God and to express God (Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7). Thus, human beings are on the earth to glorify God so that He may be satisfied. In the past some of us had a sense of emptiness within because we did not know the purpose of our human life. God created us to be vessels filled with Him so that we may glorify Him.

If we do not see this purpose, we are like an object that has lost its intended function and usefulness.

The unique purpose of an electric lamp is to manifest the function of electricity by allowing electricity to shine as light through it. The shining of light through a lamp is the glorification, the expression, of electricity. Hence, the purpose of a lamp is to be a vessel to contain and be filled with electricity so that electricity can be expressed and manifested through it. If we try to use a lamp for any other purpose, that lamp will be worthless. If such a lamp could speak, it might tell us that it feels empty and that its existence is meaningless. This is because the lamp is unable to fulfill the purpose of its existence and is in an unsatisfactory condition. However, if we put the lamp in its proper place so that electricity can flow into and shine out of it, the lamp will function properly. If it could speak, it might immediately say, "This is where I should be. Here electricity can flow through me and be expressed through me. This is the purpose for which I was made. This is where I find genuine satisfaction."

As human beings, we are similar to lamps in the sense that we exist for the expression and manifestation of God. If we allow God to flow through us and express Himself through us, we will have satisfaction, joy, and peace, and we will sense that our human life is full of meaning. Apart from this we can have no rest, satisfaction, or meaning in our human life. When we consider the totality of the human situation today, we will see that the living of many individuals is not proper, that many families are unhappy and damaged by divorce and separation, and that society as a whole is not in harmony. All these problems can be traced back to one origin—God is outside of man. A man's living is not proper because he does not have God within him, families are damaged and unhappy because they do not have God in them, and society is disorderly and in disharmony because it does not have God within it. All the problems in life and all the difficulties in human society are due to the absence of God. When a person has God, he has the solution to all the problems in life and the way to overcome all difficulties.

The more we consider our situation, the more we may sense an inner emptiness, and the more we observe others, the more we will realize that human beings are always lacking something and are never fully satisfied with anything. Sociologists have spent much time in trying to find the solution to the lack of satisfaction in the human life, yet all their labor has been in vain.

Some have suggested that the emptiness within man can be filled with education, and others have said that man's need can be met by raising his standard of living. However, history and our experience prove that the emptiness within man and the lack in human society cannot be solved by education or by the raising of living standards. Education trains a person's mind, and a higher standard of living provides enjoyment for the human body; however, neither of these take care of the need hidden deep within man. There is a need within man that is deeper than the need of his body and deeper than the need of knowledge in his mind.

It is true that a person in poverty who is unable to sustain his life will know the need for material supply. However, when he does not need to worry about his basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, he will realize that material things cannot satisfy him. He may feel that he should seek satisfaction in the psychological and intellectual realm by advancing his education. However, many rich people have obtained as much enjoyment as is possible in the psychological and intellectual realm. Some have received a high level of education, and others have enjoyed many kinds of entertainment, yet in the midst of all this enjoyment, many find that they still have a need deep within them. This need cannot be satisfied by material things or by psychological enjoyment from knowledge, entertainment, and music. Many people have exhausted their energy in pursuing physical and psychological things with the hope that they would obtain satisfaction and fill the emptiness within them, but all their efforts have been to no avail.

The need deep within man is the need for God Himself. Man not only has a body with its physical senses and a soul composed of the mind, emotion, and will; he also has a human spirit, an organ deep within him (1 Thes. 5:23). Man is the most highly endowed of all creatures because there is a spirit within man (Job 32:8; Zech. 12:1).

According to the Bible, man has not only a body outwardly and a soul inwardly but also a human spirit deep within him. The human spirit is an organ for man to contact, receive, and have fellowship with God. God is Spirit (John 4:24). Thus, man, who was created in God's image and according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26), has a spirit. God created man with a spirit so that He can have a relationship with man. God created a spirit in man so that man can contact God. Man's spirit has the ability to contact God.

In order for a light bulb to receive, absorb, and shine out electricity as light, it needs a filament. The spirit within man can be compared to the filament in a light bulb. Man's spirit is for contacting and receiving God so that man can manifest and express God. If the filament in a light bulb is broken, it will not give out light even if the glass of the bulb is fully transparent. In the same way, a person may enjoy material things, a high education, and all kinds of psychological entertainment. But if he is unable to contact God with his human spirit and allow God to shine through him, even if he cultivates his moral character and perfects his behavior, he will not be able to express God and thereby fulfill the purpose of his human life.

A light bulb that does not have electricity passing through it loses its intended function and the purpose of its existence. Similarly, if we do not have God in our spirit, we will have the sense that our human life is meaningless. If we do not have God as our Lord in the depths of our being, our human life will have no center and will be unable to reach its highest purpose. We will simply drift on the sea of human life, going east when the current goes east and going west when the wind blows west. When trials come, we will have no way to cope with them. When temptations arise, we will be unable to overcome them. When we encounter darkness and corruption, we will have no power to stand or escape defilement. This is because we do not have God within us as our center.

When we do not have God as our center, our human life is meaningless, without aim or direction. As a result, we have no satisfaction within or destination without. We have only the sense that we are persons who are wandering aimlessly without meaning or purpose. Consequently, when we calm ourselves down, especially in the dead of night, and consider our life and our future, we have the sense that everything is meaningless. Then we begin to ask ourselves, "Why do I exist, and what is the purpose of my being where I am? Where will I be tomorrow? What will my end be?" We fall into this situation because we do not have God, and we have no answer to these questions because He is not our center. No one can answer these questions for us. However, once we receive God into us, we will receive a clear answer to all these questions.

God Becoming Man's Center and Motivating Power to Preach the Gospel

Christians have the motivating power and willingness to preach the Lord Jesus as the gospel to others because they have Him as the center of their being. He not only fills the void, the emptiness, within them but also meets all their inward needs. Many people in the world recognize that Christians have a motivating power within them. However, this power is not of the Christians themselves. Rather, this power is God Himself becoming the motivating power within them. An electric fan does not spin continuously by itself. It spins because electricity flows into it to be its power. Christians have the motivating power to preach, testify, and proclaim the Lord Jesus as the gospel to their relatives, friends, and everyone not because they have any power in themselves but because the Lord Jesus in them has become their motivating power. The motivating power of the gospel does not come from man, nor does it depend on man, but it comes from Christ motivating His believers within.

For this reason we Christians often feel that there is something “burning” within us to the extent that we cannot help but preach the Lord Jesus to others. There is a fire burning within us, stirring up our burden for the gospel (cf. Luke 12:49; 2 Tim. 1:6-7). It is not that we are enthusiastic; rather, the Lord is touching us and motivating us. He desires that we would preach the gospel to all our relatives and friends, saying to them, “Your life is like everyone else’s life. Your real need is the Lord of the universe. Without the Lord, your life is meaningless and aimless. When you receive the Lord, you will have joy and satisfaction.”

THE WAY FOR MAN TO GAIN GOD

The Bible tells us the way to receive God and to gain Him. Acts 17:27 says that God is not far from each one of us, and Romans 10:8 says that the word of the faith is in our mouth and in our heart. Although man fell and was far away from God, God became a man to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). He died for us on the cross and was resurrected from the dead to become the life-giving Spirit (Acts 2:23; Phil. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17a). Then He ascended to the heavens and poured Himself out as the Spirit so that He can reach everyone who believes in Him (Acts 2:17, 21).

Today it does not matter what time it is or where we are, nor does it matter who we are; as long as we are willing to open our heart and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, we will receive God as our Savior and our life, and immediately there will be a change in our heart (v. 21; Ezek. 36:26-27).

Initially, we might have been full of darkness, but after receiving the Lord, we will be light in Him (Eph. 5:8). We might have been weak, wavering, and in turmoil within, but after receiving the Lord, we will be full of peace and strength and will be unwavering and secure (Col. 3:15). Once we receive the Lord Jesus, we will have a center and a power that calms us. As a result, we will have a joyful human life, a living filled with light, and a proper conduct. This is the positive result of the Lord Jesus entering into us to rearrange our human life and satisfy our inward need.

This is not an empty theory or a mere saying but a spiritual reality and a fact in the universe. Today the Lord is the Spirit who can enter into us so that we may be satisfied in spirit and turn from darkness to light. As long as the Lord enters into him, even a vile and corrupt person can become a good and loving person.

In the past I had a friend who studied in Japan, and after he returned to China, he held a high position in the political circle. He eventually became the mayor of Tientsin, a special municipality. However, when I met him some time later, he was lying on a hospital bed. As soon as he saw me, he cried and said to me, “I have tasted many kinds of enjoyment, received a high education, and held a high position. Regarding material possessions, I am rich. Concerning my family, my wife and children are all by my side, and I can say that I have a happy family. However, as I lie on this hospital bed, I am sorrowful within, and I do not know why I am sorrowful. I feel that I lack something and that I desire something more, yet I do not know what I lack or how to obtain it. Can you please help me to solve this problem?”

After he spoke, I did not answer immediately. Rather, I calmed down and then spoke to him softly. I said to him, “This is a very simple matter. The real meaning of human life is God Himself. In a sense, your experience is proper and complete. You have had many kinds of enjoyment, received a high education, and held a high position. You are also rich in material possessions and have a happy family. Some may say that you have everything. However, you still have a need deep within you. This need is God Himself. You are a person with a large intellectual capacity. Please consider, why are you here? What is the meaning of your existence? Actually, your life is for God, and God is the meaning of your life. Without God, your life is meaningless. What you are lacking inside is God Himself.”

As soon as he heard these words, his eyes lit up, and he asked, “How can I obtain God?” I replied, “Today God is the Spirit who has been poured out on all flesh. He is waiting to enter into those who believe in and receive Him. If you open your heart and pray a simple and sincere prayer to receive Him as your Savior, He will immediately come into you.”

At first, he was a little doubtful and asked if it was really that simple to receive God. I responded, “Yes, it is that simple. Do not be surprised. The things that people need the most can often be obtained in the simplest ways. Consider the sunlight and the air. These two are great needs to man, yet it is very simple for man to obtain the sunlight and breathe in the air. God is man’s greatest need, and it is likewise very simple for man to receive Him. I encourage you to try it right now.” He immediately agreed and prayed on the bed to receive the Lord. After praying, he said to me, “I used to oppose Christianity. I never allowed my wife to join any Christian meetings or my children to receive education in Christian schools. However, I want you to know that now from this day forward, I want my children and my wife to attend the meetings.” I asked why he wanted this, and he said, “After I prayed, there seemed to be a ray of light shining within me.” Then I said to him, “This is a good beginning, and I hope that you can pray to the Lord in this way every day.”

This was the only occasion on which I saw him after he was hospitalized. Later, I heard that he passed away not long after my visit. However, I received a report that just before he passed away, his last words to his wife and children were, “I have believed in Jesus, and I am genuinely happy. I hope that you can all attend the church meetings to hear the gospel and receive Jesus as your Savior.” Although this person was highly educated, had held a high position, and had tasted many kinds of human enjoyment, he left with such last words. This is because in him the deepest and ultimate need of human life, which nothing except God can satisfy, had been met.

Man has a need for physical and psychological enjoyment and for spiritual satisfaction as well. It is true that there are many kinds of material supply on earth to meet man’s need for his existence, and it is true that without these supplies the human life cannot be sustained. However, we need to recognize that in our deepest part there is another need that far surpasses our material needs.

After World War I, many people had blind faith in the advancement of the material world. As a result, many German young people studied science in order to pursue material enjoyment. From that time the material civilization made great progress, yet this progress led to World War II. During and after the Second World War, the Germans suffered the most because they had paid the most attention to advancing the material, physical things and to scientific progress. After the First World War and prior to the Second World War, many young people went to Germany for advanced studies. At that time, if anyone mentioned anything about belief in God, people would scorn him and say, "This person is outdated and is not living in the present age." However, those who visited Germany after World War II could testify that on every Lord's Day, almost every Christian meeting place was full of people. Many people were considering and asking questions about God. Many people realized that improvements in the material realm could not solve the problems of human life. Thus, they were seeking the Lord inwardly. This proves that the spiritual need deep within man's heart surpasses the material needs of man's physical body.

If man takes care of only his material needs and the improvement of his outward environment without maintaining an inward stability and without having a center deep in his heart, he will often make the mistake of taking the improvement of his outward environment and the meeting of his material needs as ends in themselves. Therefore, man needs an inner center, a stabilizing power within him, so that he can properly use the material things and properly enjoy the psychological things. This shows that there is a need deep within man and that this need is greater than the outward material needs.

I once met a friend in Tsingtao who had studied medicine and had become a doctor. When he saw me, the first thing he said to me was, "I do not feel that I have peace and satisfaction within." I asked him, "Why don't you have peace and satisfaction within? You are a person in the upper class. You have received a high level of education, and you have a first-class career. Is it that you do not have a happy family? Are you in want financially?" He replied, "I do not have any problems with my outward circumstances; rather, my problem is in my inward frame of mind. I always feel that I lack something within, and I do not know what it is."

I smiled and said to him, “What you lack is God. You lack the Lord of the universe, and you feel empty because you do not have Him within you. I do not need to give you many teachings. Please consider, when you are thirsty, you can quench your thirst only by drinking some water, which is easy to obtain. This same principle can be applied to your present inward lack. You have a need within that can be satisfied only by God, and it is easy to receive Him into you. God is Spirit, and He is omnipresent; He is everywhere at the same time. You only need to open your heart, call upon the name of Jesus, and believe in Him by receiving Him as your Savior. If you do this, you will spontaneously have a sense within that God has flowed into you. This is similar to radio waves being transmitted into a radio. You can try this right now.” He agreed, and he prayed with me.

After praying, he said that he had tasted something. Then I said to him, “When you go home, you should pray again. You only need to come before the Lord sincerely and speak to Him from the depths of your being, from the feeling in your heart. If you have the sense that you have wronged others, you should confess these sins before God and receive the Lord’s cleansing. When you confess and receive His cleansing in this way, He will forgive your sins and enter into you to satisfy the needs in your human life.” This is the simplest way for us to gain God.

GOD BEING EVERYTHING TO US

God is our spiritual sunlight, food, and drink. When we do not have Him, we have the inner sense of darkness, hunger, thirst, emptiness, and dissatisfaction. God is also life to us; without Him we are dead and depressed. We are neither lively nor fresh and are without vitality.

In summary, without God, man is in darkness and is hungry, thirsty, and disappointed. Without God, man’s life will not be proper, families will neither be happy nor on the right track, and society will become chaotic and disorderly. However, those who have God will be in the light and will be proper persons; families that have God will be happy, satisfied, and on the right track; and a society that has God will be peaceful, harmonious, and glorious. Therefore, every person, every family, and every society needs God. Without Jesus, who is God, everything is a chasing after wind. With Jesus, a vain human life will become meaningful, a family will become sweet and perfect, and society will be full of harmony.

Hymns, #1024 says, “You need Jesus! You need Jesus! / Men and women all need Him! / To escape from vanity, / To obtain reality, / To make life significant, / Yes, you need Jesus!” If we have Jesus, our human life will not be empty but full of satisfaction because He is what we need, and He is the One in whom we can trust. With Him we have everything. If we receive Him, our life of vanity will turn into a song.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SINS OF HUMAN LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 8:34, 36, 24

HUMAN LIFE BEING FULL OF SIN

In the human life there are many problems. In addition to the problem of emptiness, there is the problem of sin. In a real sense, sin is the most troublesome problem in human life. In the course of our human life, we are all troubled by sin. When we consider our condition, the condition of the people and families around us, and the condition of today's society, we realize that sin is everywhere.

The testimony of our conscience proves that the human life is full of sins. If we examine our conduct, we will see that we are full of offenses and unrighteousness in dealing with our relatives, with society, and with our country. If we consider our family members one by one, we will have to bow our heads and say that our family is not up to standard. If we broaden our scope and consider our society, we will be convinced that society is full of sinful and perverse things. Every day, whether in the newspapers or on television, nothing is suitable for the eyes. The movies in the theaters are filled with filth and lust, and all around us sinful activities, such as dancing in nightclubs and gambling in casinos, are taking place. This shows that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil and corrupt (Gen. 6:5).

SIN CORRUPTING MAN

Nothing is more damaging to human life than the sin within man. Although it is true that diseases are dreadful and that many people are fearful of the germs that can destroy human lives, they may not see that there is something within man that is more dreadful than disease. Sin is highly contagious and can spread rapidly. If we consider the matter of sin a little further, we will realize that sin damages man more severely than disease. Many capable youths have been corrupted by sin from the beginning of their lives, and many highly educated young people with brilliant and clear minds have not only

lost their dignity but also destroyed their precious lives because of the poison and contamination of sin.

SIN DAMAGING FAMILIES

Many people realize that the mass media report innumerable occurrences of people being damaged by sin in our society. Every day sin ruins many precious young souls and destroys many happy families. Due to the invasion of sin, the harmony between husband and wife is lost, and the sweetness of love deteriorates. Some parents, having been infected by sin, display all kinds of corrupt behavior in the presence of their children and thus imprint their corrupt condition into their children. It is rare to find any family in which the parents are proper patterns to their children.

Many wives like to play mah-jongg, and others like to watch movies or go dancing or window-shopping. The wives who love to play mah-jongg often leave their children to nannies or maids and return home late at night. Those who like to go dancing rarely take proper care of their children or have adequate concern for their children's studies. Rather, they go dancing all night long. The wives who like to watch movies often abandon their housework and leave their homes in disorder in order to seek pleasure at the movie theater. If this is the condition of many wives, how can anyone expect to have a proper family or well-trained children? In addition, some husbands do shameful and disgraceful things behind the backs of their wife and children. Over time, not only the wife but also the children learn of the husband's corruption and immorality. This leaves the wife resentful and grieved and the children unhappy and wronged. All these examples show how much more damaging sin is to the family than any kind of disease.

SIN ENDANGERING THE SOCIETY AND THE COUNTRY

Sin not only corrupts individuals and damages families but also harms society and destroys countries. Hence, in order to have a safe and peaceful society and a prosperous and powerful country, we need to not only eradicate every kind of disease and germ but also to deal with every kind of sin. How much damage and destruction have been inflicted upon our society and country by criminals and evildoers! Sin has attacked and damaged every

aspect of human life, including the life of the individual, the family, the society, and the country.

SIN RULING OVER MAN

In addition to damaging man, sin rules over man and makes him a slave of sin. In John 8:34 the Lord Jesus said, “Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.” A slave is a person who has sold himself to a master and has thereby lost his freedom. In this sense, those who sin have sold themselves to sin. The fact that the wives who like to play mah-jongg disregard their family, abandon their husband, and neglect their children and play mah-jongg habitually shows that they have become slaves to mah-jongg. They have sold themselves along with their husband and children to mah-jongg. Sin is a fierce and cruel master, and those who sin are unconsciously enslaved by it. Although people in today’s society strongly advocate freedom, no one who sins has true freedom. Rather, all who sin are slaves of sin and are under the bondage of sin.

BEING DELIVERED FROM SIN TO OBTAIN TRUE FREEDOM

To obtain true freedom is to be delivered from sin (vv. 11b, 32, 36). Anyone who is free does not sin; rather, he is released from sin and transcends sin. However, who has the ability to transcend sin and to stay outside of sin? Who is not under the bondage of sin? Sin not only rules over a man while he is living but eventually sends him into death. The Bible says that “the wages of sin is death” and that “the soul who sins...shall die” (Rom. 6:23, Ezek. 18:4). Our experience testifies also that those who sin a great deal usually have a short life.

In a negative sense, a person who desires to have a short life and who leads a life of dissipation will eventually see the fulfillment of his desire. Man’s road to suicide is sin, and whoever lives in sin will end up in death. Actually, to sin is to commit a slow suicide. A person who plays mah-jongg every day and returns home late every night will find it difficult to adequately care for his responsibilities. In addition, he may become tempestuous, have an attitude of reproach and hatred toward others, be at odds with his family, and have an unloving attitude toward his children. Such a person will have no happiness in human relations or peace in his human life. In addition, a person who

habitually plays mah-jongg is susceptible to getting angry and causing trouble. Thus, it will be difficult for him to avoid illness over time. Playing mah-jongg consumes a person's physical and mental strength and is only one example of a sin that can lead to sickness. There are many other sinful things that lead to sickness and eventually to death. Sin rules over man and delivers man into the realm of death.

Everyone who has sinned knows the misery of sin and desires to be delivered from sin. However, deliverance from sin is not in human hands. Many who have attempted to free themselves from sin have failed. Although it is easy to be contaminated by sin, it is difficult to rid oneself of sin. Trying to rid oneself of sin is as difficult as an addict trying to give up his harmful habit. Anyone who develops a bad habit will find it difficult to get rid of such a habit.

A believer once testified of his suffering from his inability to refrain from sin. Prior to his salvation he loved to dance. He would dance from sunset until two or three o'clock in the morning. However, each time he went dancing, he developed back pains from dancing, and whenever he arrived at home, he would not care to undress but would simply fall asleep on his bed. He often regretted his going out to dance and often determined not to dance again. When morning came, he would decide not to dance that day so that he would not cause himself trouble again. His resolution not to dance would remain firm until noon. However, by the afternoon the inner voice that told him not to dance was not as loud as in the morning, and by sunset, when the neon lights on the streets were on, he would begin to dance inwardly and would inevitably walk to the entrance of a dance hall and go in to dance. This brother's testimony describes man's pitiful condition of helplessness in sin.

BEING DELIVERED FROM SIN TO OBTAIN TRUE SATISFACTION

People sometimes ask whether a person can still watch movies after believing in Jesus. Preachers often find this question difficult to answer. If they answer yes, it will readily become a matter of dispute, because people might misunderstand the answer. Although many movies are proper, the improper movies greatly outnumber the proper ones, and many people prefer the improper movies to the proper ones. Hence, it is difficult to answer this question.

However, if a preacher replies that one cannot watch movies after believing in the Lord Jesus, some people would decide not to believe in the Lord Jesus because they still want to watch movies. This situation is similar to that of a child who is playing with a sharp knife. His mother may realize that it is dangerous for her child to play in this way, but she may not know how to seize the knife from her child. A clever mother would simply throw a few pieces of chocolate on the floor. When her child sees the chocolate, he will be attracted and will spontaneously drop the knife and pick up the chocolate with both hands. Once the child picks up the chocolate, he will have no desire for the knife.

Our answer to the question concerning watching movies is to apply the story of the clever mother. If a person is full of Christ within, he will spontaneously drop the “knife” of watching movies. A person loves to watch movies because he is empty and does not have the Lord within him. Because he is empty, he feels bored and needs to entertain himself. Hence, he goes to the movies to make himself happy. However, when a person has the Lord as his true satisfaction, and the Lord becomes his happiness and fills every need within him, he will testify that he no longer needs the “knives.”

In the past our answer to this question touched a lady and caused her to receive the Lord. After she was saved, she became joyful and testified in a meeting, saying, “Thank the Lord, I no longer need movies, because I have Christ within.” People who do not have the Lord are empty inside and have no satisfaction. Since they have no real hope or genuine happiness, they can only live in sin and seek the pleasures of sin. This is a basic cause of man’s sinning.

GOD BEING THE SOURCE OF ALL GOODNESS AND THE POWER FOR DOING GOOD

God is the source of all goodness. God is good, and without Him there is no goodness (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). Genuine goodness is God Himself. This is similar to the fact that electricity from the power plant is the source of light in our homes. Without the electricity, there is no light. Likewise, without God, there is no goodness. In contrast to God as the source of goodness, the devil is the source of evil. In whomever the devil is, works of evil will be manifested (John 8:44), and in whomever God is, goodness will be manifested (Eph. 2:10; 5:8-9).

God is not only the source of goodness but also the power to do good. A believer's power to do good is God Himself. An electric fan turns continuously not by its own power but by the electric current that flows through it. A Christian can be loving, just, unbiased, and righteous in dealing with people and things, not because he has the ability in himself but because God is in him as his power to do good. Whenever God enters into a person and energizes him, he no longer needs to make up his mind to do good but spontaneously becomes a person who does good.

The Chinese have different aspects of education—moral, intellectual, physical, and social. They also have different terms in the Chinese dictionary to describe intellectual ability or power and physical ability. However, there is no term to describe moral ability, that is, the power to be moral. In the same way that an electric fan needs electrical power in order to function, man needs moral power in order to have morality and goodness. Some people are physically strong and can lift several hundred pounds. Others are wise and have a large intellectual capacity for planning and devising strategies. However, when we consider man's moral conduct, it is apparent that man is powerless with respect to morality. Although man may have physical and intellectual power, he does not have moral power, because he does not have God within him.

Man's lack of God causes him to seek entertainment and pleasure in sins. Because he does not have God within, he does not have the power to do good, and when he desires to do good, he is often helpless.

CONTACTING GOD

God is the unique power through whom we can break away from sin. He alone is able to deliver us from sin. If we desire to overcome sin, it is meaningless and vain for us to make up our mind and determine to sin no more. The unique way to be delivered from sin is to receive God and allow Him to come into us. Just as an electric fan operates because it is switched on and allows electricity to flow through it, so we are delivered from sin to do good by contacting God and allowing Him to flow through us as our power. When God comes into our inner being and touches our inward parts, our entire being is revolutionized. Formerly, we might have been going downward, committing sins and doing evil things. However, after God touches us, our

whole being is turned upward, and goodness is manifested in our conduct. God's operating power within man is beyond man's own ability.

Once when I was preaching the gospel in northern China, I met a friend of mine. When he saw me, he praised the Lord and told me of his experience of believing in the Lord Jesus. From his youth he was at odds with his mother. He disliked her and was resentful toward her and even ran away from home because of their poor relationship. One day he heard the gospel, repented, believed, and received the Lord Jesus as his Savior. After his salvation he did not remember the problem between himself and his mother but simply prayed to the Lord. One day after he prayed, he wept bitterly for no apparent reason. His inward being was touched by some kind of power so that he wailed and felt sorrowful concerning his relationship with his mother. Although he was far away from home, he immediately purchased a train ticket to return to his hometown on the following day. As soon as he saw his mother, he knelt before her and confessed to her. From that day onward, his mother became a person whom he loved and honored, and whenever he thought of her, he was always happy within. He testified that the power to be happy with his mother was not from himself but was Christ within him.

Another brother, prior to his believing in the Lord, offended his wife greatly and disliked her. One day, after believing in the Lord, God touched his inner being and caused him to regret his attitude toward his wife. As soon as he returned home, the first thing he did was to confess to his wife and seek her forgiveness. The power that motivated this brother to seek forgiveness and to love his wife did not originate from himself but came from God's touch within. This kind of experience is not uncommon among believers.

Some people may say that these experiences are "superstitious" and are not for this modern age. However, many believers can testify that these experiences are not superstitious but practical. About half a century ago, when I was studying in elementary school, an elderly man stood up and said that in the future there would not only be cable telephones but also wireless telephones. People would be able to speak to one another on the telephone without any wire connections. When I heard that, I responded that it was absurd. Today, however, by means of electric waves a person who is speaking in America can be heard in Taiwan over a wireless radio. What seemed to be mysterious in the past is becoming quite ordinary today because people now know how to utilize electric waves.

God is Spirit (John 4:24). He is not physical, tangible, or visible. Electricity also is invisible. Man can see only the manifestation of electricity but not electricity itself. However, even though no one has seen electricity, some people have touched electricity. In a similar sense, even though man cannot see God, His Spirit can touch man's inner being. If man repents to God and receives Christ as his Savior, God's Spirit will enter into man and touch him. God is light, holiness, and goodness (1 John 1:5; Lev. 11:45). As soon as He touches man's inner being, the darkness in man will be changed into light, the filthiness in man will be changed into holiness, and the evil within man will be changed into goodness (Eph. 5:8; Ezek. 36:25). God is the source of goodness as well as the power for doing good. When He touches a man's inner being, that man's entire life will be revolutionized, and there will be a motivating power for him to do good and to have an upward turn in his life.

THE WAY TO OBTAIN SALVATION

The way to obtain God is to repent, confess, and receive Christ by believing. If we repent and confess our sins before the Lord and open our heart to receive Him as our Savior, He will come into our inner being. He will not only save us and deliver us from our sin but will also take away the record of our sins before God. By shedding His blood on the cross, the Lord accomplished redemption for us. Today He desires to enter into us to be our life and power. Once He enters, He will break sin's authority over us and deliver us from sin. In this way we will be persons who obtain true freedom and true satisfaction.

Although man's sins are like scarlet, once God enters into man, he will be as white as snow (Isa. 1:18). Furthermore, as many as receive the Lord Jesus, to them He gives authority to become children of God (John 1:12). As the source of all goodness and the power to do good, God desires to enter into you so that your entire life may be changed.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LIFE OF MAN

Scripture Reading: John 3:3; 10:10b; 1 John 5:12

ALL THINGS CONCERNING MAN BEING DEPENDENT ON MAN'S LIFE

In this chapter we will continue to consider man's problems. Other than the problems of emptiness and sin, we need to consider the problem of man's life. Man's existence, history, and experience all depend on man's life. If a man loses his life, everything concerning him will come to an end. All things concerning man, including his career and all his enjoyment, depend on man's life. When a person lies sick on his deathbed, his career, no matter how prestigious, and his enjoyment of material pleasures, no matter how rich, will come to an end. Therefore, all things concerning man depend on man's life.

LIFE BEING EXPRESSED IN LIVING

Every kind of life has a certain kind of living. The duck life has the duck living, and the chicken life has the chicken living. If we put some ducks and chickens close to the edge of a pond, the chickens will become frightened at the sight of water and will try to stay away from it, but the ducks will become happy and do their best to enter into the pond. We will be able to identify the chickens and the ducks simply by observing their living, their expression of life. This principle also applies to the plant life. Some trees, such as the apple tree and the peach tree, are difficult to distinguish when they are still saplings. However, they are easy to recognize when they are mature enough to produce fruit. The life of a peach tree produces peaches, and the life of an apple tree produces apples. Likewise, a good tree produces good fruit, and a corrupt tree produces bad fruit. Thus, all trees are recognized by their fruit (Matt. 7:17-18). Life brings in the expression of life. Thus, every kind of life has its own living, its own expression. This is a biological law.

THE LIFE OF FALLEN MAN BEING IMPROPER AND DISHONEST

We can apply the biological law to the life of man in order to see the characteristics of man's life. Philosophers throughout the ages have argued over the question of whether human nature is inherently good or evil. One group of philosophers advocates that man is born good, another group believes that man is born evil, and yet another group considers that man is born innocent. However, we can discern human nature simply by considering our living. We can determine the kind of life that we have from the kind of expression that we have. If our living is good, our life must be good, and if our living is improper, it is difficult to believe that our life is good. We do not need to ask others or criticize them concerning their human life; we simply need to examine our own living and walk.

If we observe our behavior in a sober and serious way, we will immediately discover that our living is improper. In many matters we are neither honest nor righteous, and our thoughts are often filled with crooked, dark, despicable, and corrupt things. No one can say with a pure conscience that he has never deceived others. People deceive not only those who are outside their family but also those who are within their family. Some do dishonorable things in order to deceive their own husband, wife, and children. No one can say that he has never taken advantage of others or never stolen from others. Some people rob others on the streets, and others rob in less obvious ways, using their pens to steal from others. We need to consider all that we own, including the things stored in our homes and the clothing that we wear, and ask ourselves whether all these items have been obtained in a just and honest way. We need to examine our thoughts in order to see what our actual condition is. If there were a tool that could diagnose and display the actual condition of the heart and thoughts of man as thoroughly as an x-ray machine can diagnose the human body, no one would be able to stand before this kind of diagnostic light. Who can say that in every matter and in every respect his hands are clean and his heart is pure and upright? If we examine ourselves in this way, we will only be able to bow our heads and admit that our living is neither righteous nor honest.

In conversing with others, some people convey the assurance that they do everything according to their conscience. However, we should not be so bold as to give others such assurance. Can we genuinely assure anyone that as far back as we can remember, we have done everything out of a good conscience? If we are true to our conscience, we will never be able to convey to others such confidence in ourselves. When a doctor checks the condition of a patient's

lungs, he sometimes taps on different parts of the patient's chest. He discerns the health of the patient's lungs by the echo that he hears. Today, as they "tap" on their conscience, many people know their true condition by the different "echoes" that they hear. They are aware of their wrongdoings, including the things that they do in secret, behind the back of their parents, their spouse, and their employer. They know well what they owe their country and what offenses they have committed against their government. Many people know what they have done to deceive and hurt others. No one is completely faultless. We can only acknowledge in shame that our living is improper and that our behavior is dishonest.

However, it is not man's will to have an improper and dishonest living. Many people do bad things not of their own will but because of the fallen and corrupted life within them. Every kind of life issues in a certain kind of living. We deceive others because our fallen and corrupted life is deceitful, and we steal because this life is greedy. When I was young, I had the concept that people told lies by learning from others. Thus, I thought that if my wife and I could refrain from telling lies at home, our children would not know how to lie to others or cheat them. This concept is wrong. I have learned from experience that even before a child learns to speak, he is able to lie. Before he can say anything, he is able to do something deceitful. When my children were young, we once left a basin of water in our bedroom. One of my children saw the basin, put his hands into it, and began to play with the water. He did not know that we were standing outside the bedroom watching him play through a small opening in the door. We then softly pushed the door open and went into the room. As soon as he heard our footsteps, he withdrew his hands from the water and hid them behind his back. This was his attempt to deceive us and to lie to us. At that time I discovered that even though a child may have just learned to walk and may not have seen anything deceitful or know how to speak, he is already able to deceive others. No one needs to teach him to do this. Man's deceitful behavior is nothing other than the expression of the deceitful life within man. The fallen life within man is deceitful, and this "fruit" will be manifested whenever there is an opportunity.

We should not consider that people sin and make mistakes because they are under a bad influence, nor that they commit sins by learning from others. Once, when I was preaching the gospel to some friends, they argued that people do bad things because they have come into contact with bad people. Their concept was that people would not gamble if they had never met others

who gambled, or that people would not take bribes if they had not met those who broke the law and took bribes. They also believed that people would behave properly and uprightly if they were put in a good environment. After listening to them, I gave a crude illustration that expressed the proper concept. I told them of a person who owned a dog and a cat at home for a long period of time. The two pets lived together for some time and became friendly toward each other. However, the cat was not influenced by the dog's life, nor was the dog influenced by the cat's life. When a mouse appeared, the cat immediately threw itself onto the mouse, while the dog remained motionless, and when a stranger came to visit, the dog barked, but the cat remained quiet and did not move. Although the dog and the cat had been living together for a long time, the mouse-catching cat did not learn to bark, and the barking dog did not learn how to catch mice. Rather, both pets continued to live according to the life each had within.

This illustration shows that the expression of man's living is not based on the environment but on the life within. When a person meets a gambler and begins to gamble after staying with the gambler for some time, it may seem that this person began to gamble because he was affected and influenced by the gambler. Actually, this person began to gamble because of the sinful life within him. Both the gambler and the one who was influenced to gamble have a sinful life within them; thus, the gambler was able to influence the other person. This can be compared to a situation where there are two cats in a home. When one cat catches a mouse, the other cat will salivate. Since the two cats have the same kind of life, the second cat has the same tendency to catch mice as the first. One person is easily influenced by another to do things such as gambling or dancing because the life within both persons loves gambling and dancing. Since the life is the same, the tastes, the preferences, and the expressions also are the same. This proves that every kind of life produces a living of its own kind. We have improper and dishonest expressions simply because the life within us is improper and dishonest.

THE LIFE OF FALLEN MAN BEING FRAIL AND MORTAL

The fallen human life is not only evil, improper, and dishonest but also frail and mortal. Our human life is frail in every respect, whether physically, psychologically, or morally. A person who is physically strong may lose his life when he is hit by a car, a person who is psychologically healthy can easily become angry or irrational when he is irritated, and people with a relatively

high moral standard can stumble and fall when they encounter certain temptations. It is difficult for man to overcome all temptation.

If we consider our past experience, we will realize that it was often difficult for us to prevail when we encountered temptation. Many young students have been brought up well in their family life, but when they graduate from high school and enter into university, their parents may repeatedly remind them not to pick up bad habits. However, even though they solemnly promise and determine to keep their parents' word, not long after the school term begins, they are tempted by their schoolmates and are soon stumbled. They stumble not because they have no determination but because the life of fallen man is frail and unable to endure the slightest test or withstand temptation.

The life of fallen man is not only frail but also gradually decaying, with death as its final end. No matter how long the human life is, it cannot escape from death. Thus, the human life is frail and mortal.

THE SALVATION OF GOD NOT BEING THE IMPROVEMENT OF BEHAVIOR

Although the actual condition of the fallen human life is evil and also frail and mortal, God desires to bring salvation to man. We need to see that God's salvation is not according to man's natural concept. All the virtuous men and philosophers from ancient times to modern times, and from the East to the West, including the Chinese Confucianists and philosophers, have focused on correcting man's behavior. They have all given some moral teachings for man to practice so that he may change his outward behavior. However, the way of God's salvation is altogether contrary to man's ideas. God's intention is not merely to correct man's outward behavior. Rather, God desires to change the life of man within. God's salvation does not begin from man's outward condition; rather, it begins by God's working on man's inner being. God does not directly change man's outward behavior but enters into man to change his inner life. We all need to see God's way. In fact, it is impossible to change man's behavior (Jer. 13:23). Moreover, even if man's outward behavior could be changed, man would still have the same evil life within.

One day a man walked across the street and saw a peddler selling clay dolls. The clay dolls looked white, clean, and beautiful on the outside, so he bought one for his daughter. His daughter liked the clay doll very much and not only

caressed its face but also kissed it often. After some time, the clay doll's white and clean face became blurry and dirty due to the daughter's continual caressing and kissing. The little girl recalled that every time her face became dirty, her mother washed her face in a basin of water. Thus, she took a basin of water and scrubbed the doll's face in the same way. However, she found that the more she washed it, the darker the doll's face became. Eventually, neither the nose nor the eyes of the doll could be identified, and the doll's face became nothing but a piece of clay. She broke into tears, and her father rushed in to comfort her. He asked her why she was crying. After he discovered that the clay doll no longer looked nice, he said to her gently, "Silly girl, this clay doll is not washable. The more you wash it, the dirtier it becomes, but if you do not wash it, it remains clean."

We need to consider what our situation is. Are we dirty outwardly or are we dirty inwardly, and are our outward good deeds more or less than our filthiness within? Many people do not sense how dirty they are until they try to improve themselves. Many misbehave and do indecent things without realizing how dirty they are. However, when they decide to improve their behavior, they begin to realize that the filthiness within them is incurable (17:9). A loose person may not sense the extent of his looseness, but when he desires to restrain his looseness, he discovers that it is impossible to do so.

A competent and cultivated lady once came to see me. She looked very grieved and told me that she had an extremely difficult problem. At first, I was worried and thought that, based on her countenance, her problem was unsolvable. When she told me the details, I realized her problem was that she was unable to control her temper. She said, "I have always hoped that I would be able to refrain from losing my temper in the presence of my husband so that we could have a happy and satisfying marriage and a pleasant family. However, the more I try not to lose my temper, the more I lose my temper. When I do not try to control my temper, I do not lose my temper as often, but when I try to suppress it and determine not to lose my temper in front of my husband, it seems that something within me involuntarily causes me to lose my temper. This problem has damaged the sweetness between us as a couple and has affected the pleasant atmosphere in our home. My losing my temper is against my will, and although I have tried my best to improve, I am becoming more helpless in this matter. Please tell me what to do." I responded calmly, "Your problem is not unusual. We all lose our temper because the life within us is a temper-losing life. If we were able to refrain

from losing our temper, it would be a great miracle, because the life within us is against this.” She replied, “What then should I do? I have tried different methods, but none have worked. As a preacher, you must have a good way to cultivate yourself and restrain yourself from losing your temper.” Then I told her that all the methods of self-cultivation do not work. The more we try to cultivate ourselves, the more we will lose our temper. This can be compared to a little child walking with two cups in his hands. When left alone, he may not break the cups, but if his mother calls out to him and tells him not to break the cups, he may become nervous and drop the two cups.

THE GRAFTING OF TWO LIVES BEING THE WAY OF GOD’S SALVATION

I told this lady that losing or not losing our temper is not a matter of self-cultivation but a matter of life. She was puzzled by my words and wondered how man could have his life changed. I told her that our concept is to correct our behavior, but God’s approach and the way of God’s salvation is to change our life. Then I said to her, “Suppose you owned two apple trees, and one produced small and sour fruit, but the other produced large and sweet fruit. How would you make the tree that produces small fruit produce large fruit?” She responded quickly, “Simply cut off some branches from the apple tree with large and sweet fruit. Then break off some branches from the tree with small and sour fruit and graft in their place the branches from the tree with large fruit. The two will then be grafted together and will grow together. After some time of growth, the tree that formerly produced small fruit will produce large and sweet fruit.”

After her response, I asked her to consider whether this is an improvement of behavior or a grafting of two lives to become one. To improve our behavior is similar to getting rid of all the sour fruit on a tree that produces small and sour fruit, with the expectation that in the next season the produce from the same tree will be large and sweet fruit. We may try to improve our behavior by trying to rid ourselves of the “sour fruit” of telling lies, stealing, and despising others, but the fruit that will be produced later will remain the same. No matter how hard man tries to improve himself, the fruit borne by him will not be better than before, because the life within him remains the same. Grafting, however, is not merely to improve the behavior of one branch but to impart and join to one branch the life of another tree. With this example, the

lady understood that grafting is not an improvement in behavior but two lives becoming one life. For grafting to take place, both trees have to be cut so that the branches of one may be grafted into the other. The fruit produced from such a grafting is different from the original. This is the way of God's salvation (Rom. 11:17), that is, to graft sinners, the branches of a wild olive tree, into Christ, God's cultivated olive tree, so that they may partake of Christ's riches and thus bear "sweet fruit" to express the riches of God in Christ.

In John 3:3 the Lord Jesus said, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To be born anew is to be born again, and to be born again is to have a change in life. Through the new birth the fallen and corrupted human life is terminated, and we receive a good life, the life of God. God desires to enter into man to become his life. Jesus Christ is the Savior of man because He can become man's life (Col. 3:4). Christianity today has overlooked the matter of Jesus Christ coming to be life to man (John 10:10). They speak mainly of Jesus Christ being the Savior, but they do not emphasize that, even more, Christ is life to man. If He could not come into man as life, He would not be man's Savior. Jesus Christ is able to save man because He is able to enter into man to be his life. If a man receives Jesus Christ as life, He will enter into him to become his new life.

In response to this, some may ask, "How do I receive the Lord Jesus as my life?" The answer to this question is simple: just as two trees need to be cut in order for the branches of one to be grafted into another, a person who wants to receive Jesus as his life needs to be "cut" by humbling himself and admitting that his life is corrupt, imperfect, and improper. On His side, Jesus too was "cut" when He died on the cross to bear man's sins, to terminate man's sinful life, and to release God's divine life from within Him (1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:6; John 19:34). A person who wants to receive Jesus needs not only to humble himself before Jesus Christ but also to confess his sins and receive Jesus Christ as his Savior and life. Then the resurrected Christ, who is the Spirit and is also life (2 Cor. 3:17; John 11:25), will enter into him.

If anyone is willing to empty his heart and humble himself, confess his corruption and sins, and open his heart and spirit to receive the Lord Jesus as his Savior, Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), will enter into him, touch his deepest part, and become his life. Thus, he will experience a wonderful and great change inwardly. This is the way of God's salvation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DESTINATION OF HUMAN LIFE

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-24; 2 Cor. 4:5

In addition to the problems of emptiness, sin, and man's life, the human life also has the problem of its destination. The human life needs to have a destination—a home to return to and a person to whom it should return.

There is a saying in Chinese that everything in the universe has its owner or master. Although man is rich in emotions, thoughtful, and purposeful, he may not know who his master is. We need to consider whether human beings have a lord, or a master, someone to whom they belong and to whom they live. Many wives consider their husband as their lord, and children often consider their parents as their master. Hence, some mothers think that their children belong to them. However, we need to consider who our lord is, the one to whom we ultimately belong, the one to whom we can tell our troubles and from whom we can receive comfort in times of sorrow. We need to consider whether our husband can be our genuine comfort, whether we can genuinely speak to our wife concerning all things, whether our parents can bear all our problems, or whether our children can meet all our needs. We need to consider whom we ultimately belong to.

On the surface, husbands may seem to be the lord of their wife, and wives may appear to be the lord of their husband. However, when difficult circumstances arise, such as a life-threatening illness, a husband will realize that his wife has no way to be his lord, and a wife will realize that her husband cannot be her lord. Children will realize that they cannot always take refuge in their parents, and parents will realize that they cannot necessarily rely on their children. When something important happens to us, we will realize that although many people are dear to us, we may not be able to find anyone whom we can turn to or rely on. This means that without a destination, in his practical experience man is completely helpless while living on the earth. He does not know whom he belongs to or whom he should live to.

When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He went about to many cities and villages preaching the gospel, and when He saw the crowds coming to Him,

He was moved with compassion for them because they were harassed and cast away like sheep not having a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34). These people were like lost sheep. Sheep belong to a shepherd, and the shepherd is the master of the sheep. The shepherd solves all the problems of the sheep and meets all their needs. When the Lord Jesus saw the people wandering about like sheep without a shepherd, with no place to go and no one to belong to, He was moved with compassion for them. Today human beings are like sheep without a shepherd, and thus, they have no destination.

HUMAN LIFE NEEDING TO HAVE A DIRECTION

Many people have no quick answer to the question of what the direction of human life is and where man is going. We need to consider where we are in our human life today and where we are going. We also need to consider what our destination is, whom we belong to, and to whom we live our lives. These are serious questions. The actual condition of human life is that it is not only empty and sinful but also corrupt and fragile. Man does not know where he came from, nor does he know where he is going. Hence, he does not know where he is, to whom he belongs, and to whom he should live. Everything in the universe has its owner, but man does not know who his master is (Isa. 1:3). This shows that human beings are lost, like sheep without a shepherd. The Bible uses many parables to describe man's lost condition. One of these parables shows that God is man's Shepherd.

RETURNING TO THE LORD, OUR CREATOR

The three parables in Luke 15 speak of God's desire to be man's destination. The first parable speaks of the Lord Jesus coming like a shepherd to seek a lost sheep, which signifies a lost sinner (vv. 4-7). The second parable speaks of the Holy Spirit coming like a fine woman to carefully sweep the house until she finds her precious coin, which signifies man as the treasure of God (vv. 8-10). The third parable speaks of the Father God eagerly awaiting the return of His prodigal son, signified by the son who left his father's house to wander in the world and became lost and without a destination (vv. 11-24). These three parables show that man should have a master.

The Bible tells us that man was created by God (Gen. 1:26-27). God is our Creator, and in this sense He is our Father (cf. Luke 3:38). He is also our Lord, and we belong to Him. Therefore, we should return to Him, just as the

prodigal son returned to his father and his father's house in the parable in Luke 15. A son who leaves his father's house to become a prodigal has no peace in his heart. He may gain much wealth, have a high position, and enjoy many material pleasures, but whenever he considers his situation, he will have an uneasy feeling within. However, once he returns home to be reconciled to his father, he will have a sense of peace within. Thus, no matter how prosperous we are in our human life, how high a position we attain, or how rich we are, if we do not come back to our Creator, we will remain as prodigals wandering away from home and having no peace within. This is because we are not in the right position and have not set aright our relationship with God the Father.

God is our Creator, and He is the Lord who shepherds us. Although we may not have much realization of His shepherding, in His divine authority God is caring for us and shepherding us every day. We are the sheep in His pasture, and He is the One who shepherds us, feeds us, and cares for us. However, we do not know Him, and we often do things behind His back, conduct our lives apart from Him, speak evil of Him, and even deny His existence. How terrible this is!

During World War II, Mussolini became the dictator of Italy, and due to his great power, he became proud. It was reported that when one missionary, with the expectation that Mussolini would fear God, spoke to him about God, Mussolini boasted that if the eternal Father were to speak to him, he would punch Him with his fist. In essence, he was saying, "Where is this God, this eternal Father? If there is such a person, I will punch Him if He speaks to me." When I read his words, I felt that he was too bold. Eventually, a few years later he died a shameful and pathetic death. This shows that God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7).

Many people say that God does not exist, because no one has seen Him. However, if there were no God, where did man come from, and how could man exist? We need to consider why our eyebrows do not grow underneath our eyes, and why our teeth do not grow inside our nostrils. Everything in the universe, including the human body, is part of the Creator's wonderful work. Thus, we cannot say that there is no God. None of the things in the universe came about by coincidence or were naturally formed. Rather, the heavens are above our head, the earth is beneath our feet, and our nostrils breathe in the air created by God. We need to lift up our heart to revere and love this God

who loves us. We should never despise God or mock Him by speaking evil things. Rather, we need to stand as a creature before our Creator, bow our head in humility, and say to Him, “O God! I am one whom You have created and shepherded. I revere You, and I belong to You. I desire to be a proper person, to do Your will, and to please You.” As creatures, we should have such an attitude. This is the way we begin our return to God and correct our relationship with our Lord and Father. When we return to Him, we will be happy, and we will have peace within.

When we are in the right position, it will not matter whether we are outwardly poor, destitute, or seriously ill; deep within our spirit we will have peace and happiness because we have a destination for our human life. We will be people who have the Lord as their destination and will not be like those who have nowhere to take their problems and no one on whom they can cast their burdens. We will be peaceful and satisfied within because we know that the Creator of all things is our Father and our Lord. This is sweet and glorious.

JESUS BEING THE DESTINATION OF HUMAN LIFE

Jesus is our Lord and the destination of our human life. He came to be our Savior because He is our Master. The Bible tells us that He is our Shepherd and that we are His lost sheep (Gen. 48:15; Psa. 23:1; Isa. 53:6; Mark 6:33-34; John 10:14-16). There is no shepherd who does not seek his lost sheep (Luke 15:4). The Lord as the Shepherd came to seek us, the lost sheep. He came from the heavens to the earth to seek and to save those who are lost (19:10). Although He is the great God, He did not come with glory and majesty; rather, He became a small man. He was God who became flesh (John 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:5-8; Isa. 53:2-3). Within, He was God, and without, He was a man. He was God putting on humanity, God in man. This man was called Jesus.

The past two thousand years of history prove that Jesus is a wonderful person. He came from a humble origin. He was born in a manger and grew up in a poor carpenter's family in Nazareth, a small town despised by people. In the eyes of the world, He did not receive much education. He never attended a university or received any degree. He lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years and was crucified on a cross. However, even though this One grew up in poverty, received little education, did not attain to a high position, did not live long on the earth, and was eventually crucified on a cross, the past

two thousand years prove that He is the most wonderful person in the history of mankind.

Many people who have believed in Jesus know the preciousness of His name, and today thousands call upon His name, bow their knees to Him, proclaim Him as Lord, and revere Him in their heart. When Napoleon was about to die, he said, “O Jesus of Nazareth! You have defeated me. I have fought many battles, yet You did not fight a single battle. However, tens of thousands of people exalt You as King. Although You were a mere Galilean who lived only thirty-three and a half years and was crucified on the cross, there are people everywhere on the earth who exalt You as King.” It is not a coincidence in history that Jesus was crucified on the cross. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified because He was not merely a man but a man with God within Him.

The Lord Jesus was a young man at the age of thirty when He began His ministry on the earth. However, He was able to declare before many people that He and God were one (John 10:30; 17:22), that when they saw Him, they saw God (14:9), and that when they believed into Him, they believed into God (v. 1). He was not speaking wild or boastful words, nor was He telling lies. His mind was clear, His person was proper, and His words were honest and trustworthy. The whole world acknowledges His human life. His words recorded in the Bible were great, high, and full of wisdom. He said to people, “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness”; “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst”; and, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever” (8:12; 6:35; 4:14a). These words are simple yet full of wisdom.

In the past six thousand years of human history no philosopher or wise man, whether in the East or in the West, has ever spoken such words. They had neither the boldness to speak such words nor the mind to conceive them. No one can say that he is the light of the world, the bread of life, and the living water of life. In six thousand years of human history, only Jesus of Nazareth has ever spoken such words. He could speak such words because God was in Him. Actually, He is God (Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8). He is God manifested in the flesh so that man can come near to Him and believe in Him (1 Tim. 3:16).

Jesus died for us and bore our sins on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). This is a marvelous thing. Many people do not have peace in their conscience when they consider God, because they think of God's righteousness, the eternal judgment, and their hidden life filled with many secretive, unspeakable, defamatory, and immoral things. Thus, they cannot help but be fearful. Their efforts to cultivate their moral character cannot comfort them, abstaining from meat cannot soothe the uneasiness in their hearts, and doing good deeds cannot give them rest. However, if they hear the gospel, believe in the name of Jesus, know that on the cross He shed His blood and bore their sins, and call on His name to receive Him, they will immediately have peace in their hearts, and the heavy burden of sin will immediately be cast off. Their condemning conscience will become a clear conscience, their anxiety will become peace, and their pain within will become joy. This is not a psychological phenomenon. If it were merely psychological, man would have no peace within. In many religions, when people are before their religious leaders, they still have no inner peace. However, once a person comes to Jesus and believes that He shed His blood on the cross and bore his sins, he has peace in his heart, his burden is lifted, and he feels released and joyful. This is marvelous.

Once there was a man who lived in Manchuria and who had done a great deal of business. One day, while he was sick and lying in bed, his conscience began to bother him. He felt that he was full of sins and trespasses. Thus, he beat himself on the chest, cried bitterly, rolled around in his bed, and even fell onto the floor. He had no inward peace. However, as he was crying, he recalled the gospel that he had heard in the past, which told him how Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, bore up man's sins on the cross, and how man's sins would be forgiven if man would believe into Him. In the midst of his pain, this man prayed to God, saying, "O Jesus, if You are the Lord of heaven and earth and if You have died for me on the cross, please forgive my sins." Not long after he prayed in this way, he sensed an inexplicable joy like a burning fire within him. His crying turned into happiness, and he got up from the floor, joyfully and prayerfully giving thanks to the Lord. On that day he was saved in his hospital room.

Many believers have had similar experiences of a dynamic salvation, and many have experienced in their conscience the effectiveness of Jesus' redemptive work on the cross. This is because Jesus is the Lord. He came to be man's Savior and bore man's sins on the cross. He resurrected from the dead and is now the Spirit who can be with man in any place (Acts 2:32; 1 Cor.

15:45). Whenever a person turns his heart to Him, calls on Him, and believes into Him, He enters into that person and reaches him as the Spirit (Acts 2:21). If such a person is condemned in his conscience, once he receives the Lord, He will give him the peace of forgiveness. If he is in agony, the Lord will be unlimited comfort to him. If he is darkened within, He will be light to him. If he has no direction, He will be his way. No matter what difficulty man has, the Lord Jesus is the solution, and He has promised to be with man always (Matt. 28:20).

Therefore, it is difficult to find a sorrowful believer. Originally, many people were idol worshippers, but after they believed in Jesus, others could see the difference that had been wrought in them. Many idol worshippers have sad countenances, whereas the faces of believers, regardless of their age, are always happy and full of smiles. Believing in Jesus is a promising way, and to take any other way is to inflict pain on oneself. When a person calls on the name of Jesus and prays to Him, his pale face turns rosy, and his sad face becomes happy.

If a brother gets up in the morning with a frowning face, it indicates that he has not prayed to Jesus. However, if he is full of joy, it shows that he has prayed in the morning and has met Jesus. Because I am often busy giving messages, when people meet me, they are surprised to see that I am becoming more vigorous, and my complexion is getting rosier. I respond by telling them that the more I speak, the rosier my face becomes and the more vital I become, because Jesus is in me. My face looks healthy not only when I speak on the podium but also when I kneel down to pray to Him at home. I often feel like a piece of steel burning in the fire. I have no way to avoid being heated up by Him. Jesus is real. He is God, He is the Lord, He is the Spirit, and He can reach us to become our Savior.

JESUS BEING LORD

The Lord Jesus is our good Shepherd who came to seek us out. On the cross He shed His blood and died for us so that He might save us from our sins. He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-4), ascended into heaven (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9), and was made by God the Lord of all (2:36), including the universe and mankind. Today He is our Lord. We have no other lord but Him. This is a glorious matter. People in religion do not believe in *the* Lord. Neither Muslims nor Buddhists say that they believe in *the* Lord. Only those who

believe in Jesus say that they believe in *the* Lord. No one will call a microphone, a stand, or a fan a person. Only a human being can be called a person. In the same sense, only Jesus is Lord. Buddha is not the lord, and Tao is not the lord. When we believe in Jesus, we believe in *the* Lord, because Jesus is Lord. We cannot apply the word *Lord* to any other person. We can use it to refer only to the Lord Jesus because only He, Christ Jesus, is the Lord.

That Jesus is Lord is a clear word in the Bible (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5). We all need to proclaim, “Jesus is Lord!” We need to pray that the Lord will bless our country and our government so that our relatives, friends, and loved ones may have the opportunity to receive Jesus as their Lord (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-4). Today we have the freedom to listen to the gospel because Jesus is the Lord. We worship Him, take refuge in Him, and belong to Him. If we stand on His side, He will stand on our side. We should have faith that He has overcome the devil (John 14:30; Rev. 5:5) and that He has come to save our souls (John 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:15). Whoever is willing to turn to Him must confess that Jesus is Lord and proclaim before Him that he belongs to Him and that he will return to Him. He is my Lord, and He is also your Lord. He is our Lord.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GOD’S WONDERFUL WAY OF SALVATION FOR MAN (1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 2:20

THREE STEPS OF GOD’S WONDERFUL WAY OF SALVATION TO MAN

First Timothy 3:16 says, “Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He [God] who was manifested in the flesh.” First Peter 2:24 says, “Who [Christ] Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed.” Galatians 2:20 says, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

The three verses quoted above reveal the steps of God’s way of salvation to man. First Timothy 3:16 speaks concerning God being manifested in the flesh. First Peter 2:24 speaks concerning the Lord Jesus bearing up our sins in His body on the cross, and Galatians 2:20 speaks concerning Christ living in us. God being manifested in the flesh, the Lord Jesus bearing our sins, and Christ living in us—these three matters fully reveal the three steps of God’s way of salvation to man.

In previous chapters we saw man’s actual condition: man is empty and sinful, his life is wicked and fragile, and he is wandering and lost. Man’s condition reveals that he needs a way of salvation. Thus, many wise men, from ancient times to the present and from the East to the West, have considered how man can be saved.

BECAUSE OF HIS CONDITION MAN NEEDING SALVATION

Throughout human history man has devised and invented many ways of salvation. The fact that so many ways of salvation have been invented indicates that because of his condition man needs salvation.

First, when we consider man's behavior, we must admit that man needs salvation. Our deeds are not proper, and our behavior is unrighteous. Although we often have a desire in our heart to do good, what we do outwardly is the opposite of what we desire inwardly. When we listen to the voice of our conscience, we are often condemned because of our fallen behavior. Such condemnation makes it clear that we are people who need to be saved.

Second, when we consider man's life, we find even more that we need to be saved. The more we have the desire to do good, the more we find that our nature is full of corruption. There is a Chinese proverb that says, "Doing good is like climbing a mountain, but doing evil is like flowing water." This proverb describes how evil and corrupt our inward life is. As people with this kind of life, we certainly need to be saved.

Third, when we consider the meaning of human life, we realize that we need to be saved. Many people think that the human life does not have much meaning. Man always feels empty and is often discouraged because the human life is unpredictable and difficult. In northern China there is a saying that man's life consists only of "three fillings and one lying down daily." This means that a person is filled by eating three meals a day and then lies down to sleep once at night. Thus, a person may ask whether these three fillings and one lying down are all that there is to the human life. He may ask whether man is merely a hanger for clothes and a container for food or whether man exists merely to have some enjoyment and be happy. Those who are thoughtful and full of feeling will consider whether this is the real meaning of human life, and they may sigh, saying, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Fourth, if we consider man's eternal destiny, we will conclude that man needs salvation. The universe has its laws, and heaven and earth have their governing principles. In our human living we have committed more sin than we have done good. Such a living violates the laws of the universe and revolts against the principles of heaven and earth. Thus, our end will not be a good end. Although many people are not excessively troubled at the time of their death, the Bible says that death is not the ultimate end, for after death comes judgment (Heb. 9:27). Since there are established laws and principles in the universe, it is certain that there will be a judgment on men, and since man's living has violated the laws and principles of the universe, it is certain that sinful man will be punished. The punishment that sinful man will suffer is

eternal perdition (Rev. 20:15). Man's death in this age does not end his troubles. When a person dies, he passes from the temporary world into an eternal world. Whether his eternal destiny will be good or bad depends on his living today (v. 12). Judging from the way people conduct themselves during their life, it is certain that their eternal destiny will not be good. Therefore, from the perspective of our eternal destiny, we need salvation.

VARIOUS WAYS OF SALVATION INVENTED BY MAN

Due to mankind's need of salvation, many wise men and philosophers have tried to invent different ways of salvation to meet man's various needs. Some of these ways are intended to meet the needs in man's behavior. Since man's behavior is neither proper nor upright, some wise men invented the way of self-cultivation. They believed that what man does and how he behaves will be proper and upright if he sincerely exerts his effort to cultivate himself.

Other wise men have said that a person's nature is easily corrupted if he is accustomed to living an easy life. Thus, if man endures more hardships by buffeting his body, he will be able to restrain his lusts. Some philosophers have considered that the meaning of human life is determined by a person's accomplishments and his ability to make a name for himself in the eyes of the next generation. However, others have thought that the meaning of man's existence is for him to enjoy himself while he can. Thus, they devised different theories and methods for man to have accomplishments and enjoyment. They emphasized that man only needs to be successful in his career and to obtain various kinds of enjoyment in order to have a meaningful human life. These methods are man's inventions to take care of the sense of the vanity of human life.

In addition, some wise men invented the way of rendering distinguished service to mankind in order to achieve virtue so that they can atone for their mistakes. They believed that a person who commits sins during the first half of his life can render distinguished service when he becomes old to make atonement for his past mistakes. Many people believe in this way of salvation.

MAN'S WAY OF SALVATION BEING INEFFECTIVE, AND ONLY GOD'S WAY

OF SALVATION BEING EFFECTIVE

All the ways of salvation invented by the intellects throughout the generations are nothing but an attempt to solve the problems of man's behavior, man's nature, the vanity within man and the meaning of human life, and man's eternal destiny.

If we examine all the man-invented ways of salvation, we will see that they are only temporarily effective. Self-cultivation cannot solve the inherent problem of man's behavior, buffeting oneself cannot solve the basic problem of man's corrupted nature, accomplishments in man's career and material enjoyment do not remove the sense of emptiness that comes from man's ignorance of the meaning of his human life, and doing good deeds and developing virtues cannot atone for one's wrongdoings in the past. All of these are only ways to bribe man's conscience and bring in a false and temporary comfort. Therefore, all the man-invented ways of salvation cannot solve man's problems.

However, we thank God that the way of salvation lies in God. The Bible tells us how God prepared a wonderful way of salvation for the human race in order to deal with and to meet all of man's needs.

GOD'S LOVE BEING THE SOURCE OF GOD'S SALVATION

God's wonderful way of salvation has three major steps, and each step comes out of God's heart of love toward man. God has a fervent love for man. The Bible says, "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). If we consider the words of the Bible, we will see that God's heart is set completely on man. God has no other love in this universe but man. Although we do not know why God loves man so much, we know that His entire heart is set on man. In a sense, all that He thinks of, all that He is concerned for, and all that He worries about is man. Human words cannot describe God's love toward man. The Bible uses the love of a mother for her child to describe God's love toward man (Isa. 66:13). From our experience we know that the greatest, richest, sweetest, and most intimate love is the love of a mother toward her children. However, the Bible says that God's love toward man is greater than a mother's love toward her children. God said, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, / That she would

not have compassion on the son of her womb? / Even though they may forget,
/ Yet I will not forget you” (49:15). God is not willing to lose or forget man.

Without man, God would feel lonely and would not be satisfied. After creating the first man, Adam, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). In saying this, God was also referring to Himself. In other words, it is not good for God to be alone, to be without man. Therefore, He created man so that man could be His counterpart. As a result, God is man’s unique satisfaction, and man is God’s satisfaction. God is man’s happiness and rest, and man is God’s happiness and dwelling (Isa. 66:1-2). Man lacks everything if he lacks God, and God lacks satisfaction if He lacks man. If man does not have God, he is empty, and if God does not have man, He has no one to fill. Man needs God, but God also needs man. The relationship between man and God is like the relationship between children and their parents. Children need their parents, but parents need children even more. Although the prodigal son needed his father, he did not know how much more the loving father had been eagerly awaiting his return (Luke 15:20).

All parents find it difficult to sleep when their children are out until late at night. When the children are out wandering, they may forget about their parents, but their parents at home will be thinking of them restlessly. Sometimes when the children return home at three or four o’clock in the morning, they are fearful that the noise from parking their car or walking to the entrance might wake their parents. Thus, they try to come into the house quietly, expecting everyone to be asleep. They do not know that at the moment they stand at the entrance, their parents will hear them and will rush out to open the door and let them in. A parent’s heart is always thinking of his children.

Therefore, on the surface, children need their parents, but actually, parents need children more. Children who are without parents have no rest, and parents who are without children are even more without rest. This is the analogy that the Bible uses to describe God’s love toward man and His need for man. We often feel that, as desolated sinners, we greatly need God. But we hardly consider that God also needs the desolated sinners because His heart loves man, is toward man, and is fully on man.

THE THREE MAJOR STEPS OF GOD’S SALVATION

God came to accomplish salvation for man because He loves man. God's way of salvation has three major steps.

Being Joined to Man through His Becoming Flesh

Man Having the Concept of Worshipping God

The first step of God's wonderful way of salvation is His coming to be joined to man. Whether barbaric or civilized, whether in the ancient times or in the present, and whether in the East or in the West, man has always had the concept of worshipping God. In the ancient times of ignorance, in the mid-ancient age of superstition, and in the present century with all its technological advancements, man has been unable to break away from his concept of worshipping God. Not only are the uneducated countrymen fearful toward God, but also some famous scientists are filled with thoughts of worshipping God. Actually, the more intelligent and thoughtful a person is and the more feeling he has, the richer his concept of worshipping God will be. Those who are rich in emotions, deep in thought, and firm in will have a concept of God.

Someone once said that he who says in his mind that there is no God does not look like a man. History has proven that almost all atheists have lost their humanity and behave like beasts (Psa. 10:4; 14:1; Rom. 1:18-32). A proper man who is rich in his mind, emotion, and will has no way to deny that there is a God in the universe. This is the reason that the world is full of religions. Every nation and tribe has its ways of worshipping God. Although the objects of their worship may be different or completely wrong, mankind in general has the concept of worshipping God.

The Worship That the Heavenly God Wants

Being to Enter into Man and to Be Joined to Man to Become One with Man

Man has a concept of worshipping God, because God desires that man have a relationship with Him. God created such a longing within man (Eccl. 3:11). However, the relationship that God desires to have with man is not merely that man would adore Him as a God who is high and far above man. God's thought is deeper than this. God desires to enter into man and to have a life union with man. When a person thinks of God, his natural concept is that God

is sitting in the heavens and that he, as man, is somewhere below. His thought is that God is high in heaven and that he is a small man on earth; hence, he can only prostrate and worship God from afar. It is far from man's natural concept to think that God desires to enter into man and to have a union in life with man.

Once, I visited a famous Islamic mosque in Jerusalem. In the mosque many people were lined up to worship Allah, that is, God. Such a scene was touching. When these people reached the peak of their worship, they prostrated themselves with their whole body and even crawled. If I had asked them where the God whom they worshipped was, they would not have dared to lift up their heads and look at the heavens but would have kept their heads bowed with humility, saying, "God is in the heavens; He is honorable, high, and great; He is too noble, too glorious. We are people who are small and lowly; therefore, we dare not stand but can only prostrate ourselves to worship Him." They worshipped five times from the morning to the evening, and they took turns to worship one group after another.

When I was visiting that place, I was impressed on the one hand, but on the other hand, I felt sorry for these people because they did not know who God is or how He wants man to worship Him. Although they genuinely had a heart to worship God, they did not know who God is, and they did not know the way to worship Him or the kind of relationship He desires to have with man. Today we need to know that the relationship God wants to have with man is not merely for man on earth to worship God in the heavens but for the God of the heavens to come to the earth and enter into man to have an intimate union with man. The heavenly God wants to be united with the earthly man to become one with this man. This is a wonderful step in God's way of salvation, and it is the most mysterious item in the truth of the Bible. God desires to enter into man, to be joined to man, and to become one with man. The result of such a union has the appearance of man outwardly and the reality of God inwardly. In such a union God and man are joined and become one, with God being the life and content inwardly and man being the living and expression outwardly. This is God's way of salvation.

The Real Meaning of God Becoming Flesh

The God in the heavens lowered Himself to become flesh (John 1:1, 14). He was born among men and entered into the human race. The God who is in

heaven was born in Bethlehem to be a child, to be a man (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1). After being born, this little child was laid in a manger (Luke 2:7). According to His flesh, He was a man, a little child, but according to His inner being, He was God. The Bible says in the book of Isaiah, “A child is born to us, / A Son is given to us; / ...And His name will be called / ...Mighty God, / Eternal Father” (9:6). He was a child, but He was also the mighty God. On the one hand, He was a human child, but on the other hand, He was the eternal Father. This child’s name was Jesus (Matt. 1:21).

Jesus was taken by His parents to Galilee and grew up in Nazareth (2:23). When He was thirty, He came out to minister throughout the land of Palestine (Luke 3:23). He lived for thirty-three and a half years and was crucified on a cross. While He was on the earth, the man Jesus spoke many words of wisdom that have never been conceived in the minds of intellects and philosophers throughout the generations (2:52; Matt. 13:54). Those who have studied the four Gospels acknowledge that the words that Jesus Christ spoke in the four Gospels are full of wisdom. A great philosopher in France once said that if the Jesus described in the four Gospels was fabricated by a man, the man who fabricated Him would be qualified to be Jesus Christ. This means that the only person who can have such wisdom is Jesus Christ.

The words of Jesus were not only words of wisdom but also words of authority (7:29). Although He was only in His thirties when He ministered on the earth, Jesus performed many signs and wonders. He spoke to calm the wind and the sea (8:26). He raised a man who had died, been buried, and become stinking (John 11:14, 17, 39, 43-44). He also caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear (Matt. 11:4-5). These facts cannot be erased from human history. Jesus was a man, yet He was able to do all these things. There was a mysterious story in Him, and this story is that God was in Him. He was not merely a man but was God manifested in man.

While Jesus was on the earth, those who followed Him saw the things that He did and were puzzled concerning Him. Thus, they asked Him and asked one another privately who He was (Matt. 8:27; 21:10; John 8:25; 10:24). In appearance He was a man in every way. He was hungry when He did not eat, thirsty when He did not drink, and tired when He did not sleep. His stature was not different from others, and sometimes He wept (Matt. 4:2; Mark 11:12; John 4:6-7; Phil. 2:7-8; John 11:35). However, His words were full of wisdom and intelligence, and His actions were full of power and authority.

Although people at His time did not know who He was, we need to know who He is today. He is the Lord who created all things, the God of the heavens and the earth (1:3; Heb. 1:8, 10). In order to contact man, to be joined to man, and to put Himself before man, Jesus lowered Himself, put on the flesh, and became in the likeness of man so that He could be with and live with man (Phil. 2:5-8).

Generally speaking, it is difficult for a great person and a common person to contact each other. Whenever a great person comes, most common people will only look from afar and will not dare to come too close or to contact such a great person face to face and talk to him. If a great person desires to contact common people, he needs to lower himself, dress in a way that is more common than the common people, and have a pleasant smile so that the common people can contact him, talk with him, and touch him without fear.

The Principle of God Becoming Flesh

This is the principle of God becoming flesh. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, outwardly His appearance was that of a man, but inwardly He was nothing less than the glorious and great God. If He had come only with majesty and had suddenly appeared among men, it would have been a tremendous matter, and many people would have been so frightened that they would have prostrated themselves on the ground. They would have had the sense that He was majestic and great and that they were poor and low. However, the Lord Jesus did not come in that way. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, the little children were not afraid of Him, the lepers were not afraid of Him, and even the corrupted people were not afraid of Him (Matt. 19:13-15; 8:2-3; Luke 15:1). Crowds were able to press upon Him, and a woman was able to touch the fringe of His garment (Matt. 9:20-22). Another woman was able to wipe His feet, and another was able to pour ointment upon His head (Luke 7:38; Matt. 26:7). People did not have the sense that He was someone great and exalted. He was more ordinary than any normal person.

Many people considered the Lord to be merely the son of a carpenter, with nothing extraordinary about Him (13:55; Luke 3:23). Although He was the son of an ordinary carpenter outwardly, in reality He was much more than this. As a man who had a poor and low origin, He had no attracting form nor majesty (Isa. 53:2-3). He had no air of self-importance about Him. Outwardly,

He was ordinary, and thus, everyone could come close to Him and contact Him. Inwardly, however, He had God within Him. He was the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9). The Lord Jesus was God manifested in the flesh. Today this principle of God becoming man to contact man remains the same.

In any philosophy or religion, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Islam, none of the followers have the sense that the leader of their philosophy or religion is close to them or related to them. When a person does not believe in the Lord Jesus, He seems very far from him, but immediately after he believes in the Lord, he has the sense that the Lord has come into him. When a believer prays to the Lord, he senses that the Lord Jesus is dwelling in him. Many Buddhists often burn incense and chant Buddhist scriptures, but in their chanting, none of them feel that Buddha has come into them. Their sense is that Buddha is still outside of them. However, all the believers in Jesus can testify that when they believed in Jesus, mysteriously they sensed that Jesus came into them, and when they pray to Him, this sense within them becomes stronger.

Many people can testify to the reality of Jesus dwelling in them, and anyone can pray to Him. When a person first begins to pray, he may feel that the Lord is still in heaven, and he is on earth. However, after praying for only five minutes, he will feel that Jesus is very near. If he prays for another five minutes, he will sense that Jesus has come into him. If he prays for an additional ten or twenty minutes, he will have many “stories” of Jesus being in him. If he continues to pray, after five additional minutes he will sense Jesus speaking within him; after ten minutes he will feel that Jesus is supplying him with power; and after fifteen minutes he will sense that he and Jesus have been mingled together to become one. This is a wonderful and inexplicable feeling. Every believer in Jesus should have this kind of experience in prayer.

A new believer shared his experience after believing in the Lord, saying, “I not only believed but also prayed. After I prayed, I had some experiences of the Lord.” The longer we believe in the Lord and the more we pray, the more we will be filled with many experiences of the Lord. Our only regret will be that we did not pray enough.

Recently, a certain hostel hired a new manager. One night, while the manager’s wife was ironing her clothes with an electric iron, she had to take

care of her child. Thus, she ironed for a little while and went to check on her child. However, after checking on her child, she fell asleep and left the electric iron plugged in. The iron continued to heat up, and after some time the iron overheated and was set on fire. The flames from the burning iron set the table on fire, and because the table was close to the wall, the wall also was set on fire. Since the hostel was a wooden building and the fire occurred between three and four o'clock in the morning, it was probable that the hostel would burn down. However, a brother who usually did not wake up at night was staying in the hostel. That night this brother suddenly woke up because he had to use the restroom. When he opened the door, he saw the fire burning and rushed to put the fire out. His action saved the hostel from burning down.

Although many people may consider this brother's timely awakening to be coincidental, if we asked other Christians, they would testify of many similar experiences. If such experiences occurred only once or twice, they could be considered coincidence. However, if these experiences occur often, we must admit that they are stories of Jesus in us.

God Desiring to Enter into Man

We can compare ourselves to an electric iron, God to the source of electricity, and Jesus Christ to the electricity. If we remain "plugged in," joined to Christ without any interruption, and open our heart to Him by praying to Him with our full attention, coming to Him and waiting on Him, His life will flow into us continuously. As a result, we will be set on fire.

I often say to Christians that if they quiet themselves before the Lord Jesus and pray earnestly to Him for an hour, their cold and hardened heart of hatred will be softened, set on fire, and full of love. The longer we pray to the Lord Jesus, the more He comes to us and makes us willing to be filled with Him. This is the wonderful way of God's salvation. God is not merely sitting on His throne in heaven and commanding angels to rescue us, nor is He merely sending forth a surge of power to meet our need when we pray. This is not God's way of salvation. God's way of salvation is to enter into us, join with us, and bear every burden with us. Whenever we call on Him, He enters into us to be our power to strengthen us and our life to supply us.

Once, after I spoke to some highly educated people with high-ranking professions about God's way of salvation, they invited me to speak with them

in their office. They said that although my speaking was good, it seemed to be superstitious. They thought that Jesus coming into us by our praying to Him was superstitious. Thus, they asked me to give them some examples. I responded that it was difficult to give examples, because God's salvation is a matter of life within us, but I could tell them of my experience. I said, "Although you did not know me before my salvation, I can tell you that I was worse than you. I was exceedingly impatient and strict; if a person said something wrong or did something improper, I would hit him. This is the kind person that I was. However, what do you think about me today?" They responded, "Based on what we see, you are quite a nice person." Then I asked, "How could I have changed from the kind of person that I was to being a nice person? I am not the only one like this; there are many others who have had similar experiences. How could they have changed from what they were to be nice persons?" They all admitted that they did not know.

Then I answered emphatically, "There is no other reason—not my will, self-cultivation, or trying hard to restrict myself—but my praying to the Lord Jesus. Since the day I believed in Him, I have prayed to Him every day. I can testify that it has been impossible for me not to be set on fire after praying for half an hour, and it has been impossible for me not to be changed after praying for an hour. Before praying, I might have envied and hated a certain person, but after praying to the Lord Jesus for half an hour, the envy and hatred within me were dissolved. After praying for another half an hour, it became impossible for me not to love the person whom I hated. After praying yet another half an hour, I was compelled to run to this person, shake his hand, and with tears speak words of love to him. Such a burning fire and such a change from being cold to being hot are absolutely not generated from within me but from Jesus Christ entering into me."

Many electrical appliances can receive the flow of electricity, yet no one can see the electricity in these appliances. That electricity is able to pass through electrical appliances is a fact, yet man cannot see the electricity. Many households can use a radio to receive the radio waves from the United States and listen to radio programs from the United States. By means of a little radio the activities in the Western Hemisphere are made known to the people in the Eastern Hemisphere without connecting any electric wires. Today there is a very small radio that a person can carry around with him. When he turns it on, he is able to hear voices from the United States and from South America. This is wonderful. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and in the same way that electricity is

transmitted into electrical appliances, He transmits Himself into man. God's way of salvation is wonderful.

The Chinese characters for *Spirit* and *electricity* are grouped together, both containing the same radical. This is meaningful. It indicates that the Spirit, like electricity, is invisible yet real and has an expressed reality. God does not want to be separated from man. Rather, He desires to reach man and enter into man. Therefore, in Christ, through His death and resurrection, He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). He did not remain a God far away in heaven who bestows favor on man to save man on earth. Rather, He became a man, lived a human life, died on the cross, and was resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit in order to enter into man on earth. Wherever and whenever anyone calls upon Him, He will enter into him and operate within him. When He enters into man, He enters not as someone extraordinary but as the Spirit to be joined with man's spirit as one spirit (6:17); thus, it is difficult for man to distinguish whether he is experiencing the Spirit of God or the spirit of man, or whether the one living is God or man. This is the way that God joins Himself with man to become one with man, and this is the mystery of the faith of a Christian.

This joining of God to man is the power of a Christian (Phil. 4:13). Most people acknowledge that the most powerful preachers are Christians. This is because there is a motivating power within Christians that makes it impossible for them to stop preaching. Often people ask me what advantages I gain from preaching and why I am burdened to persuade people to believe in Jesus. I respond by telling them that there is no advantage; there is only a story. The story is that if I do not pray for thirty days, I will not preach the gospel, but if I pray for half an hour in the morning, I must preach the gospel on that day. I cannot help it; once I pray to Jesus, I must preach Jesus. If I do not preach Jesus, He will bother me within. If I speak Him forth, He will be happy, and I will be at peace. The more I speak, the happier I am. Therefore, I am always thankful for many of my dear friends who have given me great opportunities to preach Jesus to many people. Whenever I preach Jesus, my heart is full of joy, and I am able to go home and sleep peacefully. I can testify that every time I preach the Lord Jesus, I mysteriously have peace and power within.

The peace and power that I enjoy is Jesus Christ. He enters into man to be man's life and power. If a person desires to overcome sin, to have a proper

living, or to live in the light, it is futile for him to make up his mind, practice self-cultivation, and try harder. There is only one way of salvation, the way of calling on the name of the Lord Jesus so that He immediately enters into you (Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 10:13). Once He enters into you, all your sins will be forgiven and forgotten (Heb. 10:17-18), all your lusts will be subdued (Rom. 8:1-2), and you will become a proper person who lives in the light (Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:7). Once the Lord Jesus enters into you, you will be able to love whatever you were unable to love in the past, you will be able to endure whatever you were unable to endure previously, you will readily forgive what you formerly could not forgive, and you will easily bear what you previously could not bear. Once He enters into you, your entire perspective will be changed. Jesus is God, and once He enters into you, He joins Himself to your spirit to become your life (Col. 3:4) and causes you to be filled with power (Eph. 1:19).

In this chapter we have covered only the first of the three steps of the wonderful way of God's salvation to man. In the following chapter we will cover the two remaining steps. I hope that many will see clearly that God's way of salvation is to enter into us and to be joined with us. We only need to open our heart, receive Him into us, confess our sins, unload our transgressions, and let His Spirit fill us inwardly. If we are willing to believe and to pray in this way, He will enter into us and save us to the uttermost.

CHAPTER NINE

GOD'S WONDERFUL WAY OF SALVATION FOR MAN (2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 2:20

There are three major steps in God's salvation for man. Each step comes out of God's love for man, and none of these wonderful steps has ever come up in man's heart. The first step of God's salvation is that God Himself became a man to be joined to man. There are millions of people in the world who have concepts about how to worship God, but no one ever had the thought that God became a man in order to be joined to man and to be one with man.

Without God entering into man and being joined to man, there would be no way for man to contact God and be saved by Him. Without being joined to man and becoming one with man, God could not provide man with a salvation that is subjective and real. God does not save man merely outwardly, nor does He want man's salvation to be something apart from Him. Rather, God wants to enter into man and to inwardly carry out His work of salvation. God wants man to be joined to Him so that man can receive God as his salvation. Such a salvation involves a divine-human union and human-divine oneness that has never come up in man's heart; this speaks of God's incomparable love toward man.

The honorable, holy, and great God became a man to be one with the base, common, and small man. Jesus Christ is the union of God and man. He is not only man but also God; He is not only God but also man; He is God yet man and man yet God. We must realize that Jesus is a proper man, being both the expression of God and the pattern of man. In Him, people can see the God of glory; in Him, people also can see a perfect man. He is truly the union of God and man, man and God. As such a God-man, He was manifested both as the glorious Lord who created the universe and as a perfect man during His thirty-three and a half years on the earth. After this proving of Himself, He went to the cross and suffered death on our behalf.

Being Crucified and Judged on Behalf of Man

The second step in God's salvation involves His death on the cross. God's becoming flesh is the first step in His salvation, and His crucifixion is the second step of God's salvation. Everyone who studies history or observes current affairs has to admit that the cross is something special. It is hard to find a symbol among the human race that surpasses the cross. Although the cross is a simple symbol, consisting only of a horizontal line and a vertical line, it has become the most excellent sign in the six thousand years of human culture. However, although people in the world know about the symbol of the cross, very few know its true significance.

Some people regard the cross as a sign of self-sacrifice, whereas others regard the cross as a sign of victory. Some even regard the cross as a good luck symbol that will help them avoid bad luck. No matter how people interpret the significance of the cross, it is a very special symbol among the human race. People all over the earth recognize the sign of the cross. Countless people wear a cross as part of their jewelry, countless preachers speak about the cross every day, and countless Christian publications include depictions of the cross.

The apostle Paul, who endeavored to preach God's salvation, said, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The subject of his preaching was Christ and His cross. He spoke of our glorious Lord and of His crucifixion. The cross is superior, wonderful, and excellent; consequently, we need to consider what makes the cross so excellent. Many say that the cross shows that the Lord Jesus sacrificed Himself for others. Others say that the cross shows that Jesus Christ was willing to be sacrificed for His beliefs. For those who hold these views of the cross, the significance of the cross is related to ethical teachings such as dying for the sake of some virtue or sacrificing oneself for the sake of justice. These human interpretations, however, miss the significance of the cross as revealed by God. According to God, the cross signifies substitution; that is, the Lord Jesus died on the cross as our Substitute, suffering God's judgment on our behalf.

As the Lord of the universe, God has rules, laws, and principles for everything. When we look at the universe and the things created by God, we can see many rules and laws. These rules and laws come from a God who is

both disciplined and perfectly upright. However, man has transgressed against God's law. For example, God requires man to honor his parents, but man rebels. God requires man to love others, but man hates. God requires man to be honest and not bear false witness to deceive others, but man is filled with hypocrisy and lies. Man's outward conduct on the earth constantly violates the law of God. When a citizen violates the laws of a nation, there is punishment from the government of the nation. Similarly, when the laws of the Lord of the universe are violated, there is also need for punishment.

God is the sovereign Lord of the universe, and as His creatures, we have the obligation and duty to obey His law. However, our outward conduct is completely contrary to His law. According to His righteousness and law, He must punish us and put us to death because our actions are contrary to His law. However, He also fervently loves us and is determined to gain us. Without us, He is not satisfied. Without us, He has no joy. Without us, He cannot accomplish His eternal purpose. Thus, there is a conflict. According to His righteousness and law, God must punish and condemn us, but according to His heart, He loves us and longs to gain us. Consequently, God's way of salvation must reconcile His love with His righteousness.

Only God's way of salvation can solve this problem. His way involves coming as a man to stand in the position of a man to receive God's punishment as man's Substitute. Although man violated His ways and deserves to be punished and condemned by God, He stood in the position of a man and bore the sins that man committed. He bore the sins of man and became the Substitute for man on the cross. When He was punished on behalf of man, He expressed His love for those whom He was about to save, and He proved and satisfied His righteousness. If we could write two words on the cross, one would be *love*, and the other would be *righteousness*.

If we look at the cross, we will understand how much God loves man, and we will understand the righteousness of God. The Lord Jesus was crucified because God so loved the world and because God is righteous. If God had no love for man, He would not have died for man, and if God was not righteous, He would not have borne the sins of man. Through the Lord Jesus' death on the cross, God's love for man was demonstrated, and God's righteousness was satisfied.

Anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus will be moved to say that His death on the cross was the expression of God's love. God so loved us that He became a man and gave up His life on the cross, shedding His precious blood for us. When we look at the cross, we should sense His love, but when we consider the cross, we should also think of His righteousness. If God forgave us without the shedding of blood, He would have put Himself in an unrighteous position, a position that would have annulled His ways and His righteousness. In order to keep His ways and preserve His righteousness, He became a man and gave up His life, perfecting His love and His righteousness toward man. The substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus on the cross was not just a matter of virtue or sacrifice to obtain justice; it perfected the love of God and the righteousness of God toward man so that God's love and righteousness could be fully accomplished on man.

This wonderful death was prophesied and described in the Old Testament, including His crucifixion on the cross and the shedding of His precious blood (Psa. 22; Isa. 53). When He was on the cross, He bore our sins because God put the sins of the world upon Him. As He was dying on the cross, darkness fell over the land for a period of time, and during this time, He felt deeply distressed, even separated from God. He cried out with a loud voice, saying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). If Christ was dying only as a martyr for the sake of some virtue or for the sake of justice, God's presence would surely have been with Him. However, God forsook Him during His crucifixion because He was bearing the sins of man at that time. At that very moment, in God's eyes the crucified Jesus was the greatest sinner because He was bearing all the sins of man. When He was on the cross, He was bearing the iniquity of the world. God executed judgment upon Him because He was bearing the sins committed by mankind.

The cross is mysterious. First Peter 2:24 says that Christ "Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree." When He was crucified on the tree, He bore up our sins. We committed the sins, but He bore the judgment for our sins. We committed the sins, but He suffered the consequence of death. We committed the sins, but He tasted the suffering of sins on our behalf. He was not merely sacrificed on the cross; rather, He stood in the position of our Substitute in order to bear God's judgment for us. He bore God's punishment for us, and He suffered the pain of death for us. He suffered death on the cross to satisfy the righteous requirement of God. Without the cross the sins of man would not have been removed before God. Without the cross there

would have been no way for God to forgive man despite His desire to do so. Because of the cross God and man can contact each other.

Because of the fall there was a barrier of sin between God and man. Through the cross, however, this barrier has been removed. Although God and man were separated by sin, God can reach out to man, and man can come to God through the cross. Sin created a separation between God and man, but the cross bridged this gap. The cross speaks of the union between God and man, and it issues in fellowship between God and man. Through the cross God is joined to man and communicates with man. The cross has removed the sin that condemned man, and the cross has removed the demand of death upon man. The cross has removed the barrier between God and man, causing man to be reconciled to God, bringing man back to God, and joining man to God. Through the cross man can draw near to God, pray to God, and receive God. Through the cross God can forgive man, accept man, justify man, enter into man, and be joined to man.

God's salvation does not require that we be virtuous or do good in order to pay for our sins. Instead, as our wonderful Substitute, He became a man in order to bear God's punishment on our behalf. Hence, the cross speaks of redemption through substitution. Because of the cross, we can communicate with God. We can approach God, and God can draw near to us. This is the second step in God's wonderful salvation.

God's salvation comes out of His great love. He was willing to become our Substitute because of His love. He became a man and died on the cross because of His mercy and love toward us. This wonderful salvation is something that could never have come up in our heart. He became a man to be joined to us. He was crucified for us so that we could contact Him. These things never came up in our heart, and they are above all that we could ask or think.

Multiplying in Resurrection and Living in the Believers

God's way of salvation did not stop with the step of His crucifixion. His crucifixion was efficacious in its substitution, but it did not manifest His power. Without resurrection death would be the end, and without His resurrection the Lord's power would not be manifested. However, He died and was resurrected. After being buried for three days, He resurrected and

became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Now He is the Spirit. He entered into death and came out of death. He not only died but also resurrected.

Some people find it hard to believe that it is possible for a person to be resurrected after death. Many years ago a college student told me that he found it difficult to believe that Jesus Christ had resurrected from the dead. Although the thought of resurrection seemed strange to him, I was able to show him that the principle of resurrection is very common. I pointed to a wheat field where tender green shoots of wheat were growing and said that this crop of wheat started out as grains that were sown into the ground. In the ground the shell of the grain decayed and died, but this death activated the power of life within the seed, which brought forth many grains. If the grain did not die and break, the life within it could not be manifested. If something lifeless is buried in the ground, nothing will grow, because it has no life. However, if a seed is buried in the ground, the life within it will be manifested after a period of time. Jesus Christ is God, and He is the eternal life. Therefore, His death and burial were only an opportunity to manifest Himself as life.

If we put a grain of wheat on a table for people to appreciate, the power of its life will not be manifested. However, if we put it into the ground, it will have an opportunity to manifest its life. Similarly, the life of God in Jesus Christ was given the opportunity to be manifested through His death and resurrection. His death through crucifixion was an opportunity to manifest His life in resurrection. Through resurrection His divine life was released. The Lord even compared Himself to a grain of wheat when He said, “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

If Jesus Christ did not go through death and resurrection, He would have abided merely by Himself alone, but through death and resurrection He became the Spirit, and He entered into millions of people. He entered into the disciples, including Peter, John, James, and Paul. When He entered into Peter, He was enlarged in Peter. When He entered into James, He was enlarged in James. Through death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus entered into myriads of people to be enlarged in these ones. Through His resurrection He has spread all over the world. Without death Jesus Christ could not have been resurrected, and without resurrection He would have remained by Himself. However, Jesus was resurrected, and He became the life-giving Spirit to enter into many people. This is the reason that Paul says, “It is no longer I who live,

but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Christ not only died for us on the cross, but He also wants to live in us. This is the third step in God’s wonderful salvation. He not only bore our sins on the cross, but He also wants to be life in us. He not only died for us on the cross to save us from God’s judgment upon our sins, but He also is living in us today to deliver us out of the power of sin. This is God’s wonderful salvation.

BELIEVERS NO LONGER LIVING, BUT CHRIST LIVING IN THEM

Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” The mystery of a Christian, the power of a Christian, the authority of a Christian, and the motivation of a Christian depend on Christ’s living in him. Jesus Christ is living in all those who have called on the name of the Lord. Those who fellowship with the Lord Jesus and approach Him through prayer can testify that Jesus is living in them. The Savior in whom we believe is not a historical figure. He is living in us today, and He is a real person. As believers, we all can testify that our Savior, who was crucified on the cross and died for us two thousand years ago, was resurrected and is now living in us. He is not merely a historical figure; He is living in us as our Savior. This is the power of a Christian and also the life of a Christian.

Many Christians are not clear about Christ’s living in them. They only know that He was crucified for the sins of the world, and then He resurrected and ascended. Although they know that the Lord Jesus is sitting on the throne, they do not know that He is also dwelling and living in them. Many believers do not know that the Lord Jesus, who is in the heavens, also became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection in order to enter into and live in them. We should not think that He occasionally comes down from the heavens to visit us but then goes back to the heavens. Rather, He is dwelling and living in us. We need to know that He is living in us, have a taste of His living in us, and experience the fact of His living in us.

I once met a sister whose husband would not come home until very late at night. She was deeply troubled, and she came to seek my opinion about the situation. After listening, I asked, “Are you saved? Do you belong to the Lord?” She said, “Yes.” Then I asked, “Do you know that the Lord Jesus dwells and lives in you?” Although she believed that Jesus had been crucified for her and

also believed in His resurrection and ascension, she had no realization that the Lord Jesus was living in her. I told her that the Lord Jesus' living in us means that He is moving and doing things in us, even such things as making a phone call, writing a letter, or cleaning a room. Christ is doing such things because He dwells in us and lives in us.

After hearing this, she again asked what she should do about her husband, and again I answered that Jesus was living in her. It might have seemed to her that my answer had nothing to do with her question, but this was in fact the real answer. I could have told her to be patient and tolerant, but these human methods would have been useless. Even though she was very troubled, I told her that Jesus Christ, who was living in her, had the best way; thus, she should go home in peace and bring this matter to the Lord. I told her that since the Lord was living in her, this matter was not her concern only, because she, as His house, was being hurt by her husband's actions. I told her that the Lord Jesus, as the One dwelling in her, would surely take care of her.

When I said this, she seemed to understand and asked, "Brother Lee, does this mean that I should pray?" I said, "Whether or not you pray is not the key issue. Go home and let the Lord take care of this matter. However, if you pray, pray to the Lord who is dwelling in you." I pointed out that her previous prayers were to Jesus in the heavens but that she should now discuss and seek advice from the Lord who was living in her. Because Christ lived in her, it was not her business that her husband did not come home until late at night; rather, it was the Lord Jesus' business. Although she had never prayed in this way, she was willing to try.

When she returned home, her husband was still out, and she began to feel lonely and cast down, but then the thought of having a discussion with Jesus, who was living in her, came to her mind. After having a wonderful discussion, she had a sense that the Lord wanted her to make some tea, prepare some snacks, and joyfully wait for her husband to come home no matter how late he returned. Although she had a sense that the Lord wanted her to listen for her husband's footsteps, open the door, greet him, relieve him of any burden in his hands, serve him tea and snacks, and keep him company, she felt that she could not do this, because it was difficult for her to submit to him. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit worked in her, and she was reminded that Jesus was living in her. When she again discussed this with the Lord Jesus, she received the same sense to prepare some snacks and wait at the door. In tears

she knelt down and said, “Lord Jesus, You are my Savior. I am willing to give You the ground; it is no longer I who live but You who live in me.” Her tears ceased, and she began to smile. She cheerfully made some tea and prepared some snacks. When her husband came home very late, she heard his footsteps and opened the door for him. As soon as she opened the door, she lowered her eyes and took his briefcase from his hands. As his wife was putting out the snacks, her husband thought that he was in a dream, but this caused his heart to turn, and it resulted in a complete change in behavior. This was the work of God’s wonderful salvation.

According to God’s wonderful salvation, He desires to enter into man and to be joined to man. The Lord Jesus accomplished redemption on the cross. He was judged on behalf of man to fulfill God’s righteous requirement and express His love toward man. He was resurrected from the dead to become the life-giving Spirit, and He is now living in His believers so that His divine life can be propagated. A proper Christian fellowships with Christ, prays to Christ, and draws near to Christ. When we draw near to Christ, we will not merely live out some measure of goodness but, rather, Christ Himself. This expression of Christ is actually Christ living Himself out of us. As we love Christ and fellowship with Christ, we no longer live out ourselves; instead, we experience Christ’s living in and out of us.

CHAPTER TEN

WHO IS JESUS?

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 2:5; John 1:1, 14; Matt. 1:21-23; Isa. 9:6

Beginning with this chapter, we will have four chapters on the truth of the gospel. When a person first receives the gospel, he usually is not very clear concerning the truth of the gospel. Therefore, after preaching the gospel, we need to declare the clear truth of the gospel to those who have believed so that they may truly know the gospel. When they are clear about the truth of the gospel, the salvation of the Lord that they have received will be clearer.

The most important thing to know concerning the gospel is who Jesus is, because Jesus is the center of the gospel. Without the Lord Jesus, there would be no gospel. The meaning of the word *gospel* is “glad tidings.” These tidings are blessed because they tell us about our Savior. Without the Savior these tidings would not be a matter of blessing. We need to know the Savior who is spoken of in the gospel. If we do not know who He is, it will be very difficult for us to understand the truth of the gospel.

The Savior spoken of in the Bible is truly wonderful. The Bible even says, “His name will be called / Wonderful” (Isa. 9:6), because He is so wonderful. He is wonderful in His being, that is, in what He is, in who He is, and in what He does. We need to spend time to see who He is because He is such a wonderful Savior.

WHO JESUS IS

Throughout the last two thousand years of human history, many have studied Jesus. Even when Jesus was on the earth, the disciples who followed Him were studying Him, and even though they were with Him for three and a half years, they still did not understand who He really was. The Lord Jesus even asked His disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” (Matt. 16:13). They responded, saying, “Some, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (v. 14). These opinions showed that many did not know who He was.

Throughout the generations historians have studied Jesus, but many people still do not know who Jesus really is. Even when people look in secular books, they can find many different views about Him. One early Chinese dictionary says that Jesus is merely the founder of the Christian religion. Later versions speak of Him as a revolutionary in Judaism, and other dictionaries say that Jesus is a Western saint. These different views show that it is not easy to know who Jesus is. In spite of this, almost everyone is willing to admit that Jesus is a special and extraordinary person. Over the last two thousand years of history, it is difficult to find another person who is more revered or respected. Countless people on earth praise the excellence of Jesus. His wonderful excellence is related to who He is.

THERE BEING ONLY ONE GOD IN THE UNIVERSE

In order for us to know the Lord Jesus, we must consider the matter of sovereignty in the universe; that is, we must speak of God in the universe. When we use the word *God*, we understand this to mean that God is the unique sovereign Lord in the universe; this is the highest denotation of the word *God* in the Chinese language. In order for us to know the Lord Jesus, we must know the sovereign Lord in the universe. The sovereign Lord in the universe is God. In the universe there is only one God. While this is clearly spoken of in the Bible, the principles and laws of the universe also point to this.

If we look at hundreds and thousands of different matters and things in the universe, we will realize that this universe is in harmony because it is one in nature. Many scientists have considered whether the universe is monistic or dualistic in nature. After much study, the majority of scientists conclude that the universe is monistic in nature. Even though there are myriads of matters and things in the universe, the universe is one because everything is altogether in oneness, not in confusion. This oneness proves that the universe is monistic in nature. For example, when a country has two governments, there will be confusion rather than oneness, and if a city has two mayors, there will be confusion because there is a dual government. When there is only one administration, confusion is avoided. Hence, a country has only one government, and a city has only one mayor.

The entire universe is governed by this principle of oneness. The principles and laws of the universe are not in confusion but in order. The administration of the universe is monistic in nature, and this monistic administration proves that there is only one God. If there were two Gods, there would be two sovereign Lords, and with two sovereign Lords, there would be two administrations, two sources. If the universe were dualistic in nature, I am afraid that it would not be safe to live on the earth. Many scientists have shown that the distance between the earth and the sun is just right for human existence. If the earth was just a little closer or just a little farther from the sun, it would be impossible for human beings to exist on the earth. This order in the universe proves that the universe is one.

There is only one God in the universe because the administration of the universe is one. If we extend this logic to all the matters in the universe, whether big or small, the same principle applies. For example, there can be only one leader in a country. No country in the world has two leaders. Whether the leader is a king, a president, or called by another title, there can be only one leader. There can be only one father in a family. If a family has two fathers, this would be a serious problem. Likewise, there can be only one principal in a school. There can be only one general manager in a company. This is an unchangeable principle. These examples illustrate the principle that there is one sovereign Lord in the universe.

It would be terrible if there were many sovereign Lords in the universe, because everyone could be God. If a Chang could be God, then a Lee can also be God, and a Wang and a Liu can be God as well. This would be terrible. If everyone in the universe is God, the universe would be in utter chaos. Thankfully, there are not many Gods in the universe. There is not a God who has a last name of Chang or a God who has a last name of Lee. In the universe there is only one God, the sovereign Lord, the Creator of the universe. Today mankind is building spaceships to go to the moon. Even though landing on the moon would be a marvelous matter, it would not change the fact that God is the sovereign Lord. God created the sun, the moon, the heavens, and the earth. This wonderful universe came into being through Him, not through any human being.

We should also consider our wonderful body. Many biologists, medical experts, and chemists have endeavored to study the human body, but in the end their studies produce more questions than answers. I once asked a

medical expert what is missing in the body of a dead human in comparison to the body of a living person. He said that the same elements that are in a living body are present in a dead body. So then I asked, "Why does a man die? Something must be missing after he dies." He said, "The only difference is that a living person can breathe." When I pressed him for a further explanation, he could only say that more research was needed. If we do not fully understand our own body, how could we be God?

Even our lack of understanding of the human brain shows that we are not qualified to be God. We do not know how many hairs are upon our head or how many cells are in our body. If we do not know even these things about ourselves, it is foolish to think that we could be equal to the sovereign Lord in the universe. Only the Creator and Administrator of the universe can be the sovereign Lord and God. Only He is God, and in the universe there is only one unique God.

JESUS BEING GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH

What is the relationship between Jesus and God? This is a wonderful question. Although the existence of one sovereign God in the universe can be inferred from the things in the universe and the order in the universe, no man has ever seen God. Nevertheless, we should not think that something does not exist if we cannot see it. Science has become so advanced that everyone knows that our physical eyes cannot see many things that actually exist. For example, we cannot see radio waves in the air, but we know that these waves exist because they can be heard with a radio. Likewise, we cannot see the electricity that powers a fan. Consequently, everyone realizes that many things exist beyond our ability to see with our eyes.

Nevertheless, it is hard for many to accept the fact that God exists, because He cannot be seen. However, the Bible says that one day the sovereign Lord in the universe, the one God, the unique God, became flesh; God became a man (John 1:1, 14). He was manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). He emptied Himself, becoming in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7). The One who was abstract became embodied in a human being, Jesus Christ.

In our consideration of radio waves, it is clear that the radio waves, which are being broadcast by radio stations, are abstract and intangible. However, when we turn on a radio, the waves in the air are received and even

“embodied” for our ears. Although we cannot see them with our eyes, our ears can hear them. When abstract radio waves are received by a radio, they are embodied, or we can say that they are manifested. When they become embodied and manifested, people can hear and understand them.

According to our limited human feeling, God is too abstract, and we have no way to feel Him, see Him, or touch Him. In order for man to touch Him, to contact Him, to be able to know Him, and to understand Him, God emptied Himself and was embodied in a man. The infinite God of the universe became a wonderful man named Jesus.

JESUS BEING GOD PUTTING ON HUMANITY

As far as outward appearance is concerned, a radio is only a wooden box, but a radio is different from other wooden boxes because it can receive radio waves. It can receive radio waves that convey many different languages, such as English, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Mandarin. We can also hear many different kinds of sounds, such as the sound of a piano, the sound of singing, the voice of a man, or the voice of a woman. All these different sounds manifest the radio waves that are received by the wooden box.

In all human history, there has been only one man who was more than a mere man. Jesus is something very wonderful. He is a man, yet He is also the incarnated God who became flesh. The Lord Jesus is God incarnate as a man. Jesus Christ is the God who created the universe. He is God, and God is in Him. When the universe was created, He was God. However, when He became flesh, God entered into man and put on humanity.

The putting on of humanity is like the putting on of clothes. When a baby comes out of his mother’s womb, he is not wearing a suit; only his human body can be seen. Very quickly, however, some clothes are put on the baby, and then a different expression is manifested. Instead of seeing the color of his skin, we see the color of his clothes. Before the Lord Jesus was clothed with humanity through incarnation, He was God. But through incarnation He entered into man and put on humanity. God put on humanity just as man puts on clothing. When people saw Jesus, they saw a man, but inwardly He was also God. The Lord Jesus was in the likeness of men and was found in fashion as a man because He put on humanity through incarnation (Phil. 2:7-8). When He became a man, He did not cease to be God; instead, He

became God in humanity. When a person puts on clothes, he does not cease to be a man; rather, he becomes a man in clothes.

Jesus Christ is God putting on humanity. Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord, the Creator of the universe, who entered into humanity to be a man. Hence, as a man, He is truly man; as God, He is truly God. He is man, and He is God. When He was born in the city of Bethlehem, He was born of a human virgin called Mary. Although many people celebrate Christmas to remember the birth of Jesus, many do not know the significance of His birth. The real significance is that God became a man to be among men.

Although He is a man, He is also God. This fact is seen in the wonderful words of the Bible: “She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Verse 23 then says, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel.” *Jesus* means “Jehovah the Savior,” and *Emmanuel* means “God with us.” The child who was born of a virgin was God coming to be man’s Savior and also God entering into man to be with man. Although outwardly He appeared to be only a man, He was God with man. The Old Testament speaks of this in Isaiah 9:6: “A child is born to us, / A Son is given to us; / ...And His name will be called / Wonderful Counselor, / Mighty God, / Eternal Father, / Prince of Peace.” The child who was born in a manger in Bethlehem was the mighty God, the eternal Father; He was the sovereign Lord in the universe. In this child was the source, the Father, of the universe. In other words, He was the eternal Father, the mighty God.

JESUS BEING GOD YET MAN AND MAN YET GOD

During the thirty-three and a half years that He lived on the earth, the Lord Jesus manifested both His divinity and His humanity. In His humanity He was the same as all men: He became hungry when He did not eat, He became thirsty when He did not drink, He slept when He was tired, and He shed tears when He was sad. He was exactly the same as man because He truly put on humanity. In the many different situations that He encountered, He manifested His divinity. He could calm the winds and the sea, command demons, and cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear. He could raise men from the dead, and He knew the intentions within men’s heart because He was the omnipotent and omniscient God. This wonderful One was truly God yet man and man yet God.

If we want to know God, we need to look at Jesus; if we want to know man, we also need to look at Jesus. In Him we see the true God; in Him we see a real man. If we want to know God, we must know the Lord Jesus; if we want to know man, we also must know the Lord Jesus. He is truly a man, and He is truly God. In Him God and man are mingled as one. This Jesus, whom we preach as our Savior, is the sovereign Lord in the universe, the God who created all things, who has become a man. On one hand, He is man, and on the other hand, He is God.

JESUS BEING RESURRECTED WITH A GLORIFIED BODY

At the end of His thirty-three and a half years on earth, Jesus died on the cross. His death is related to His flesh, to His being a man. If He had not become flesh, there would have been no way for Him to be put to death on the cross, and He could not have sacrificed His body or shed His precious blood for us. He was able to give up His body and shed His blood because He became a man and put on humanity; He died on the cross for us with a body of flesh and blood. Then three days after His death, He resurrected. His resurrection involved more than just His spirit; He was resurrected bodily. When He died, His physical body was hung on the cross. When He was buried, His physical body was laid in a tomb, and when He rose on the third day, His physical body was resurrected. More than His spirit and soul came out from Hades because He was resurrected with a body.

When the Lord came to the disciples after His resurrection, they were frightened and thought that they had seen a spirit. He said to them, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you behold Me having” (Luke 24:39). After saying this, He showed them His hands and His feet and said, “Do you have anything here to eat? And they handed Him a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate before them” (vv. 41-43). When the Lord Jesus resurrected, He still had a human body, but this body was transformed. Before His crucifixion His body was a body of humiliation, a body that was limited and restricted by time and space, but after His resurrection His body was a glorified body, a body that was unlimited and unrestricted by time and space.

Today it is difficult for us to understand much about His glorified body. However, the Gospel of John illustrates this matter when it speaks of a grain

of wheat falling into the ground and dying (12:24). When a grain of wheat is planted into the ground, its outer shell decomposes, and then a new sprout of wheat comes forth from the earth. This sprouting is the resurrection of the seed. In its sprouting, even the outward form of the grain of wheat changes. Initially, it was yellow in color, but it comes forth as a green shoot. This process of transformation can be seen in a butterfly also. A butterfly is originally an ugly caterpillar, but after being transformed in the “tomb” of its cocoon, it becomes a beautiful butterfly. This is also an illustration of death and resurrection.

The human body that Jesus put on when He became flesh was a body of humiliation; it had no outward comeliness or beauty (Isa. 53:2). After His death and resurrection, however, His glorified body was without limitation. Even though His body was glorified, it still was a human body with the human nature. After His resurrection He was still God and still man, just as He was both God and man when He became flesh through incarnation before His resurrection. In His incarnation He was still God even though He became a man. After His death and resurrection He was still man even though He had been transformed, had entered into glory, and was manifested as the mighty God. When He became a man, He was still God with the divine nature, and after He manifested Himself as God in His resurrection, He was still a man with the human nature. This is our Savior. He is still the sovereign Lord who created and governs all things, and He is still a man who passed through death and resurrection to bring man into glory. As such a God-man, He is both God and man. He is God yet man, man yet God. This is our Savior.

We need to see these three stages. In the first stage God created all things and governed all things, and all things were out from Him. Nevertheless, as the sovereign Lord in the universe, He had no relationship with man. In the second stage God put on humanity and lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years. Even though He put on flesh through incarnation to become a lowly man, He did not cease to be God. In the third stage this incarnated God in humanity died and resurrected to bring His human body into glory and to manifest Himself as the God of glory. Although He is the God of glory, He still has humanity. In glory God and man now are mingled together; divinity has been fully mingled with humanity. This is the mingling of man with God as one in God’s glory. This is our Savior. This is the One in whom we believe today. He created the universe; He rules over all things. He also died on the cross to bear our sins. Then He resurrected from the dead with both His

divinity and His humanity, having a glorified human body, to be man's living Savior.

This is the One whom we preach, this is the One in whom we believe, this is the One whom we worship, and this is the One on whom we call day by day. He is a great and glorious Lord. He cannot be compared to animals that people often worship, nor can other idols or so-called gods be compared to Him. God, the sovereign Lord, has become our Savior. He is so glorious. He is the One who created the universe and the One who rules the universe. He is the One who created all humans and the One who redeems repentant sinners. He is God entering into man; He put on humanity to become a man and to bring man to God. He is God, and He is also man. He possesses humanity in order to be man's Savior and the Lord of all. This is the Lord whom we preach, whom we believe in, whom we petition, and whom we worship.

I believe we all can understand that the Lord Jesus is the sovereign Lord, the God who created and rules the heavens and the earth, who became a man to mingle God with man, and who died on the cross and resurrected to bring man into God. He is God yet man, and He is our Savior. We believe in Him, and we worship Him. This is a glorious matter. We can believe in, worship, and call on such a Savior. He is the wonder of wonders. His name is truly Wonderful. He is the almighty God, but He is also God with man.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JESUS BEING OUR SAVIOR

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:5-6, 10; 1 Pet. 1:13;
Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20

In the previous chapter we covered who the Lord Jesus is. In this chapter we will see what the Lord Jesus has done for us. The Lord Jesus is God becoming a man to be our Savior. Since He is our Savior, He has delivered us from a threefold problem. In order to know what the Lord Jesus has done for us, we must have a clear picture of this problem.

MAN'S THREEFOLD PROBLEM

Man's Outward Behavior Being Improper

When we begin to consider our threefold problem, it is easy to realize that our behavior is improper. The primary reason that we express our need for God is that we want to be saved from our improper behavior. We are all improper to some degree. There is no difference between a robber and a gentleman, because everyone has stolen from others or taken advantage of others.

Once I was preaching the gospel and speaking about stealing. In the audience there was a young boy who was in junior high school. When he heard this word, he disagreed. He shook his head and inwardly argued, saying, "Others may have stolen, but I am from a well-disciplined family, and I have never stolen anything." The Spirit was upon me during my preaching, and I pointed my finger at him and said, "Even though you say that you have never stolen anything, you stole a piece of chalk from school and took it home." Even though he had actually stolen a piece of chalk, he reasoned within himself that this did not matter. I continued to speak, saying, "You took the chalk home and drew circles on the ground." When he heard this word, he began to shake in his seat because he was shocked that I knew these things. Actually, I did not know; it was God, the One who searches man's heart, who knew.

Similar things happened in England to a famous evangelist, Dr. F. B. Meyer. One day when he was preaching, he pointed into the audience and said, “Look at yourself, young man! You have stolen three pounds and eighteen shillings from your master. If you do not repay these three pounds and eighteen shillings, you will never have peace.” Indeed, there was a young man sitting in front of him who had stolen three pounds and eighteen shillings from his employer. When he heard this word, he was very frightened because he thought that only he knew about his theft. Yet, to his surprise, Dr. Meyer pointed out the sin that he had committed. The young man had no peace when he returned home, and “three pounds and eighteen shillings” filled his mind as he was lying on his bed. When he woke up from his sleep, “three pounds and eighteen shillings” was still ringing in his ears. He knew that if he did not return this exact amount, he would never have peace. Then he wrote a check for three pounds and eighteen shillings and put it in his pocket. On that very day it so happened that a believer invited the young man to have dinner with him and Dr. Meyer. This was quite marvelous. After dinner the young man said to the believer who invited him, “Yesterday, Dr. Meyer pointed out my offense. Even though I have written a check for three pounds and eighteen shillings, I have been childish and reluctant to mail it, but as soon as I saw Dr. Meyer, I had no peace to eat this meal. Now I want to put this check in an envelope, seal it before him, and mail it to my employer.” This shows that no one should consider himself to be absolutely proper. When the Spirit shines on us, we will see our darkness.

There was a famous Chinese evangelist named John Sung. One day as he was preaching the gospel in Hankow, he pointed to a young lady in the audience and said, “You concubine.” She became quite scared because she was indeed a concubine. There were probably over a thousand people there that day. Dr. Sung did not know who she was, and yet he pointed his finger at her in the audience. After leaving the meeting, she cursed Dr. Sung and was also angry with the person who had brought her to hear the sermon. She said, “What bad luck! Why did you bring me here to be scolded in front of everyone?” She was very angry, but the angrier she became, the more the Holy Spirit worked in her. The Holy Spirit convicted her that she did not fear God even though she was committing sin. She ceased her cursing and was convicted of her need to repent. Then she knelt down and prayed, confessing in tears that she was a sinner, and she was saved.

I know of many such gospel stories. Seven or eight years ago I went to Amoy to preach the gospel, and I spoke about the Samaritan woman who met the Lord Jesus by the well in Sychar in John 4. When she came to draw water, the Lord Jesus asked her to give Him a drink (v. 7), and He said, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (v. 10). Then she asked the Lord for this water. Although the Lord was moved with compassion, He also knew about her sinful life. Nevertheless, He did not rebuke her; rather, He gently said, “Go, call your husband and come here” (v. 16). She tried to cover her sin by saying, “I do not have a husband” (v. 17). She spoke the truth, but her intention was to deceive. However, the Lord Jesus also knew her true situation and said, “You have well said, I do not have a husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly” (vv. 17-18). This woman had one husband after another, and the man she was currently with was not even her husband. This shows that we are born dissatisfied. The woman at the well was not satisfied with her first husband, so she changed husbands repeatedly. Her history of going from one man to another was an expression of her dissoluteness. Her actions were similar to a person who continually drinks because his thirst cannot be satisfied.

While I was preaching, there was a friend of a sister in the audience. When the friend heard this word, her face turned red, and she glared at the sister beside her. Although the sister’s friend had not changed husbands six times, she had changed four times. Consequently, she turned to the sister and angrily said, “You have told my story to this Mr. Lee.” She thought that I was speaking about this matter because the sister had told me. The sister replied, “I have never told Mr. Lee anything about you. He was merely telling a story from the Gospel of John in the Bible.”

In our preaching of the gospel, we encounter many situations such as this. Since man’s behavior is improper, it cannot escape the light of God’s examination. When God examines us, everyone has a problem. We should carefully consider our improper ways. Our words are improper, our actions are improper, our thoughts are improper, and our attitudes are improper. Every aspect of our behavior is improper.

Man’s Inward Nature Being Evil

The second aspect of our problem is related to our inward nature. The first aspect is our improper behavior; the second aspect is our evil nature. We lie because our inward nature is deceitful, and we hate because our inward nature is envious of others.

We should not think for a moment that we only occasionally make mistakes or that our inward nature is not corrupt. Rather, we are improper outwardly because our nature inwardly is corrupt. Luke 6:43 says, “There is no good tree that produces corrupt fruit, nor again a corrupt tree that produces good fruit.” In other words, a good tree produces good fruit, and a corrupt tree produces corrupt fruit. A corrupt tree produces corrupt fruit because the inward nature of the tree is corrupt. Our conduct is improper because our nature is evil. Hence, more than the aspect of our outward behavior must be addressed; we must also solve the aspect of our inward evil nature. Our outward behavior proves that our inward nature is evil. We do not attend classes that teach us how to sin, yet we all commit sins. Although there are schools for art and universities for education, we do not need schools or universities to teach us how to lie and sin. Instead, we are taught to be moral, benevolent, and righteous, and we are admonished to do good and be honest, because lies and sins spontaneously come out of our nature.

There is a sweet date tree with fruit that is full of thorns. We like the dates but dislike the thorns. Similarly, we may have a certain measure of benevolence, righteousness, elegance, and love, but we are full of “thorns.” We may have many virtues that are admirable, but these virtues are entangled with thorns that cause hurt to others. All these “thorns” grow out from within us. Our nature produces many different kinds of “thorns.” The “thorns” in our outward conduct merely confirm the evil in our inward nature. This is the second aspect of our problem.

Man’s Life Being Corrupt

Our evil nature is related to our life, which is the third aspect of our problem. The aspect of our life is directly connected to the aspect of our nature. We have a certain kind of nature because we have a certain kind of life. This can be seen in our common use of the expression *life and nature*. According to our nature by birth, we lose our temper, but this nature is contained in our life. Since nature comes out of life, the only way to avoid losing our temper is for our life to end. Our temper is no longer a problem

when we die. Our nature of losing our temper is in our life, just like the circulation of life is in the blood in our body. As long as there is a circulation of our corrupt life, our nature of losing our temper will be active. Our nature is in our life.

Our behavior issues from our nature, and our nature is hidden in our life. Our threefold problem consists of behavior, nature, and life. Although our behavior is outward and our nature is inward, our life is the ultimate source of our condition. Considering our problem from inside to outside, there is life, nature, and behavior; considering our problem from outside to inside, there is behavior, nature, and life. We need to ask ourselves whether our behavior is good or bad and whether we are persons of moral integrity. If we admit that we are not good, we have some degree of moral integrity, but if we think that our conduct is good and that we have moral integrity, we are deceiving ourselves. We lie to people, we hate people, and we even steal from people. At the minimum we have stolen candy or cookies from our parents. How can we think that our behavior is good? If someone dares to say in public that he has good behavior, he is the greatest sinner in the world because he has deceived everyone.

Our poor behavior is derived from our nature. Both our behavior and our nature are problematic. Moreover, our nature comes from our life, which is also problematic. Outwardly, our behavior is improper, and inwardly, our life and nature are improper. Since our life is corrupt and our nature is evil, our behavior is improper. Since our inward life is corrupt and our inward nature is evil, our outward conduct cannot be proper.

THE LORD JESUS SOLVING MAN'S THREEFOLD PROBLEM

Our life, nature, and behavior are a threefold problem. In order to be our Savior, the Lord Jesus must be able to solve this threefold problem. If He could solve only one aspect of our problem, His salvation would not be complete. If He could solve only two aspects, His salvation would not be sufficient. Thankfully, the Bible shows that His salvation is complete and full. He is a wonderful Savior, and His saving way is also wonderful. He fully solves man's threefold problem related to behavior, nature, and life.

On the Cross the Lord Jesus Solving the Aspect of Man's Behavior

With His death on the cross, the Lord Jesus solved the aspect of our problem associated with our sinful behavior. Our sins, wrongdoings, and transgressions expose the problematic aspect of our behavior. As violations of God's righteousness, these sins make it impossible for us to escape His condemnation. When a person violates the law of a country, he can be convicted as a criminal according to law. Our numerous sins have violated God's righteousness, and they prevent us from being accepted by God or receiving His blessing. Although God desires to give us grace, the charges against us before God prevent Him from drawing near to us.

A proper government cares for its citizens and is willing to provide for their security and enjoyment, but once a citizen violates the law and is convicted of a crime, he no longer has the right to enjoy these provisions. This is our situation before God. God is gracious and wants to bless us, but our sins have become a hindrance. The Lord Jesus solved the problem related to our sins on the cross. When He was put to death on the cross, not only was He killed by men, but He was also judged by God on our behalf.

First Peter 2:24 says, "Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree." When the Lord Jesus was nailed on the cross, God caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. God saw Him as the redeeming Lamb (Isa. 53:5-6, 10). His death on the cross involved more than a death at the hands of evil men. For a period of time on the cross, He was judged and punished by God for our sins. He bore our sins on the cross. As sinners, we deserved to die, but He died for us on the cross. We should have received God's righteous punishment, but He received this punishment on our behalf. As the Scripture says, "Christ also has suffered once for sins, the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Because of the charges against us before God, there was a distance, a barrier, between God and us. In order to rescue us and bring us to God, the Lord Jesus removed the distance between us by clearing away the charges that were against us. He bore our sins on the cross and received God's judgment on our behalf to satisfy God's righteous requirement. He removed the barrier between God and us. He brought us before God so that we could receive God's forgiveness, God's acceptance, and God's grace and blessings.

The Lord Jesus cleared away our sins by His death on the cross. No other way could take away our sins, including any achievement or merit on our part. Without a substitute to receive God's righteous judgment, the charges against us before God would have remained. However, the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross. Although we had been led astray like sheep with all kinds of sins, God put all our sins and iniquities upon the Lord Jesus so that He could bear them on our behalf. God looked upon the Lord Jesus as our Substitute and judged Him on the cross. The Lord Jesus shed His precious blood to cleanse us from our sins. The shedding of His precious blood was a declaration that He had received God's righteous punishment. Through His vicarious death on the cross, the aspect of our sinful behavior was solved.

On the Cross the Lord Jesus Solving the Aspect of Man's Nature

When the Lord Jesus died on the cross as a man, the human nature that He put on in His incarnation was also crucified. The Lord Jesus, the Word who became flesh, put humanity on Himself. He not only bore our sins when He was crucified but also bore our person. Thus, He not only dealt with our sins on the cross; He also dealt with us as sinners, that is, our nature of sin. Romans 6:6 says, "Our old man has been crucified with Him." Our old man is our old nature. When the Lord was crucified, our old nature of sin was crucified with Him.

Here is a certain fact: whoever believes in the crucified Lord, calls on Him, and draws near to Him, has been delivered from his sinful nature because of the effectiveness of His death. First Peter 2:24 says, "Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness." Christ's bearing up of our sins not only issued in the forgiveness of our sins; it also enabled us to die to sin. When we die to sin, we are delivered from the bondage of sin. It is not easy for people who smoke opium to quit even though they suffer from their addiction. However, when an opium smoker dies, he is freed from the desire to smoke opium. Only a dead person is freed from the bondage of opium.

All our addictions come from our nature. The best way to give up our addictions is to put our nature to death. Some people care for nothing other than playing mah-jongg. Even though they hate themselves for their addiction, they are unable to quit. Even if a person cut off one of his hands to keep from

playing mah-jongg, he would not be able to refrain from playing. His inward impulse to play would eventually overpower him. Even with the loss of a hand, he would continue to play mah-jongg. Only with his death would he be free from what comes out of his nature of sin.

Some people may say, “This is terrible. Does believing in Jesus mean that we must die? If this is so, what is the benefit of believing in Jesus?” The termination that we are speaking of, however, is not something dreadful but glorious, because this termination delivers us from our sinful nature and bad habits. Deliverance from our sinful nature is not possible through resolutions, through struggle and striving, or even through the help of others. Even if a man tries to quit drinking and asks his wife to help him, he will eventually beg her for a drink despite her earnest efforts to help. Such a situation proves how difficult it is to deal with man’s nature.

In contrast, many people who believe in the Lord Jesus can testify that many bad habits simply dropped away when they received the Lord Jesus as their Savior and then trusted in Him, prayed to Him, and drew near to Him. Although this is difficult for them to explain, they can testify of the power of His salvation. The more we pray to Jesus, the more our corrupt nature is put to death. The more we draw near to Jesus, the more our addictions fall away. We do not need to cut off our hands or physically die; we only need to pray to Jesus and draw near to Him. This will activate an indescribable power within us that causes us to have no desire to play mah-jongg. This is marvelous; it is a power that kills the “germs” of our sinful nature, just as penicillin kills germs within us.

When we believe in the Lord Jesus and call on Him, He is like an injection of penicillin. The “germs” of sin and the “germs” of our addictions are completely killed. Tens of thousands of Christians can testify that Jesus Christ bore their sins on the cross. When we receive Him, the result is that we are dead to sin. He has the power to put our sinful nature to death. He not only deals with our outward sins; He also deals with our inward nature of sin.

The Lord Jesus, through His Death and Resurrection, Solving the Aspect of Man’s Life

The final aspect of our threefold problem is related to our life. This aspect has been solved by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This is a

wonderful matter. Even if we spoke for a month, we could not adequately cover the mystery of His resurrection. The principle of resurrection can be seen in the biological world, including the plant life and the animal life. When a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, it dies and its outward shell decays, but when it decays, something from within the seed begins to grow. This speaks of the principle of resurrection. A chick breaking out of its shell also illustrates the principle of resurrection. Biologists tell us that many things receive life through the process of death, passing from death into resurrection. Although this is a mysterious matter, the principle of resurrection can be seen in the biological realm. The Lord Jesus died and was resurrected. The Scriptures tell us that His resurrection released His glorious life from within Him (John 12:24). Just as our voice is transmitted through radio waves, the Lord's life is released through the Holy Spirit into everyone who believes.

When we call on Him and draw near to Him, a wonderful thing happens: His Spirit enters into us with His life so that we may have His life. Thus, we have another life within us. At our birth we received our physical life. However, when we repented and received the Lord Jesus as our Savior, He came into us with His life to be our life. There are now two kinds of life within us. When we were born, we received the human life, and when we believed in the Lord, we received the divine life. After receiving the Lord, every saved person soon discovers that there are two persons with two lives inside him. The first person is our old man with our original sinful life; the second person is the Lord Jesus with His divine life. The first life comes from our parents; the second life comes from the Lord. The first is the life of man; the second is the life of God. The life of man is evil and corrupt, but the life of God is holy and good. The life of man is dark, but the life of God is bright. The life of man corrupts man, but the life of God empowers man.

The two lives within a believer are in constant opposition to each other. Nevertheless, the divine life that we have received by believing in the Lord Jesus is more powerful than our sinful life. When we were regenerated, we received the life of God. Now we can live by the life of the Lord Jesus rather than by our sinful life. Salvation changes the source of our life. Salvation solves the deepest aspect of our threefold problem.

When the Lord died for our sins on the cross, He solved the aspect of our problem related to our behavior. When we believed in Him and called on Him, He also solved the aspect of our problem related to our nature by applying His

death to our sinful nature. Furthermore, when we believed in Him and called on Him, He entered into us as the life-giving Spirit in resurrection to be our life and to live in us. This solved the aspect of our problem related to life. Rather than having only our original corrupted life, we now have the life of God. With His life we also have a new nature, which is holy and good and which produces proper behavior.

OUR WONDERFUL SAVIOR ACCOMPLISHING A WONDERFUL WAY OF SALVATION

This is how the Lord Jesus saves us. As our wonderful Savior, He has accomplished a wonderful way of salvation. When a person believes in Him and fellowships with Him, his sins are forgiven, his nature is transformed, and he receives God's holy and glorious life. The Lord's salvation solves the problem of our behavior, our nature, and our life. This is what He has done for us. Now He wants to live in us and become one with us by being mingled with us; in this way He becomes our living, glorious, and wonderful Savior.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE WAY TO RECEIVE GOD'S SALVATION

Scripture Reading: Matt. 22:4; Rom. 10:6-11, 13; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31;
20:21

GOD'S SALVATION BEING ACCOMPLISHED

We need a proper understanding of God's salvation and of the proper way to receive God's salvation. As God, the Lord Jesus entered into us to become one with us in order to save us so that we would receive His life and salvation. On the cross He bore our sins and was judged on our behalf. Through His death and the shedding of His precious blood, our offenses have been forgiven, and the record of our sins has been removed from before Him. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, we were also crucified with Him, and our sinful nature was terminated. Moreover, in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit to enter into us to be our life. The Lord Jesus has accomplished everything for us in God's salvation. Everyone who believes in and receives Him obtains God's life and can have a new living that is well pleasing to God.

THE WAY TO RECEIVE GOD'S SALVATION

Coming to the Lord's Feast— Eating, Drinking, and Enjoying

The Lord Jesus has accomplished everything and can enter into man as life. However, many still do not know how to receive God's salvation. Upon hearing the gospel, many people ask, "How can I obtain this Savior? How can I receive His salvation? How can I be saved?" Even though the Lord Jesus has borne our offenses, put our sinful nature to death, and can impart God's life into man, many still wonder how the Lord Jesus can enter into them and be joined with them. Although being joined to the Lord is not an easy concept for man to grasp, the Bible reveals that it is as simple as eating and drinking.

Although cooking can be difficult, it is not difficult to eat. In the New Testament receiving the Lord's salvation is often described in terms related to eating and drinking (John 4:14; 6:53-57; 7:37). Matthew 22:4 says, "I have

prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatted cattle have been slain, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding feast.” To come to a feast means to come and eat. If we are invited to a prepared feast, there is no need for us to bring food. Furthermore, when we go to a feast, we should eat. Every host of a feast wants his guests to enjoy the food that he has prepared. If none of his guests eat, the host will be quite unhappy. Some people deliberately restrain themselves from eating too much before a feast so that they can please their host by eating more at the feast.

In the Bible God uses feasts to illustrate His desire that man would receive His salvation. He has prepared everything related to our salvation. The Lord Jesus, like the fattened calf, has been slain. All things related to our salvation are ready; we do not need to prepare anything or do any work. We only need to come forward to eat, drink, and enjoy.

Putting Away Our Struggle and Effort— Simply Receiving

A brother once invited some people to a feast. Everyone arrived on time except a sister who did not come until much later. She was late because she wanted to bring a duck that she had roasted. The host was very unhappy when he learned this because he wanted his guests to eat the food that he had prepared; there was no need for his guests to bring anything. In receiving God’s salvation, man often acts like the sister who was late. Even though God has prepared everything and only wants man to receive and enjoy, many rely on their own efforts.

It is not uncommon for someone who has heard the gospel to pray about improving himself so that he might be acceptable to God. This person may acknowledge the fact that the Lord Jesus died for his sins on the cross, but he may have no assurance of this, because he still loses his temper and hates certain people. In his mind he needs strength from God in order to improve himself so that he can be forgiven. Such a person is “roasting a duck” at home.

Once I was on a long journey, and I preached the gospel to an elderly man whom I met. Based on our conversation I realized that he had heard the gospel in his youth and had been praying to the Lord for almost sixty years. Nevertheless, he did not know whether he was saved. He knew that the Lord Jesus bore the sins of the world on the cross, and he could even quote 1 Peter

2:24, which says, “Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree.” However, when I asked him whether his sins had been forgiven, he could not answer. He could only say that he no longer wanted to sin. Even though he was not committing big sins, his small sins kept him from having the assurance of his salvation. In his mind he felt that he would be forgiven only when he completely stopped sinning. He was trying to “roast a duck” before coming to God’s feast. I was very burdened for him, so I asked, “Do you know whether or not your sins have been forgiven? Have you been saved?” He said, “I believe in Jesus, and I pray to Him. I also know that He bore the sins of the world on the cross, but I do not know whether my sins have been forgiven.” In order to help him, I pointed to his bag and said, “Your sins are like this bag that you are carrying around. When the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, your sins, like this bag, were also nailed to the cross. Since your sins are on Him, why are you still carrying them?” I took the opportunity to stress 1 Peter 2:24, which says, “Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree,” pointing out that his sins were upon the Lord Jesus. Then he said, “According to the Bible, my sins are on the Lord Jesus, but according to my feeling, they are on me.” Then I asked, “Are your feelings more trustworthy than the Bible?” The Bible is surely more trustworthy. Then I asked, “When you ride in a train with your bag, do you continue to carry your bag?” He replied, “Since my bag is on the train, I do not have to carry it.” Then I said, when you believed in the Lord Jesus, He began to carry your burden of sin. Since you have cast your burden on the Lord, you should let Him bear it for you.” Only then did he begin to realize that the burden of his sins had been taken care of by the Lord.

Man can be clever about many things but still be foolish in the matter of receiving God’s salvation. God’s Word clearly says, “All things are ready. Come to the wedding feast” (Matt. 22:4). God does not want man to do anything but to receive. He has prepared a feast, and man does not need to wait. Although a host waits for his guests, no guest should wait for a host. When we preach the gospel, we are actually giving out invitation cards, asking people to come to God’s feast. Regarding man’s salvation, nothing has been left unfinished. Regardless of man’s condition or even the state of his conscience, the Lord Jesus has shed His precious blood and has borne the sins of man.

A preacher once asked a lady who was very touched by the gospel whether she was saved. She said, “The sins that I have committed are too big. No one has such a heavy burden of sin as me.” After the preacher reminded her that

the Lord Jesus bore not only our small sins but also our big sins on the cross, he asked, “Do you believe that the Lord Jesus bore your sins on the cross?” She said, “I believe, but my sins are still so big.” In response, the preacher declared, “The Lord Jesus bore every sin. None of the sins that you have committed are bigger than the ones He has borne.” This shows that when a person is about to receive God’s salvation, there can be many obstacles and reasonings in his concepts.

God wants us to receive Him simply by coming forward to eat and drink Him. We should come to eat and drink freely. We do not need to pay a price, prepare a gift, or even labor. We can come to God’s feast with empty hands to simply eat and drink. The host of a feast is most pleased when his guests enjoy what has been prepared. Regrettably, many who hear the gospel have their own ideas and opinions, and thus, they are like the troublesome ones who come to a feast. It is not easy to find those who will eat and drink without reservation. When we talk to these troublesome ones, they may feel that Jesus is very good, but they always have some reservation in their mind. In relation to God’s salvation, man often considers his strange ideas as being quite reasonable, but in order to receive God’s salvation, man must be simple.

God has already prepared everything for our salvation; all things are ready. God has become a man to be our Savior; He has died on the cross on our behalf, shed his precious blood, and cleansed us of our sins. He has also put our sinful nature to death and resurrected from the dead. Now He is the Spirit who can enter into us and impart His life into us to empower us to overcome every kind of sin. He has accomplished everything related to our salvation. We do not need to struggle or try different methods; we simply need to receive.

Using the Proper Organ— Contacting the Lord by Our Spirit

We need to use the proper organ to receive God’s salvation. On the one hand, receiving God’s salvation is like eating and drinking; we simply need to receive without being concerned whether our sins are small or big. On the other hand, we need to use the proper organ to receive.

In order to receive anything, we must use the proper organ. For example, we must use our ears to hear a message in a meeting; if we plug our ears, we

will be unable to hear the words that are being spoken. We also need to use our eyes to see the different expressions of the brothers and sisters. If we close our eyes, we will not see anything. We drink with the mouth, not with our eyes; we listen with the ears, not with our eyes; and we hold the Bible with the hands, not with our nose. The proper organ must be used in order to receive.

The salvation that the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us cannot be separated from Him. When we receive His salvation, we do not merely receive what He has accomplished. In order to receive what He has accomplished for us, we must receive the Lord Himself. In other words, when we receive the Lord Jesus, we also receive what He has accomplished. The Lord Jesus is now the Spirit; God is Spirit, and we need to receive the Spirit with our spirit (John 4:24). It is not sufficient just to listen to a message about Him with our ears or to think about Him with our mind. We must use our spirit to contact and receive Him.

After rising up in the morning, many people like to go outdoors to breathe in some fresh air. We cannot use our hands to breathe in the morning air; we have to receive the air with our nose. The Lord Jesus is God, and He is Spirit. Like the air, He cannot be touched with our hands or seen with our eyes. We have to touch Him in spirit and in truthfulness. Our spirit, not our mind, is the proper organ. The more we try to receive Him by thinking about Him, the more we will be confused, and the more God will not seem real. We need to stop our outward activities and even our inward thoughts and contact the Lord Jesus from deep within, touching Him in spirit and in truthfulness. Then the Holy Spirit will work in us.

Clearing the Obstacles between God and Us—

Confessing Our Sins to God

When we contact the Lord Jesus, He touches our spirit. When He touches our spirit, we are enlightened concerning our sins because He is holy and cannot tolerate sin. When He gives us a sense of our sins, we should respond by praying and confessing. When we come to the Lord Jesus, we do not have to consider what to pray; we simply need to speak to Him in response to the inward sense deep within us.

For example, the Lord may give a person the sense that he has offended his parents. He should respond and say, “O Lord Jesus, I have offended my

parents.” If he also has a sense that he has offended his wife, he should say, “O Lord, I have also offended my wife.” We need to confess one thing after another to the Lord, according to our inward sense.

When someone draws near to the Lord, he may not have much feeling about his sins at first, but the Spirit of the Lord will work in him. From experience we know that the more we confess our sins, the more we sense our sins; and the more we confess our sins, the more sins we discover. When the Lord enlightens a person concerning his sins, he should confess them, because the more he confesses his sins, the lighter his burden will be, and the more joyful and peaceful he will be. When he confesses his sins, he will receive the Lord in the deepest part of his being, and thanksgiving and praise will overflow from within him. Through his confession his sins will be discharged, and the burden of these sins will be lifted. In addition, his whole being will be bright and at ease.

After we confessed our sins, we could truly testify that the Lord Jesus entered into us to be our Savior. Now we belong to Him, and He belongs to us. Those who have not believed should give Him the opportunity to touch them. Many people who have lived on the earth for thirty, sixty, or even seventy years are still confused about the meaning of their human life. Because they have not been cleansed of their sins, they are like persons who have not washed their hands for their entire life. Their hands are filthy, and they truly need the Lord to shine on them in order to be cleansed of their sins.

When the Lord gives a person a sense of his sins, he should confess them one after another, as though he is spitting them out one by one. As he begins to confess, his sense of shame and sorrow will increase, and even his repentance will increase. However, his sorrow will be a sweet sorrow, and his repentance will be a happy repentance. It is truly marvelous that a person can be both sorrowful and happy at the same time. This is because it is easy for the Lord Jesus to come into one who believes and confesses his sins. A person who receives the Lord Jesus will be full of the Lord’s joy. As soon as the Lord Jesus enters into someone who believes, he experiences the forgiveness of sins, the putting to death of his corrupt nature, and the receiving of God’s life, which brings in true peace and boundless joy.

THE ISSUE OF RECEIVING GOD’S SALVATION

A saved person has received the Lord Jesus. The key to receiving the Lord Jesus is to come, eat, drink, and enjoy Him. Many can testify that it is simple to come to the Lord to eat and to drink Him. There is no need to find a secluded place in order to receive the Lord. As soon as a person hears the truth of the gospel, he simply needs to receive the Lord.

When I was saved, I was less than twenty years old. When I heard the gospel, I was extremely moved and felt as if every sentence was being spoken directly to me. At that time no one had to tell me how to pray. I was truly touched by the Lord, and as soon as the meeting ended, I left the meeting place and spoke to the Lord on my way home, saying, “O Lord Jesus, from today onward I do not want anything else but You.” When I arrived home, I knelt before the Lord and said, “O Lord, I am a great sinner. Although I am young, I am full of sins.” I confessed one sin after another to Him; I could not help but confess my sins. I believe that I was saved as soon as I prayed to Him on my way home. Through confessing my sins, however, I received the joy that comes in response to the forgiveness of sins.

After listening to the gospel, a man who was a judge came to me and said, “Brother Lee, you said that the unique God, who created all things, died on the cross for my sins and resurrected from the dead to be my Savior and life. But how does He enter into me?” My words were like a foreign language to him. Although it seemed as if it was hard to believe, I told him to go home and kneel before the Lord Jesus and pray, “Lord Jesus, if You are real, show me my sins so that I can confess them and receive You as my Savior.” Since he felt that he would not suffer any loss by praying in this way, he agreed to try.

When he returned home, he shut the door to his room and half-jokingly knelt and prayed to the Lord Jesus. In his prayer he said, “Lord, if You are the real God, show me my sins.” He soon was overcome with a sense of his sins, and he asked the Lord for forgiveness. After he prayed and confessed, he thought that Jesus would appear to him, but nothing happened. Eventually, he went to bed. The next morning as he was going to court, a sense of great joy rose up within him. At that moment he felt as if heaven and earth had changed—the sky was beautiful, the earth was lovely, and even a barking dog along the roadside was cute. As he was judging cases in court, the people whom he previously thought were quite unworthy became lovely to him. As he judged his cases, he was joyful, and his face was brimming with smiles. He

was still smiling after he returned home. When his wife asked him what had happened, he could only testify that something marvelous had happened.

Soon afterward he came to see me and told me this story. He asked me what had happened, why he was joyful, and why he felt that heaven and earth had changed. Furthermore, he wanted to know why his view on human life had changed, why he no longer desired to continue his bad habits, and why his attitude toward others was so different. I told him that the Lord Jesus had entered into him and was working in him. Immediately, he realized that he was full of joy because Jesus had entered into him. When the Lord enters into a person, sometimes a person weeps before Him, and sometimes a person is filled with an inner peace. God's salvation can be expressed in many different ways, but it always gives a person a more accurate view of human life and of the things in human life. It also causes a person to realize that he has been accepted by God, based on the redemption of the Lord Jesus. This condition is expressed in some people through joy, and others realize it through an inward sense of sweetness. None of these conditions are the result of man's efforts or moral cultivation; rather, they are the spontaneous issue of receiving God's life.

Thousands of Christians can testify that it is marvelous to believe in the Lord Jesus. This is the reason that some Christians seem "crazy" when they begin to speak of the Lord Jesus. They never tire of speaking about Him. If I preached about the Lord every day for a year, the content of my preaching would be new every day because there is so much about the Lord that is glorious and sweet. To receive our wonderful Lord, a person only needs to be simple. He only needs to come to the Lord's feast, putting his knowledge and doubts aside.

The Bible says, "All things are ready. Come to the wedding feast." We only need to come to eat, to drink, and to receive; the simpler we are, the better. Jesus is God who came to be a man. He shed His precious blood on the cross to redeem us from our sins, and He resurrected from the dead to enter into us as life. Now He is the Spirit. We only need to receive Him with our spirit and in truthfulness. When we follow His inner sense to pray and confess our sins, the Lord Jesus will come into us. When we receive Him, we will receive God's salvation. Then we will have an accurate view of our human life and experience God's wonderful life in us.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MAN'S CONCEPTS BEING DIFFERENT FROM GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION

Scripture Reading: John 1:12-13; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 1 John 5:10-13; 3:14;
Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 5:17

THE SALVATION PREPARED BY GOD BEING A RICH FEAST

Our Savior, the Lord Jesus, has accomplished everything related to our salvation. It is very easy for a person to be saved; he needs only to believe and receive. The Lord's salvation is like a rich feast; it can be received by coming forward to eat, drink, and enjoy.

Man's concepts concerning salvation, however, are very different from God's way of salvation. In order for the Lord Jesus to accomplish salvation, He had to be incarnated as a man. The glorious Lord in heaven became a lowly man on earth, and He set aside His position as God. The Bible also says that though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor (2 Cor. 8:9). He passed through thirty-three and a half years of human living on the earth, experiencing all the hardships of human life. Then He suffered man's persecution and God's judgment on the cross (Mark 15:25, 34; Isa. 53:10). He gave up His body and shed His precious blood. He was buried, and He entered into Hades (1 Pet. 3:18-19). After three days and three nights He resurrected from the dead, ascended to the heavens, and completed the accomplishment of God's plan (Acts 5:30-31). In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit to be our real and living Savior (1 Cor. 15:45). In order to accomplish salvation He went through many steps; this matter is too great and too rich.

MAN'S CONCEPTS BEING DIFFERENT FROM GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION

Even though the accomplishment of God's salvation was not easy, it is easy to receive His salvation. Man needs only to believe in order to receive this

salvation. God requires nothing more of us because He has already accomplished everything for us. We can obtain salvation simply by receiving it. There is no constraint of time or limitation in space related to receiving salvation. Regardless of place, time, or person, those who receive the Lord Jesus receive God's salvation; this is the way of salvation that God has ordained.

However, man's concepts are completely contrary to God's way. Even though we know that God's salvation is received by faith, we still have many concepts about God's requirement for receiving salvation. These concepts create additional conditions for salvation, which, in turn, hinder many people from receiving the Lord; hence, we need to consider some of them. As spiritual physicians, we have encountered various types of people who have heard the gospel. For example, I recently visited a brother who believed in Jesus. During my visit I asked, "Have you believed in Jesus?" He replied, "I have believed." Then I asked him whether he had the assurance that he was saved. He hesitated and said, "I have believed, but I still do not pray enough." His response showed that he had a concept that prayer was related to salvation. Rather than arguing with him, I opened the Bible and read John 3:36, which says, "He who believes into the Son has eternal life." Then I asked, "Are you a believer?" He acknowledged that he was a believer. After he said this, I asked him, "If you are a believer, do you have eternal life?" To my surprise he again spoke of his lack of prayer. This shows how difficult it was for him to drop his concept. At this point I said, "Your Bible must be different from mine because, according to your understanding, it says, 'He who believes into the Son and prays much has eternal life.'" He quickly opened his Bible to see whether it was different, but, of course, he could not find his thought in the Bible. After spending more time with him, he dropped his concept.

As a further example, I once met a lady who attended gospel meetings at a stadium for a period of five to six days. At the end of this time I asked her, "Have you believed in Jesus?" She said, "After hearing the gospel, I felt very good, but I am still not so zealous." Thus, I had to deal with her concept about the need to be zealous. I told her that the Bible does not say, "He who believes and is zealous has eternal life." It helped her to know that the Bible says only, "He who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). Between *believes* and *eternal life*, there is no further requirement for things such as prayer and zealousness.

I also have encountered some who say that they have believed but do not have the assurance of salvation because they are not faithful in their tithing. One person even said that he believed in the Lord Jesus but that he was not assured of his salvation because he did not have much money to give to the Lord. He said, "I do not have much money to donate. I go to weekly services, but I have not given any money, because my income is limited, and I am in debt. If the Lord has pity on me and allows me to make more money, I will donate some money." In his concept there was a relationship between tithing and the assurance of salvation. He had a concept that only those who believed and donated money had eternal life. He had the thought that, in addition to believing, donations were needed in order to have eternal life.

When a married woman was asked whether she believed in the Lord, she said, "Yes," but when she was asked whether she was saved, she began to cry, saying, "I lost my temper this morning." Her tears indicated that her concept of salvation involved both believing and not losing her temper. The concept that something in addition to believing is needed for salvation can also include the matter of Bible knowledge. A college professor once told me that even though he believed from his heart and prayed, he had not read through the Bible once. Then he said, "Since I still do not understand the Bible, I am not yet saved." According to his concept, reading the Bible came after believing but before eternal life.

In response to those who have a concept about reading the Bible, I sometimes say, "If you have to wait until you understand the Bible in order to be saved, who can be saved?" I have believed in the Lord for nearly thirty years, and I read the Bible every day. However, the more I read, the more I do not understand. Who can say that they understand the Bible completely? If we have to wait until we thoroughly understand the Bible in order to be saved, there is no possibility of anyone's being saved and having eternal life.

A brother who was a doctor once met an elderly woman in the hospital. This brother was very zealous, and he was burdened that she believe in the Lord. He asked her whether she had ever heard the gospel, and she responded with a smile that she believed in Jesus. When he asked her how long she had believed in Jesus, she said that she had been a believer for many years and even prayed to Jesus every day. However, when he asked her about the assurance of her salvation, she frowned and said, "I believe in Jesus, and I pray to Him every day, but I do not know whether I am saved. I must wait

until I die and see Jesus. If He approves of Me, then I will know that I have eternal life. If He does not approve, I will not have eternal life.”

In response to her word, the brother asked her to recite John 3:16: “For 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.” Then he asked, “Have you believed in Jesus?” She said, “I have believed.” Then he asked further, “Do you have eternal life?” She said, “I do not know. I must wait until I die and go to be with the Lord, and if He approves of me, then He will give me eternal life. If He does not approve of me, He will reject me.” Even though she had believed in Jesus for many years, was zealous, prayed frequently, and could recite Bible verses, she still had no assurance of her salvation. When this brother heard her response, he turned to the Lord for a way to help her. Then he asked her to recite John 3:16 again and again. She recited the verse until her irritation was evident. Then the brother said, “You have recited your version of John 3:16 incorrectly.” She was astonished by his word and asked, “How can I be wrong? I have recited it since I was a little girl. If I am wrong, you should recite it for me.” Based on her request, the brother said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him must wait until he dies and goes to meet the Lord Jesus to know whether he has eternal life.” She angrily replied, “John 3:16 is not that long.” Then the brother asked, “Then how long is it?” She replied, “John 3:16 only says, ‘For 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.’” Then the brother immediately asked, “Have you believed?” She said, “I have believed.” When he then asked her whether she had eternal life, she could not repeat her concept about waiting because it did not correspond to John 3:16. Then she immediately realized that those who believe into Him have eternal life. Many people have similar concepts. Even though they say that they have believed, they also speak of not having a firm faith, of not being able to meet regularly, of not being able to pray, or of having a difficult time dropping their old habits. Even if we spoke for many days, we could not exhaust all such concepts.

THE KEY TO SALVATION—BELIEVING

The key to salvation is believing. When we believe, we are saved. There are no further requirements, such as not playing mah-jongg or not drinking alcohol. Neither do we have to control our temper after we believe in order to

have the assurance of our salvation. If this were true, no one would be able to be saved. When it comes to our salvation, the key is to not add anything after the word *believe*. The simple way is the best way—believe. When we add additional requirements, such as not watching movies or not drinking alcohol, the devil, who is very subtle, will use this concept to cause us to question our salvation, and this will hinder us from praising and thanking the Lord for His salvation. Even when we speak of just believing in the Lord, the devil can come to bother us, saying, “What if your faith is not firm? What if your faith cannot endure?” Even though we have believed, the devil has many ways to shut our mouth and cause us to doubt our salvation.

Confessing that we are saved is a critical matter. We must hold fast to the word in the Bible that we are saved as soon as we believe. If we go to a movie, we should repent, but then we must say, “Thank the Lord, I am saved.” If we say this, the movie will be under our feet. This is an amazing thing. Even though the devil reminds us of our old habits of drinking alcohol and playing mah-jongg, we need to say to the devil, “Even if you put all the alcohol in the world in front of me, I have believed in Jesus, and I am saved.” If we confess this with boldness, alcohol and mah-jongg will be under our feet. This acknowledgment, this living faith, this living confession, connects us to the Lord. When an electrician comes to install an electrical lamp, he simply puts the electric bulb into the socket of the lamp; once it is connected to the electrical source, the lamp shines immediately. The only thing that matters is the connection.

We have heard the gospel and have believed in the Lord. Nothing more is needed. Even though Satan does not want to let us go, we have been connected to the Lord. We should not allow the devil to distract us with matters in the past or in the future. All these matters are in the Lord’s hands. Since we have believed in the Lord, we are saved. If the Word says that we are saved, we also should say, “I am saved, and I am in Christ.” This simple confession is quite powerful. There is nothing simpler than receiving the Lord’s salvation. When we believe, we have eternal life: he who believes has eternal life.

THE BIBLE BEING GOD’S COVENANT WITH MAN

We know that we have eternal life when we believe because of the words in the Bible. The Bible speaks very clearly about this. When we believe, our sins

are forgiven (John 3:18). When we believe, we are purified by God (Heb. 1:3). When we believe, we are justified by God (Rom. 3:24-25). When we believe, we are regenerated (John 3:6). When we believe, we have eternal life (5:24). When we believe, we are saved (Mark 16:16). When we believe, we become children of God (John 1:12). Believing solves all our problems before God. This is not a matter of our feeling; it is altogether a matter of God's Word. According to the Bible, once we believe, we are forgiven, we are purified, we are justified, we are regenerated, we have eternal life, and we become children of God.

The purchase of a piece of land is always based on a contract. If we have a contract, we have the assurance that the land is ours. A contract is a covenant, and the Bible speaks of covenants. The Bible is God's covenant with us. God has given His salvation to us, and His contract, His covenant, is the Bible. This covenant clearly states that in His Son, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). If a person believes in the Lord but does not know whether his sins have been forgiven, we need to show him the words of God's covenant. If he does not believe God's covenant, he makes God a liar (1 John 5:10).

We should never forget that the Bible is a covenant. There is even an old and a new covenant. The old covenant is related to the Jews; the new covenant is related to all the believers in Christ. If we have believed in the Lord Jesus, God's new covenant has been established with us. According to God's new covenant, those who believe into His Son have been forgiven of their sins (Col. 1:14), they have been justified (Rom. 3:24-25), they have received eternal life (John 5:24), and they have been born of Him (1:12-13). When people ask us whether or not we have eternal life, it may seem humble and polite to say, "I do not dare say that I have eternal life," but if we say this, we are actually making God a liar. Our politeness and humility are worthless. When people ask us whether or not we have believed in the Lord and have eternal life, we should boldly and simply confess, "Praise the Lord, I have eternal life."

We know that we have eternal life because the covenant that God has established with us says, "Truly I say to you, Until heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one serif shall by no means pass away from the law until all come to pass" (Matt. 5:18). God said this in His covenant, the Bible, and God cannot violate His covenant. We have believed, and our sins are forgiven. We have

believed, and we are saved. We have believed, and we are regenerated. We have believed, and we have God's life. We have believed, and we are children of God. This is our assurance.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WITNESSING WITH US THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

Furthermore, those who believe in Jesus not only have the Bible in their hands but also the Holy Spirit within them. The Bible is a mysterious book, but the Holy Spirit is even more mysterious. Although the Holy Spirit is invisible and intangible, the Holy Spirit is a reality. As soon as we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit enters into us. Even though we may be confused in our mind, we still have a clear sense of the Holy Spirit being in us.

Someone who has believed in the Lord may say, "I do not have much feeling that I am saved." If we ask him to pray with us, he may begin by praying, "Lord, You are my Savior" and continue by praying, "O Father!" As he calls upon the Lord, an inner sweetness rises up in his being. As he turns to the Father, he even feels like the prodigal son returning to his father in Luke 15. He feels so sweet, and his tears will start to fall. The more he cries, the more joyful he is within; the more he cries, the more he calls on God as his Father. The Bible says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13; Acts 2:21). Without God's life, who would call God his Father? Who would casually call any person his father if he was not born of that person? This is why it is difficult for men to call their wife's father "dad," but it is easy to call their own father "dad." We call God our Father when we pray, because we are His sons. "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6). It is very sweet when we call, "Abba, Father."

Before I believed in Jesus, I was quite annoyed whenever I heard the name Jesus. If someone was opposing Jesus, I would immediately stand with him. Even though I knew many pastors and preachers, I still stood on the side of those who opposed Jesus. After I was saved, I could no longer stand with those who were opposing Jesus. In fact, inwardly, I was standing with Jesus. Knowing whether we have truly believed in Jesus is not merely a matter of mental confirmation. Rather, our inward sense tells us that we are in Christ and standing on His side. If our relatives say, "This Jesus cannot be believed," there will be an immediate reaction of disagreement within us. This is what it

means to stand on the side of Jesus. Whoever stands with Jesus in this way has believed in Jesus and has been joined to Jesus because the Spirit of Jesus has entered into him.

I once met an elderly man who believed in Jesus very devoutly and prayed to the Lord frequently. However, he dared not say that he was saved, because he had not been taught the truth of salvation clearly. He thought that since God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble, he should not be bold to say that he was saved. He was willing to wait until he died in order to find out. Although his mind was confused, his spirit was very clear. The Holy Spirit was in him, and he had the peace that comes from being saved. He even knew that he would be with the Lord when he died. Nevertheless, he was unwilling to say that he was saved.

We need to forget these concepts in our mind. The Holy Spirit in our spirit testifies that we are children of God. We have the Bible in our hands and the Holy Spirit in our spirit. These two witnesses, one within and the other without, are the assurance of our salvation (Rom. 10:13; 8:16). Because we are saved, we do not need to ask about the future. Our future is in God's hands.

OUR BEING IN CHRIST, HAVING BEEN DELIVERED OUT OF THE REALM OF ADAM

Today we are in Christ. Since we are saved and have been joined to the Lord, we are in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This is like being a passenger in a boat. Even though the ocean is deep and vast, we can sleep peacefully because we are in the boat. Therefore, we should loudly sing, "Now I'm already in Christ; / I have left Adam's realm; / All old things have become new, / Earthly became heav'nly! / Praise the Lord, here I can enjoy grace, / Fully tasting life and peace! / Praise the Lord, I am in the Lord now!" (hymn #229 in the Chinese hymnal). Hallelujah! We are in the "boat," in Christ. This is so precious. We are not in ourselves or in Adam; we are in God. Today we have the Bible in our hands and the Holy Spirit in our spirit. God is in us, and we are in Christ; this is sufficient. We should boldly proclaim, "Hallelujah! I am saved, I have the life of God, and God is in me!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:22-23; Eph. 6:15

THE ITEMS OBTAINED BY THE PRODIGAL SON IN LUKE 15

The Best Robe and the Fattened Calf

We all know the story of the prodigal son in chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke. When the son returned, the father told his slaves to bring out the best robe and put it on his son, to put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and to bring the fattened calf and slaughter it (vv. 22-23). Although we are very familiar with this story, I am afraid that it is not easy to remember all the things that the father gave his son.

We may remember the best robe and the fattened calf, but do we remember the other things that the father gave to his son? It is good to have the best robe and the fattened calf, but there were other things given by the father. In addition to the clothing and food, we must also pay attention to the ring on the hand and the sandals on the feet. The robe signifies the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and with this righteousness, we, as prodigal sons, have been accepted by God. With the robe, the prodigal son matched the father's house. Since the Lord Jesus has become our righteousness, our robe, we have been accepted by God. The fattened calf signifies the Lord Jesus as our food for our enjoyment. God's salvation not only clothes us outwardly with the righteousness of Christ but also satisfies us inwardly with the life of Christ. God has made Christ our bread of life. The Father has given us the Lord Jesus as the fattened calf, as the bread of life, so that we can have the strength to walk the path before us.

The Ring

In the parable of the prodigal son, the robe and the fattened calf are the most important items, but the father gave his son two additional items. Although they may seem small, they are very important. Most believers do not

mention these two items—the ring and the sandals—and of these two items, the sandals are the most easily forgotten.

The ring signifies a seal. Because the ring was given by the father, it signifies the seal of God. Today, when a bride wears a ring, she becomes one with the bridegroom, one who belongs to the bridegroom. In the same way, the ring of God signifies that we belong to God. In particular, the ring signifies that the Holy Spirit has become our seal. Although the ring represents the seal of Christ, the seal of God, and the seal of the Holy Spirit, how is this applied to us in our spiritual experience? Specifically, how can we prove that we have the seal of the Holy Spirit? How is this seal expressed?

When we do anything in our living, we do not walk as the Gentiles walk (Eph. 4:17); that is, we walk differently than the Gentiles because we have the flavor of Christ. This is the seal of the Holy Spirit, and this indicates that we are wearing God's ring on our finger. If our walk does not express the seal of the Holy Spirit, it means that we need to put on the ring of God; it does not mean that we are not saved. A ring implies restriction. Those who do not obey the restriction of the Holy Spirit need to put on the ring. Christians should obey the restriction of the Holy Spirit. If we do, we will express the seal of the Holy Spirit, and people will know that we are Christians as soon as they see us. As Christians, we should express the seal of the Holy Spirit in our behavior.

The Sandals

Another item is the sandals. This item is easily neglected, but it is quite important. Sandals are for walking and for protecting the feet, but neither of these are the most important significance of the sandals that the father gave to his son. The most important significance involves separation from the defiled world.

As the prodigal son returned home, every step of his journey was in close contact with the defiled world. His feet were not separated from the world. However, when he arrived at the father's house, he was separated from the world as soon as he put on the sandals. When a person is saved today, he not only receives the robe of righteousness, the satisfaction of life, and the seal of God; he also needs to be separated from the defiled world. Although we have been saved, we must ask ourselves whether we have put on sandals. Many Christians, realistically speaking, are "barefooted" and have not put on

sandals. They are still connected to the world rather than being separated from it.

The most important significance of putting on sandals is to be separated from the world, but there is also the significance of being able to walk. We must be separated from the world in order to walk. Walking always follows separation. Walking with sandals on our feet will keep our walk from being defiled by the world.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

According to spiritual experience, the “sandals” in Luke 15 are the gospel of peace in Ephesians 6:15. Christians should be separated from the earth, but we cannot lift our feet from the earth with our own hands. For example, when someone invites us to go to a movie, it is not sufficient to just say no. This is like using our hands to try to lift our feet from the earth. It is also not sufficient to find a convenient excuse for turning down the invitation. It is not even enough to tell people that we cannot go to a movie because we have believed in the Lord. All of these responses involve an effort to keep our feet from touching the world, but they ignore our need to walk. We must walk in the world, but in order to walk, we need to put on sandals.

When a person invites us to watch a movie, we should do more than say no; we should also preach the gospel to him. We should let him know that he too can be satisfied without watching movies. To put on sandals is to be separated from the defiled world through the gospel. Only those who are separated from the world can walk; therefore, putting on sandals involves preaching the gospel. Without preaching the gospel, we do not have sandals on our feet, and without sandals on our feet, we cannot walk, much less fight the spiritual warfare.

Wherever a Christian goes, he should preach the gospel so that he can be separated from the world; in this way, he will be protected. Therefore, sandals also have the significance of protection. Our walk depends on separation and protection.

Christians should put on sandals by preaching the gospel. This will separate us from the world and bring us under the restricted leading of the Holy Spirit. If we do not put on the sandals, we will not be restricted by the Holy Spirit. If

we would be separated from the earth and kept by the Holy Spirit, we need to preach the gospel of peace.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading: Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:16-17;
2 Cor. 12:15; Phil. 1:5

OUR COMMISSION TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Every saved person who has read the New Testament knows that the Lord Jesus left the believers with only one command: to preach the gospel to all the nations. In Matthew 28:19-20 the Lord charged the disciples, saying, “Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” In Mark 16:15 He also charged the disciples to preach the gospel, saying, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all the creation.” Preaching the gospel is a very important matter.

In the New Testament the apostles kept the Lord’s command and were filled with the spirit of the gospel. In Romans 1:16 Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.” In 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 he also spoke of his attitude toward the gospel, saying, “If I preach the gospel, I have no boast, for necessity is laid upon me; for woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.” Paul accepted the commission and even offered his whole being for the gospel, just as he said in 2 Corinthians 12:15: “I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls.” Paul was filled with the spirit of the gospel, and he was glad to spend everything for the gospel, even his being. The church in Philippi also had fellowship with Paul for the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:5), and the believers there were one soul with him (v. 27).

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

When we do not preach the gospel, our spirit becomes deadened. In the same way, when the church does not preach the gospel, the church becomes deadened. However, when a Christian rises up to preach the gospel, his spirit becomes burning, and when the church preaches the gospel, the church

becomes burning. Preaching the gospel is like lighting a fire; preaching the gospel releases the Spirit. If we do not preach the gospel, we will quench the fire in our spirit and choke the Spirit.

The spirit of the gospel is burning within every believer who loves the Lord. This inward burning should be reflected in our outward attitude toward the gospel. We have the spirit of the gospel within, but we need to allow the spirit of the gospel to burn us from within. The spirit of the gospel is a fire that has been kindled, but we need to respond.

Some people think that eloquence is needed in order to preach the gospel. They think that a person cannot preach the gospel unless he is a good speaker who can give a message. This thought comes from the world; it does not apply to spiritual things. It is not a message that causes a person to be saved but the release of the spirit of the gospel. Regrettably, we focus on eloquence and the content of a message instead of paying attention to the spirit of the gospel. Consequently, people are not filled with the Spirit and are not saved. The spirit of the gospel is not something outward; it is something that ignites from within us.

ENEMIES OF THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

Man's Throne

The greatest enemy of the spirit of the gospel is “man’s throne.” A person who preaches the gospel must not exalt himself. Such a person must also deny himself. The spirit of the gospel cannot burn within someone who is sitting on a throne. The first condition for the spirit of the gospel to be released is to come down from any throne in our being.

Man's Cleverness

“Clever” people cannot preach the gospel; it is the “foolish” who can preach the gospel. D. L. Moody preached the gospel his whole life and brought thousands and thousands of people to salvation. He originally worked in a shoe shop. One day, due to the burning of the spirit of the gospel, he stood on the street in the rain holding an umbrella without fabric, and he preached the gospel to people who were passing by him. When people laughed at his umbrella, he said, “Although you laugh at my umbrella without fabric, it is

your umbrella that cannot shelter you from the rain of God's judgment that is coming." When he said this, many people were saved. This is the spirit of the gospel.

In Shanghai a young brother, who studied in National Chiao Tung University, put on a white gospel vest and preached the gospel on the electric cars and in the streets, paying no attention to the strange looks that he received from people. In this way the fire of the gospel burned and influenced many brothers and sisters. This fire spread from Shanghai to Nanking, to Hangchow, and eventually to other big cities in China. After a year many souls in China were saved. This is the spirit of the gospel.

When the spirit of the gospel goes out, the words of the gospel have power. When the spirit of the gospel goes out, the words of the gospel save people. Doctrines cannot save people; only the spirit of the gospel can save people.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DOES GOD EXIST?

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:19-20

Christianity occupies an important position in human history because of its great impact and many adherents. Consequently, it is worthwhile to study the matters of the Christian faith related to believing in Jesus Christ. There are several important matters in the Christian faith, such as God, man, and sins. If we are clear about these matters, we will have a basic understanding of the Christian faith. It is a pity that many people lack a proper understanding of these important matters.

GOD

The first matter related to the Christian faith is God. Some say that there is a God, and others say that there is no God. There is even a Chinese gospel hymn entitled, “You Say There Is No God, but I Say There Is a God.” Those who have God are joyful, but those who do not have God are miserable. Those who say that God exists are strengthened when they speak of His existence, but those who say that God does not exist feel empty when they deny His existence. Another hymn entitled “There Is a God” says, “Listen to the voice of your conscience; / If you say there is no God, / You go against your conscience! / Listen to the voice of your conscience; / How can there be no God?” The last stanza firmly declares, “There is a God! There is a God! Yes, there is a God!” This is the most important matter related to believing in Jesus Christ.

People may say that it is useless to speak of God in the twentieth century with so many advances in science. However, the first great matter related to believing in Christ involves the question of the existence of God. There is no way to understand the Christian faith if this point is overlooked.

IS THERE A GOD?

When people ask about the existence of God, some strongly say that God exists, and others strongly say that there is no such thing as God. Rather than

answering yes or no so assertively, others lack a willingness to say yes but are equally unwilling to say no. Those who fall into this in-between category are afraid to say no because God may exist; however, they also are reluctant to say yes because they do not want to waste their time if He does not exist. Therefore, they sit on the fence, unable to make a decision.

Even though many people are not clear about the existence of God, this matter has a great impact on our lives. Those who believe that God exists live a certain kind of human life, whereas those who assume that there is no God live a different kind of life. As human beings, we need to be clear about this question in order to be clear about our human life.

The number of people who believe that there is a God is about equal to the number of people who believe that there is no God. Those who think that there is no God often despise those who believe in His existence, regarding them as superstitious and overly assertive in their beliefs. However, those who deny the existence of God are just as superstitious and are overly assertive because they have no way to prove their denial.

Those who do not believe in God always ask those who believe to give them some proof of His existence. Since believing in God is not a matter of superstition, we can certainly provide some arguments for His existence. However, before we offer any argument for the existence of God, we should ask those who do not believe about their proof that He does not exist. We should ask, "What is your basis for saying that there is no God? You should provide evidence for your belief that there is no God." Often their strongest proof is nothing more than a declaration that God does not exist because no one has ever seen God. They regard their inability to see God as some kind of scientific proof. But basing one's belief on only what can be seen is truly a matter of superstition.

If we regard everything that cannot be seen as being nonexistent, there are many things whose existence we would have to deny. For example, the universe is so big that we cannot fully observe, describe, and understand it. Likewise, should we deny the existence of microorganisms or oxygen simply because we cannot see these things? Is it logical for a blind person to say that there is no such thing as color in this world? Should a deaf person say that there is no such thing as sound in the universe? It is not reasonable to deny the existence of something that cannot be seen or heard.

ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

The Vastness of the Universe

The surface area of the earth is nearly 200,000,000 square miles, whereas human beings are only around six feet tall. Man is tiny compared to the earth. Even the distance between the earth and the sun is slight in comparison to the distance between our solar system and other stars. The distance between stars in the universe is measured in terms of light-years. Light travels at approximately 186,000 miles per second. If we multiply 186,000 miles by the number of seconds in one year, then the distance associated with one light-year is slightly less than 5,865,700,000,000 miles. The shortest distance between the sun in our solar system and another star in the sky is approximately 4.24 light-years. If this is the shortest distance, the distance to faraway stars is almost incomprehensible. If it is difficult to understand the vastness of the universe, one should not quickly assume that his determination of the nonexistence of God is correct.

The mystery of God is much greater than the vastness of the universe. Consequently, it is amazing that people would dare to conclude that there is no God. Their denial of God's existence is too bold. Even though the universe is vast and we see so little, some people are willing to boldly assert that there is no God merely based on what they see. This is not reasonable.

The Origin of the Universe

The vastness of the universe is a strong argument for the existence of God. Another strong argument relates to the origin of the universe. If there is no God, how did the universe come into existence? Those who say that there is no God can only say that the universe came into being naturally, but this is a weak and irresponsible argument. Clearly, the source of the universe is God. Rather than admitting this, they can only say, "It came into being naturally." It is easy to rebut the point that the universe originated apart from God, because Romans 1:19 and 20 speak of the invisible things of God being manifested within man and to man, and that these invisible things are perceived by the things made. The very fact that some people deny the existence of God when they speak of the creation of the universe shows that there is an understanding deep within them that the universe manifests the invisible things of God. If God does not exist, there would be no need to deny

His existence when looking at the things of the universe, because there would be no perception within people that these things come from God. Please look at the universe, and consider all the wonderful details of its astronomical arrangements and physical laws. Those who study astronomy and physics know that there is much that is unknown about the universe despite numerous observations and theorems. It is truly pitiful and ignorant to try to argue against the existence of God by saying, “The universe came into being naturally.”

I was in Tsingtao twenty-three years ago, and a cook in one of the hotels told me a story about a relative who came to visit him from her home in a rural area. When she saw an electric lamp for the first time, she was amazed, and she even asked the cook to give her a light bulb so that she could use it in her home in the country. She thought that the light and the light bulb “came into being naturally,” but she had no idea about the many complicated matters that made electric light possible.

D. L. Moody once climbed a mountain with a young man who did not believe in God. Moody asked him, “Where did these big rocks come from?” The young man answered, “From small rocks.” Moody then asked, “Where did the small rocks come from?” He answered, “From atoms.” When Moody asked him where atoms came from, the young man could not answer. The most he could say was that they “came into being naturally.” People who say it is superstitious to believe that God created the universe are truly superstitious when they say that all things came into being naturally.

A young student once asked a pastor about the origin of the earth, and the pastor spoke of the account in Genesis. When the student said that this account was mere superstition, the pastor asked, “Then how did the earth come into existence?” When the student said that the earth was formed from a nebulous cluster, the pastor asked him about the origin of the nebulous cluster. In response the student could only say that it came into being naturally. Then the pastor asked, “Who is being superstitious, you or me?”

The Orderly Operation of the Universe

When we see the orderly operation of the universe, how can we say that there is not a sovereign Lord? When country people see a train, they may think that trains move naturally, because they know little about the many

mechanisms involved in the operation of a train. Some may laugh at their simple-mindedness, but those who say that there is no God, who have little understanding of the operation of the universe, are just like these country people. There are differences that we do not understand between morning and night and between the four seasons in a year, and there are even changes in weather conditions. Nevertheless, these differences and changes are truly wonderful! When we see these things, who has the boldness to arbitrarily say that there is no God? The vastness of the universe and the marvels and order of all things in the universe are strong arguments for the existence of God.

The Structure of the Human Body

Even the structure of our body argues for the existence of God. All doctors know that the human body is structured in a wonderful way. For example, if our nostrils were pointed up or our eyebrows were underneath our eyes, what would happen? The direction of our nose and the placement of our eyebrows speak of the wonder of man's creation. Every organ operates according to its own profound principles. A doctor once told me that the hairs on our body grow downward, but that the hairs in our trachea grow upward. He said that these hairs help keep unhealthy things from entering into our body and help eliminate unhealthy things from our body.

Once, I talked with some doctors who worked in a hospital about the wonders of the human body. Although some of them despised preachers, they were not willing to deny the existence of God, because of their specialized knowledge of the wonderful structure of the human body. Doctors who dissect dead bodies for research truly know that the human body is designed in a wonderful way. The circulation of blood, for example, supplies all the organs of our body, and it also facilitates the elimination of harmful things from our body. The circulation of blood helps to keep a body healthy and free from sicknesses. This is truly fascinating!

Things in general can be modified, but the structure of the human body needs no modification. If it were modified, it would create problems and look unpleasant. If our hands were in the position of our legs, and our legs were connected to our shoulders, this would look quite terrifying. God's creation is perfect, and there is no need for modification. Even a minor modification would result in an imperfection.

The Psychological Aspects of Man

Not only does our body argue for the existence of God, but our heart does as well. Paul says, “That which is known of God is manifest within them, for God manifested it to them” (Rom. 1:19). These words clearly point to an experience within man’s heart. The existence of God is supported by the tendencies in man’s heart. For every inward need in man, there is a corresponding supply outside of him. For example, the appetite for food within man is met by the supply of a variety of foods outside of man. From the beginning of human existence, man has engaged in a search to know God. This tendency to seek God proves that there is God. Even those who deny God with their words will call on God spontaneously when they are weak, when they face insurmountable obstacles, or when they are physically weak. They spontaneously seek God because in their hearts they know that God exists.

Power, position, wealth, knowledge, and pleasures cannot satisfy man’s needs. The only true satisfaction for man is God. Spiritual needs cannot be satisfied with material things. A person who is spiritually hungry will be satisfied only when he receives God. Man needs fresh air, and he will be satisfied when he breathes fresh air. Man also needs God, and he will be satisfied when he contacts God.

God exists. Our conscience testifies of this. Some are willing to say that there is no God because they do not feel an immediate need for God. This is a common situation among young people. Sooner or later, however, we are all confronted with our need for Him. We may not feel a need for God when we are young, but we will feel a need when we get older. Someone who is young and strong can have a hard heart that fools him into thinking that he does not need God. One day, however, when he realizes his limitations and weaknesses, he will realize his need for God. Often, saying that there is no God reflects only a temporary state of mind. The more one says that there is no God, the weaker and more fearful he becomes. In contrast, the more one says that there is a God, the stronger and more powerful he becomes, because God has both strength and power.

People who have God are quite bold. Generally speaking, a twenty-year-old may say that there is God, but his assertion may not be very bold. When he reaches the age of thirty, he will be much bolder, and as each year passes, he

will become bolder and bolder. When he reaches fifty to sixty years of age, his speaking about God will be loud and quite forceful.

In contrast, one who says that there is no God is quite forceful in his speaking when he is twenty years old. When he reaches the age of thirty, he will still have some strength to deny God's existence, but as each year passes, he will be less and less bold. When he reaches fifty to sixty years of age, he will begin to be afraid and to wonder if God truly does not exist. He will also begin to worry about what will happen to him if God does exist. These two examples are related to the testimony of man's conscience concerning the existence of God.

There was once a father and a son who were atheists. One day the father was feeling quite sick, and his heart began to soften toward God. Sensing this, his son asked him to hold on more firmly to his atheistic belief, but the father answered, "What can I hold on to? There is no strength in holding on to such a belief." This is another example of man's conscience testifying that there is a God.

The universe and the human body are strong arguments for the existence of God. Moreover, our conscience also testifies that there is a God. Dear friends, there is proof all around us. Why are you still hesitating?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WITHOUT GOD EVERYTHING BEING VAIN

Scripture Reading: Eccl. 1:2-11

ALL BEING VANITY

Hymns, #1080 speaks of the vanity of human life. Regardless of the circumstances, man has a strong sense that things are vain if he is without God. The chorus of this hymn says, “Vanity! Vanity! / Vanity! Vanity! / ’Tis chasing the wind, / It’s all vanity!” Even when people consider their parents, husbands, wives, and children, they have a sense of vanity. In such cases the hymn can be changed to say, “Parents are vain! / Children are vain! / Husbands are vain! / Wives are vain! / ’Tis chasing the wind, / It’s all vanity!” This sense of vanity also covers teachers, students, schools, and work, so the hymn also could say, “Teachers are vain! / Students are vain! / Schools are vain! / Work is vain! / ’Tis chasing the wind, / It’s all vanity!”

At some point in our human life, we all have a sense of the vanity of human life: work is vain, adults are vain, children are vain, houses are vain, buying and selling are vain, and riches are vain. Everyone and everything are vain: you are vain, I am vain, clothing is vain, food is vain, staying at home is vain, traveling is vain, east is vain, west is vain, south is vain, north is vain, ancient times are vain, and modern times are vain. Everything in human life eventually causes people to sense the vanity of human existence without God. The Chinese are fond of speaking about blessings, wealth, longevity, and happiness. In fact, blessings are vain, wealth is vain, longevity is vain, and happiness is vain. It is not a coincidence that newspapers and magazines often have stories about successful people who have committed suicide. This shows the uncertainty of everything and that efforts to find something certain are like chasing the wind.

Are our husbands, wives, riches, positions, houses, and knowledge dependable? Even if we depend on these things, they can be gone in the twinkling of an eye. Today’s happiness often is the source of tomorrow’s grief. Nothing and no one on earth are reliable. The preceding chapter spoke of God’s existence, whereas this chapter speaks of the vanity of man’s existence.

In regard to man, the only word is *vanity*. Man experiences vanity because he is full of vanity and not satisfied inwardly. Instead, he is hungry, thirsty, and empty. He is full of anguish rather than rest, sorrow rather than joy. Some may say that they are too busy to feel empty, but after many years everyone senses the tediousness of human life.

THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE

Given this sense of vanity, it is very important to know the meaning of human life. This seems like a simple matter, but in general people have no answer about the meaning of human life. There is a saying in northern China that a man's life consists of "three fillings and one lying every day." This refers to a person eating three meals a day and sleeping at night. According to this saying, a person's life consists of being filled with food in the morning, being filled with food at noon, being filled with food in the evening, and then lying down to sleep. When morning comes, his stomach is empty, and he needs to be filled again. In brief, his life involves eating three times a day and sleeping once a day. This is true for adults, children, those with an education, those with no education, common people, and even emperors. It is true for everyone. By the time I was twenty-one years old, after eating and sleeping for more than twenty years, I felt that life was meaningless, mundane, and dull. I even asked myself, "Is this all that man is living for?"

Sixteen years ago I received the calling to go to Shanghai for the Lord's work. When I was riding in a car on Nanking Road, I saw trams, automobiles, foreign cars, and bicycles passing by from all directions. A policeman was directing traffic with red and green lights. When he signaled red, everyone had to stop in one direction, and when he signaled green, everyone could move in the other direction. All the people in the vehicles were watching the traffic lights. They were staring straight ahead with their full attention on the policeman. I cried out in my heart, "You run here and there every day, but what is it all for?"

People run continually every day. Many are running nonstop in Taiwan. Ten years of running will turn into twenty years, and twenty years will turn into forty years. Even after sixty years, many will still be running. Even though so many are running, they are running mainly to just eat and sleep.

Those who run well live in nice houses and ride in automobiles; those who run poorly live in shelters and travel on foot. Students also run daily. They run to be admitted to a school, but if they are not admitted to a school, they still run every day. After finishing kindergarten, they run to elementary school; after finishing elementary school, they run to high school; after finishing high school, they run to the university; they run continuously to eat and sleep better in the future. A person who is a bureau chief will run to be an agency head, and a cabinet member will run to be the president. Everything is for eating and sleeping, but is the meaning of human life merely eating and sleeping? If this were the case, life would be pitiful. Those who work in companies say that they are serving society, and those who work in government offices say that they are serving the country. Actually, they are only eating and sleeping. They run from place to place and toil simply so that they can eat and sleep. Is this the meaning of human life?

MAN BEING MADE FOR GOD

Just eating and sleeping is not God's original intention for man. According to a Chinese saying, "Man is the spirit of all creatures." This is not wrong. In God's creation man was originally noble, extraordinary, and special. Now, however, everyone groans about the meaninglessness of human life. Originally, man was full of purpose, but since he lost his original position and function, he has also lost his purpose.

Man was made by God for God; this gave great meaning to man in the beginning. However, man has become alienated from God. He does not know God, does not have God, and does not believe in God. Without God, man is left with a sense of vanity and meaninglessness related to his human life. Man is like a light bulb that cannot shine. The function of a light bulb is to be placed in a lamp so that it can shine and fulfill its function of illumination. If a light bulb is placed in anything other than a lamp, it will be useless, and its inability to shine will make its existence superfluous. This is man's condition without God.

Man is made for God. If he is not for God, his life is meaningless. If a man puts on beautiful clothing, he will eventually feel meaningless. If a man has a good family, he will eventually feel meaningless. Even a high position will not take away a sense of meaninglessness because a high position is not the reason for man's existence. Only when a man touches God does he have a

sense of meaning, joy, strength, and power. Man is a “single-purpose” item. He was made solely for God. Hence, when a man has God, he does not have a sense of vanity; instead, he has satisfaction, joy, and peace.

HAVING SATISFACTION, JOY, AND PEACE WHEN MAN HAS GOD

All the problems of human life are due to not having God. Whatever man relies on will always be a source of sorrow and vanity (Eccl. 1:2-3). There was a mother who gave birth to a child, and she named him Little Treasure. When he was young, the mother would lovingly call him “Little Treasure! Little Treasure!” As he grew, Little Treasure began to cause her to be full of sorrow and tears. When she was asked about the reason for her tears, she said, “Little Treasure is growing up and is no longer obedient.” When I heard this, I laughed inwardly, saying, “Little Treasure has become Annoying Treasure.”

Another sister also treasured her son, but when her precious son was married, he no longer seemed to care as much for his mother. The mother wept every day. When we visited her, she said, “My dear son no longer loves me; he is always with his wife.” I told her, “Your strong love for your son is the source of your pain.” When the child of another mother suddenly died, the mother was broken-hearted and wept over the coffin, crying, “I wish that I could go with you, my dear child; you have ruined me!” She experienced such great pain because she loved her child apart from God and because her love was excessive.

There was a highly educated sister who taught in the university and accumulated much wealth. She did not spend much money on food and clothing, but she exerted every effort to make money. However, she did not know where to put her money. She felt that it was unsafe to entrust her money to friends or to deposit it in Chinese banks. Eventually, she put her money in a foreign bank in Shanghai. One day, however, this bank suddenly closed. When the sister heard the news, she almost became insane with grief. Money truly destroyed her.

We should be cautious. Wives must be cautious, and husbands must be cautious. Everything that we depend on can be a source of vanity. If a wife depends on her husband, he will bring her vanity. If a husband depends on

his wife, she will bring him vanity. Only when we depend on God will we have satisfaction, joy, and peace.

Before World War II there was a rich man in Shanghai who had a nice house and a nice car. He also had a doorkeeper. The rich man was under stress every day, and he could not eat or sleep well. When he asked his wife about the reason for his stress, she could not give him a reason. Eventually, he said, "The only one who eats and sleeps well is my doorkeeper, because he has no money. Since he has no money, nothing matters to him." The wife did not believe her husband, so he said, "If you do not believe me, I will make him lose all his sleep tonight." Then the rich man gave five hundred dollars to the doorkeeper. Throughout the day the doorkeeper considered how to spend the five hundred dollars, but he could not decide what to do with the money. When he could not decide, he wrapped up the money, put it under his pillow, and tried to go to sleep. However, he would repeatedly feel the money and then look at it. Eventually, he did not sleep well the whole night. When the rich man heard about his lack of sleep, he told his wife, "Money also has made me unable to eat or sleep well."

This does not mean that money is useless; rather, the problem is that we set our heart on money. We suffer because we love money instead of God. We need to see that money is vain and that a heart set on vanity can only be vain. This is true of everything, not just money. As long as we stay away from God and set our heart on anything that is vain, we will be empty and miserable. If we love God, we will have God, but many do not have God because they do not love Him. This is the reason for their vanity and misery.

As long as we do not want God and do not have God, we will have a sense of vanity related to our family. Similarly, organizations, societies, and countries are vain. Without God, families, organizations, societies, countries, and even the whole world will be a source of vanity and misery. If there is no God, there can only be vanity and misery. Since man was made for God, man can be satisfied, joyous, and peaceful only when he has God.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SINS

Scripture Reading: Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18

The Bible is quite thorough in its speaking related to man's sins. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, / And it is incurable; / Who can know it?" Romans 3:10-18 says, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks out God. All have turned aside; together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not so much as one. Their throat is an opened grave; with their tongues they practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Swift are their feet to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER MAN IS GOOD OR EVIL

The content of the gospel that is revealed in the Bible includes many items. We have covered the existence of God and the vanity of man's existence without God. In this chapter we will speak about sins. The matter of sins raises the question of whether man is good or evil. When someone calls us an evil person, we are not happy, but our unhappiness only proves that we do not believe that we are evil. No one is happy with criticism, but our unhappiness is an indication that we do not believe that we are evil. If we truly knew that we were evil, we would never become angry when people call us evil.

When we consider and compare the behavior of people, it is possible to say that some are good in relation to others, but I am not speaking about good and evil in a relative sense. For example, an older brother may provoke his parents to anger once a month, but a younger brother may provoke his parents only once a year. In a relative sense, the younger brother is a little better than the older brother. However, we need to consider good and evil in an absolute sense, not in a relative and comparative sense. Who is absolutely good in this universe? Who has never hated a person, never reviled a person, never told a lie, never coveted, never had a malicious intention, or never done anything wrong? No one can raise his hand to say that he is such a person.

Even if someone raised his hand, he would be lying, and this would only prove that he is sinful.

Stealing involves theft no matter if something large or something small is stolen. Stealing is stealing, regardless of the scale of the theft. Likewise, a light bulb is damaged no matter if it is broken into many pieces or it has only a small crack. Many people who are morally bankrupt are like a light bulb that is broken into many pieces, but many, who are not completely immoral, are like a light bulb with a small crack.

There was once a Western missionary who employed a Chinese cook. He preached the gospel to the cook, saying, “All men are sinful; there is no one who is good.” The cook was unconvinced because he acted according to his conscience and, therefore, did not regard himself as being sinful. When the Western missionary asked, “Can you keep yourself from sinning?” he answered, “Yes.” Then the missionary agreed to give the cook a horse if the cook did not sin for an hour. After making this agreement, he left the cook for an hour. After an hour he returned and asked the cook whether or not he had sinned in the past hour. The cook answered, “No.” The missionary then asked the cook what he had been thinking about during that past hour. He answered, “I thought about getting a horse, but it was not easy because I also realized that I needed a saddle. Since I knew that you had not promised to give me a saddle, I spent much of the time trying to think of ways to ask you for a saddle.” Then the missionary asked, “Is covetousness a sin?” The cook said, “Yes.” The Western missionary responded by saying, “So with the promise of a horse you began to covet a saddle?” When he heard this, the cook could not say a word.

SINNING SPONTANEOUSLY

A man does despicable things with his hands, walks on crooked and evil ways with his feet, looks at corrupt things with his eyes, speaks filthy and malicious words with his tongue, and thinks dirty and depraved thoughts with his mind. Man needs no instruction in order to commit these sins. A human being will spontaneously sin by hating, lying, stealing, and thinking filthy thoughts.

Hating Others

If we examine ourselves, we will see that we are full of hatred. Students hate their principals, teachers, and schoolmates. Family members also hate one another. For example, wives hate their husbands, husbands hate their wives, and children hate their parents. We all have some experience of hating others. None of us has a perfect heart.

Lying

We all tell lies. We do not need anyone to teach us how to lie. Before a person can speak, he knows how to lie. It is an indisputable fact that the world is full of lies.

Stealing

We all have stolen something as well. There are pickpockets on trains, and there are “pickpockets” in homes because husbands and wives often steal from each other. There is stealing on a large scale and stealing on a smaller scale. Some steal using guns, and others steal using pens. Many people bring stationery, pencils, and erasers home from their work for their children. When we were in Shanghai recently, some brothers and sisters were riding on a train together, and a nurse sat next to us. When the conductor served us with tea and towels, she pretended to be in our group so that she would not have to tip the conductor. This was a blatant act of stealing! If we think that our conduct is honorable, we should consider how much of the money that we have carelessly handled has “carelessly” ended up in our own pockets.

Filthy Thoughts

There is no need to describe the filthy thoughts in our mind in great detail. We all have had filthy thoughts that are known only to ourselves. The Bible speaks of the heart of man as being “incurable” (Jer. 17:9). Some versions translate the word *incurable* as “exceedingly corrupt.” Man is vain and empty, but he is also corrupt. He is vain because he does not have God, and he is corrupt because he is empty. When a man is empty, he becomes wicked and corrupt. Originally, God’s intention was that man would be His dwelling place, but when man does not let God dwell in him, he is truly empty; and once he is empty, he becomes corrupt. In order to have meaning, man must have God. If a man does not have God, there is no way for him to not be filled with corrupt things. When a person dies, his body will immediately begin to decay and rot.

All decay and corruption is an issue of not having life. Without life there is death, and death spontaneously brings in corruption.

MAN ENDEAVORING TO CURE HIS WICKEDNESS

Restraining Man with Confucianism

Man's wickedness is undeniable, so throughout history he has tried to develop many "cures" for his evil ways. One method of restraint can be found in the teachings of Confucianism. More than ten years ago a close friend of mine passed away. When I saw him in the coffin, his face was rosy, and his hair was combed in a tidy manner. He looked so nice because the mortician had applied cosmetic makeup to his face and dressed him up. Although he looked nice, he was still dead. Confucianism is comparable to the work of a mortician; it can only dress up and cover up man's sinful behavior. Confucianism will not change the nature of a crafty man, eliminate the hostility within a violent man, or cleanse a defiled man. Dressing someone up in the teachings of Confucianism will not cause a dead person to be alive.

Improving Man with Education

Another way that man attempts to cure his wickedness is through education. We need to ask ourselves whether education can change people. I have specifically discussed this matter with people involved in education, and they have many favorable opinions about the impact of education. However, when I recently asked a college student whether or not his education had made him a better person, he honestly answered that he had been a better person in high school. Then he said that he had been better in junior high than he had been in high school and better in elementary school than he had been in junior high. Although this was the honest confession of a student who was only in college, it reflects the situation of man in general. Students are honest and simple in elementary school, but they learn to do bad things from others in junior high school. As they grow older, they become worse and worse. Before receiving an education, a person may tell lies in a clumsy way, but with an education he will become a skillful liar.

Many highly educated people return to their country after studying abroad, having made a name for themselves, but they still twist the law and take bribes. Education is like a sharp knife that can be used to make good food if it

is in the hands of a good chef, but if the knife is in the hands of a mentally ill person, it can be very dangerous. Regrettably, education is often put into the hands of those with an improper heart, and it becomes a tool for sin. The proper use of education requires God. The knife of education will be in the hands of a good chef only if the chef has God. A man's heart can be proper only when he has God, and only then will education not be a tool for sinning. Those in darkness can be guided into the light, and those with an improper heart can become proper persons only if they have God. In order for education to be beneficial, the educated one needs to have a proper heart, but education itself cannot change man's heart.

Changing Man with Religion

Man also tries to cure his wickedness with religion. Most people believe that religion can change a man's heart. Many people have asked me if they should join a church, because they think that religion can save man. Joining a Christian organization just to be a member is like wearing a nice suit but being dirty underneath. Joining a religion cannot save man; the only One who can save man is God Himself. A sinful person does not lack religion but God. We should open our heart to let God in, and through this we can have a real change and receive true benefit.

Neither Confucianism, nor education, nor religion can save man; these are of no use in changing man's sinful condition. Only God Himself can save man and change man. Those who have God are saved, and those who have God can be changed.

All of man's cures are ineffective. Man is corrupt, commits sins, and is full of evil because he lacks God; the root of man's sickness is that he does not have God. Therefore, we need to receive God as our salvation in order to be delivered from the corruption associated with hating, lying, stealing, and filthy thoughts so that we may gain the eternal life of God.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

JESUS BEING GOD

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-4, 14, 18; 3:31; 10:30; 14:9

In this chapter we want to consider who Jesus is. Stanza 2 of *Hymns*, #84 says, “Christ, by highest heav’n adored, / Christ, the everlasting Lord: / Late in time behold Him come, / Offspring of a virgin’s womb. / Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, / Hail th’ incarnate Deity! / Pleased as man with man to dwell, / Jesus our Immanuel.” *Immanuel* in Hebrew means “God with us.” God became a man to live with man. Stanza 3 says, “Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace! / Hail the Sun of righteousness! / Light and life to all He brings, / Ris’n with healing in His wings: / Mild He lays His glory by, / Born that man no more may die; / Born to raise the sons of earth; / Born to give them second birth.” This shows that God became a man in order to bring salvation to man.

God speaks and communicates to man through the Bible, but He also wants to be with man. Because He has given us the Bible, God does not need to speak directly to every believer, and if we pay attention to the words in the Bible, we can hear God’s speaking. Nevertheless, even though God communicates through the words in the Bible, He personally came to be among man. However, He did not come in the greatness and glory of His position as the God who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). If He came in this way, no one would dare come near to Him. There is no way for us to approach the glorious light of God’s holiness, because we are defiled and evil. As filthy sinners, we cannot see God, much less approach Him. Therefore, God became a man like us in order to come to us.

Once, a brother in Kuling was recuperating from an illness. He was lonely and wanted to talk with someone. When he saw a flock of sparrows nearby, he walked toward them, but they all flew away. As soon as he walked away, the sparrows came together once again. Then he scattered some rice on the ground to lure them forward, but once he approached them, the sparrows flew away again. He thought, “Little sparrows, I do not have any intention to hurt you. I earnestly want to be friends with you, but you misunderstand my intentions.” Then he said to himself, “If I could become a sparrow like them, they would not be afraid when I approached them. It is a pity that I cannot

become a sparrow.” Then he realized how difficult it is for God to have a relationship with man. Since God wants to be with man, He had no choice but to leave the greatness and glory of His high position and become a man so that we could approach Him.

Jesus is God. He is the One who is great, holy, and bright, but He did not come to us according to His high position. If He had come to us in this way, we certainly would have run away and hidden like the sparrows. John 1:1 and 14 say, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality.” This shows that Jesus is God who became flesh. *In the beginning* refers to eternity past before time even existed. The Word was with God in the beginning (v. 2), that is, before time began. Moreover, 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.” Even though He created all things in the universe, He became flesh to be among men (v. 14).

Jesus means “Jehovah the Savior,” or “the salvation of Jehovah” (Matt. 1:21). He is also called Emmanuel, meaning “God with us” (v. 23). Jesus is both God and man. He became a man so that He could be near to man and so that man could be near to Him. When Jesus was on the earth, no one was afraid of Him, including adults, children, prostitutes, and tax collectors, because He was a man. Even though He also was God, He did not appear to be powerful, and people were not afraid of Him. Furthermore, His visage was marred, and He did not have an attractive form or beautiful appearance (Isa. 53:2). He was the son of a lowly carpenter (Matt. 13:55). Hence, everyone could approach Him. Although He appeared to be only an ordinary man, He performed miracles. When He performed miracles, people were amazed, saying, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” (vv. 55-56). Nevertheless, some people did not believe that Jesus was God. Therefore, we need to see who Jesus is based on His own words.

JESUS DECLARING THAT HE IS GOD

I have to ask, “Who is Jesus?” If you reply that He is a Savior, I need to ask, “Whom did He come to save?” If Jesus were merely a man, He could not be

man's Savior, because a man cannot save man. Every man has sins, and a sinful person cannot save sinners. If Jesus were merely a man, He could not save us. The only One who can save us is God. But is Jesus God, or is He just a man? Let us see what Jesus said concerning Himself.

In the Gospel of John, Philip asked the Lord Jesus to show the disciples the Father, and it would be sufficient. Jesus answered and said, "Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works" (14:9-10). He also said, "I and the Father are one" (10:30). Other than Jesus, no one has said that he was God. No sage in the history of China has said that he was God. Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, did not say that he was God, and even Mohammed said that he was only a prophet. Other than Jesus, no one in history has dared to say that he was God. Many people, who consider Jesus to be the same as the idols that they worship, do not realize that the title of *god* is given to the idol by people only after the death of the person upon whom the idol is based. Can anyone who has been given the title *god* be God? Do people have the power to make someone God? Jesus is not God because He was declared to be God by man. God is God, yet He came to the earth to be a man. Only Jesus said that He was God. The God who has come to the earth is Jesus.

If a person claims to be God but is not, there are only two possible explanations for his error: he is either speaking nonsense, or he is lying. Jesus, however, did not speak nonsense, nor did He lie. From ancient times to the present and from the East to the West, no one has been able to credibly call Him a madman. Then, if He is not a madman, His claim to be God must either be a lie or the truth. Since Jesus had the highest standard of morality, who can say that He was a liar? If Jesus was not crazy and was not a liar, then He was truthful in His declaration that He is God. When He was arrested, He did not say a word, and at His trial He acknowledged that He is the Son of God. He was killed because He acknowledged that He is the Son of God. If He had been a liar, would He have lied knowing that it would result in His death? Furthermore, none of the miracles that He performed, including healing the sick, casting out demons, resurrecting the dead, and calming the wind and the sea, could have been accomplished by an ordinary man.

The words that Jesus spoke were full of wisdom, containing the highest standard of morality that has ever existed in the world. A philosopher once said, "The philosophy in the four Gospels is extraordinary. If these words are fabrications, then the fabricator must be God." Jesus also spoke prophetically of His own death and resurrection. Could any human being do this? All of Jesus' words and deeds prove that He is God.

BELIEVERS PROVING THAT JESUS IS GOD

During the first century, the Roman emperor Nero slaughtered many Christians because they confessed Jesus as God. If Jesus were not God, there would not have been so many people willing to sacrifice their lives because of their belief in Him. Almost two thousand years have passed since the time of Jesus' ascension; if He were not God, how could He still listen to prayers, heal the sick, and perform miracles today?

Many years ago Dr. John Sung went to Shantung to preach the gospel. There was a woman who had been paralyzed for eighteen years and was unable to walk. She was carried to Dr. Sung, and he was asked to lay his hands on her. At the time three saints who were present began to pray for the woman. At the end of their prayer, one of the brothers ordered her to get up and walk. To everyone's amazement, she got up and walked. She later testified that she felt a warm current going through her body when the saints were praying. When the husband of the woman received the telegram notifying him of his wife's ability to walk, he could not believe the news. As a result of her healing, the whole family was full of joy. If Jesus were not God, how could miracles occur when people pray?

When gospel preachers go to the countryside to preach the gospel, they often encounter demons. Nevertheless, all the demons are afraid of Jesus. Demon-possessed people, whether male or female, have enormous strength and can easily break the restraints upon them. However, even these strong demons are afraid of Jesus. Christians can cast out the demons just by praying in the Lord's name. Once, there were two brothers who went to the countryside. When they knelt down to pray, a demon-possessed woman tried to frighten them by jumping around with a pair of scissors in her hands. When they did not cease in their prayers, the woman suddenly trembled. Through their prayer the demon was cast out, and she was healed. When

Christians are present, demons often dare not come, even when people are performing works of divination.

In cities demons use different kinds of entertainment, such as dancing and movies, to possess people, causing them to be beside themselves in dancing and watching movies. They dance until they forget who they are. This is Satan's work. He pretends to be civilized in order to deceive people. Demons possess people and cause them to resist Jesus, because demons are afraid of Jesus. If Jesus were not God, why would demons be afraid of Him? Whenever people speak of Confucius, they feel as if they are being honorable, and when they speak of different kinds of "isms," they feel as if they are being scholarly. However, when they speak of Jesus, they feel ashamed. Some try to blame this sense of shame on the fact that teachings about Jesus come from a foreign country. It is strange, however, that they do not have a similar sense of shame when they promote foreign businesses, foreign education, and foreign goods. This shows that their shame is really an issue of the work of demons. Demons cause people to feel shameful in order to turn them away from Jesus. Demons want to possess man. Consequently, demons do not want people to believe in Jesus, because once a person believes in Jesus, the demons' desire is frustrated.

Jesus is God, the omnipresent and omniscient God who created all things. When we pray to Him, He listens. When we entreat Him, He perfects us. People who are in darkness receive light when they pray to Him, and those who are lost receive salvation when they open to Him. He is the true God.

CHAPTER TWENTY

YOU NEED JESUS

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-5, 14, 16-18; 15:4-5, 7-8

JESUS AS PORTRAYED IN THE GOSPELS

The New Testament begins with four Gospels: the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John. These four Gospels, as biographies of the Lord Jesus, record His words and actions on the earth. Many people do not understand why the Bible has four biographies of the Lord, but this is because there are many different aspects related to the Lord Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew speaks of the Lord Jesus as the King who is bringing the kingdom of the heavens to the earth. The Gospel of Mark speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Slave who faithfully labors for God on the earth. The Gospel of Luke speaks of the Lord Jesus as a perfect man who is the Savior of mankind, and the Gospel of John speaks of the Lord Jesus as God who comes to be life to His people.

This may be compared to casting a bronze bust of someone. In order to get an accurate cast, a sculptor needs to see the person from the front, the back, and both sides. In this way the bronze bust will closely match the real person. The blueprints of a house show a view of the house from the front, back, and sides. There are four sets of drawings but only one building, and when we stand in front of a house that has been built, there are the front door, the windows on both sides, and the patio in the back. In order to have a complete view of the house, we need to look at it from every direction. A full portrait of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament also requires four different viewpoints in order to unveil Him as the King, the Slave, a perfect man, and God. Through the portrait in the four Gospels, we can see that the Lord Jesus is a noble King, a lowly Slave, a perfect man, and the Most High God.

THE LORD JESUS AS GOD

COMING TO US TO BE OUR LIFE

In this chapter we will look at the aspect of the Lord Jesus as God. Therefore, we need to study the Gospel of John carefully. In the Gospel of

John, Jesus is portrayed as God. His introduction in the Gospel of John is different from what is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Both Matthew and Luke include a genealogy of the Lord Jesus. However, the Gospel of John begins, saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1). Verses 2 through 5 say, “He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” From the beginning of the Gospel of John, the emphasis on the Lord Jesus relates to the fact that He is God. He is also revealed in verses 3 and 4 as the source of life: “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” This shows that without the Lord Jesus as life, man is darkened within and walks in darkness. The life of the Lord Jesus is the light of man.

Verse 14 says, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.” Verses 16 through 18 continue, saying, “Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” This shows that the Lord Jesus, who is God in the heavens, became flesh and lived among us. He came to be among man in order to contact every kind of person.

When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He contacted thousands and thousands of people. If we were to write down their stories, even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written (21:25). The cases that John recorded were specifically chosen by him to reveal various aspects about Jesus coming to be our life.

THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE

The accounts of those who contacted the Lord in the Gospel of John were specifically selected in order to show that God’s life meets the need of every man. The account in chapter 2 presents a general principle that involves all men, whereas the accounts in chapters 3 through 11 relate to specific kinds of people. Chapter 3 contains the account of Nicodemus, who was an educated

and moral man of high reputation. He was a person from the upper class of society. Therefore, he represents moral persons with high standing in society.

In chapter 4 the Lord contacted a Samaritan woman involved in immoral relationships. In chapter 3 the Lord spoke with Nicodemus, who was a Jewish Pharisee, but in chapter 4 He spoke with a Samaritan woman, who had a base and low living. Chapter 3 shows that the Lord can meet the need of moral persons, and chapter 4 shows that He can meet the need of a person with no morality. Chapter 3 speaks of persons at the highest level of society, whereas chapter 4 speaks of persons with no standing in society. These two types of people are in direct contrast. Chapter 4 also speaks of the need of those who are dying. When the Lord visited a place with weak and fragile people who were dying, He healed them, including the son of a royal official, with His life-giving word (vv. 43-54).

In chapter 5 the Lord contacted a paralyzed man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. This man lay beside the pool of Bethesda, waiting for an angel to stir up the water, because the first person to step into the water after it was stirred up would be made well (vv. 2-5). When the water was stirred up, however, the paralyzed man was too weak to step into the water. This shows that he did not even have the strength to receive grace. Many people on this earth are like this paralyzed man. They know that they are weak, but they have no ability to rise up from their weakness. They cannot pray, and they do not even have the strength to receive grace.

In chapter 6 the Lord contacted people who were hungry, feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish. Many people are hungry; that is, they cannot be satisfied. They are troubled and always searching for something to satisfy themselves. Because they have a deep sense of their lack, they search. The number of people who are like this is relatively high. Chapter 7 speaks of people who are thirsty and in need of something to fill them up. This is the reason that the Lord stood up on the last day, the great day of the feast, and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (v. 37). There are many hungry and thirsty people on the earth.

In chapter 8 the Lord contacted a woman who was caught and condemned for committing adultery. She represents people who are under the bondage of sin. She was despised and condemned by others as a sinner for her immorality.

In chapter 9 the Lord contacted a person who was born blind. Even though he had eyes, he was born blind. There are many people in the world who are like this blind man. They have eyes outwardly, but they are blind inwardly. They are without light and are unable to see anything. The Lord purposely healed the blind man on the Sabbath to expose the vanity of religious ritual, which is the source of much blindness. Chapter 10 is a continuation of chapter 9. It speaks of man's need for shepherding. The blind man in chapter 9 was such a sheep. He was led by the Lord out of the Judaism-fold.

Chapter 11 then speaks of those who are dead, as represented by Lazarus. Death is the most serious condition of man; death terminates everything. But in His contact with those who are dead, the Lord Jesus as life is able to resurrect the dead. In the Lord's salvation He does not merely heal the sick; He also gives life to the dead. Hence, He remained where He was for two days until Lazarus had died (v. 6). The Lord does not reform or regulate people—He regenerates people and raises them out of death.

Chapters 3 through 11 cover every type of person and every need of man. Consequently, after chapter 11 no special people with different needs are introduced; rather, John focuses on those who have already come in contact with the Lord. The Gospel of John records nine types of people, including those who are moral, immoral, dying, impotent, hungry, thirsty, under the bondage of sin, blind, and dead.

Jesus is God who became flesh and who came to be among men. The people to whom the Lord came were honorable and moral, dishonorable and immoral, dying, impotent, hungry, thirsty, condemned and despised, blind, and dead. The Lord contacted all these types of people.

Every one of the thousands of people whom the Lord contacted could be included in one of these nine types. This is like a housewife who goes to the fish market. While she is there, she will encounter many fish, but there will only be a few different kinds of fish. Among mankind, some people are like Nicodemus, some are like the Samaritan woman, some are like the dying son in need of healing, some are like the weak paralytic, some are empty and hungry, some are dissatisfied and thirsty, some commit sins and are despised by others, some are darkened inwardly and blind outwardly, and some are breathing outwardly but are dead inwardly. Every person fits into one of these types of people in need.

Which type do you belong to? Are you a moral person like Nicodemus? Are you like the Samaritan woman who lost God and was seeking for happiness in sin? The Samaritan woman had five men as husbands, and a sixth man was not even her husband. When she was not happy with her first husband, she changed to another one. Because she was still unhappy, she changed husbands again and again. She was constantly looking and changing but never happy. According to the record in chapter 4, she came to draw water from a well because she was thirsty, and there she met the Lord, who said, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever” (vv. 13-14). Because she was drinking only “this water,” she was still thirsty. This shows that those who are far from God are thirsty. Being thirsty, they need to drink, but even after drinking, they are still thirsty. Thus, their thirst causes them to drink again and again, that is, to continually seek happiness through sin. People who indulge in dancing or who are infatuated with romantic novels and movies are never satisfied with the momentary happiness they receive from dancing, reading novels, or watching movies. After dancing, reading novels, and watching movies, they must repeat these activities again and again. They are seeking for a happiness that cannot be found. Those who drink and play mah-jongg are often far from God and unhappy. Therefore, they try to find happiness in sin.

THE NEEDS OF MAN IN VARIOUS CONDITIONS

If someone asked me what type of person I am, I would answer that I am like them all. Practically speaking, these nine types represent nine aspects of man’s inward condition. The only difference between these types in our experience is the degree to which these aspects are manifested. The manifestation of a certain aspect may be more obvious than the manifestation of another aspect, but regardless of whether we are male or female, young or old, we all have the same inward condition. Some may manifest morality more than immorality, and others may manifest immorality more than weakness. For example, we know that we should obey our parents, but we do not have the strength to obey them. We also know that we need to help and love others, but we are weak and impotent in doing this. Hunger and thirst are a very common condition because people are constantly seeking satisfaction. Being condemned because of sin is also a common human

condition. Husbands condemn their wives, wives condemn their husbands, parents condemn their children, and children often condemn their parents in their hearts. This condemnation is related to sins. Furthermore, we have all been born blind because we are unable to see the truth before we are saved. Furthermore, every person who is not saved is far from God and dead in offenses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

EVERYONE NEEDING JESUS

These nine types of people represent nine conditions of the human race, and all nine types need Jesus. The moral Nicodemus needed the Lord's regeneration. Even a moral and honorable person needs the Lord in order to be regenerated so that he can enter into the kingdom of God. In order to enter into the kingdom of God, one must have the divine life. Therefore, moral people need Jesus. The immoral Samaritan woman also needed the Lord Jesus to quench her thirst. Base and low people need Jesus because immorality is a sign that one does not have God. When people are without God, they become immoral because they seek for happiness in sin. In order to be delivered from sin and to have real happiness, a person must have God.

Those who are dying need the Lord, and those who are impotent, who do not have the strength to be freed from sin, need the Lord Jesus. Everyone who is impotent in regard to a particular weakness is like a person who is lying on a mat and unable to rise up. To some their "mat" is smoking, and to others their "mat" is mah-jongg. Those who are impotent do not have the strength to rise up from their "mat"; they even rely upon their "mats" as a means of support. However, if you have the Lord Jesus, you do not need to remain on your mat, because the Lord said, "Rise, take up your mat and walk" (John 5:8). Once you have the Lord Jesus, you will not need to rely on your mat; you will be able to take up your mat and walk. Although you were once enslaved to your mat, you can become the master of your mat by receiving the Lord. Without the Lord, a person is impotent and stuck to his mat, whether it is smoking, mah-jongg, or something else. However, when you receive the Lord Jesus, you can rise up, be delivered from your mat, and be strong rather than impotent, no longer being enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:6). Those who are impotent have a great need of the Lord Jesus.

Those who are hungry need the Lord Jesus as their food. The Lord said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he

who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst” (John 6:35). The Lord is not only the bread of life but also the fountain of living water. According to His promise, those who drink of Him will never thirst again. Likewise, those who are born blind need the Lord because they cannot see where man came from or where man is going. Truthfully speaking, many intelligent people in this world are blind inwardly. One day we were preaching the gospel in Shanghai, and a brother drew a cartoon of a blind person who had a Ph.D. This cartoon was an accurate representation of many educated people. Although their minds may be filled with knowledge and they may understand many matters related to science and philosophy, they cannot provide an answer to the question of where man came from and where man is going. They do not know the meaning of human life because they are blind. Although they are filled with knowledge, they are actually groping in darkness, without any trace of light.

This is the situation of those who are highly educated, those who are in high positions, and those who are in the business world. They are always busy, seeking promotions and wealth, but they do not know anything of their future destiny. How blind they are! These people need Jesus. Finally, if man does not have God, he does not have life. Those who are without God are just like dead people living in tombs. Whenever such a one receives the Lord Jesus, he is resurrected and released from his “tomb.” Therefore, as those who are dead, people particularly need Jesus.

All the people in chapters 3 through 11 of the Gospel of John need Jesus. A high-class, moral person needs Jesus. An unsatisfied sinner needs Jesus. A weak and impotent person needs Jesus. Those who are hungry and thirsty need Jesus. A person enslaved to sin needs Jesus. A blind person groping in darkness needs Jesus, and a person in death needs Jesus. No matter what type of person you are or what condition you are in, you need Jesus.

When we meet the Lord Jesus, our needs are satisfied. When people believe into Him, they do not perish but have eternal life. Whenever people have God, they do not need to seek for happiness in sin, because they have real happiness. When the impotent have Him, they are strengthened. When the hungry have Him, they are fed. When the thirsty have Him, their thirst is quenched with living water. When the despised have Him, they are not condemned. When those walking in darkness have Him, they have the way and are in the light. When the dead have Him, they have resurrection and life.

Man's only need is the Lord Jesus Himself. We need the Lord Jesus all the time.

CONTACTING THE LORD AND FELLOWSHIPING WITH HIM

After showing that the Lord Jesus meets the need of every man, John speaks of the vine in chapter 15. Verses 4 and 5 say, "Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." Verses 7 and 8 say, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so you will become My disciples." We need to abide in the Lord because He is the vine and we are the branches. If we are apart from Him, we cannot do anything, and we will be useless. We need to contact the Lord and fellowship with Him so that He can meet our every need. This is what the Gospel of John reveals. The Lord Jesus is the Word who became flesh to be among men to satisfy man's needs. However, in order for Him to meet our needs, we need to receive Him.

Neither the Gospel of John nor the Gospel of Matthew speaks of the Lord Jesus' ascension. After His resurrection the Lord charged the disciples to go and preach the gospel, to disciple the nations, and to baptize them into the name of the Triune God (Matt. 28:19). However, there is no mention of His ascension in the Gospel of Matthew. John 20 records the Lord Jesus' resurrection, but there also is no mention of His ascension in the Gospel of John. In chapter 21 He was with the disciples in His resurrection life to live in them and to walk in them. This shows that the Gospel of John stresses the Lord's being in us. We need to fellowship with the Lord all the time; He is in us waiting for us to contact Him and expecting to fellowship with us. God came from the heavens to the earth to become a man. He passed through human living, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection and became a life-giving Spirit to enter into us and be with us. In our fellowship with Him, He can take care of all our needs. This is His way of salvation; He is our unique need.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

GOD CONTACTING MAN THROUGH HIS SPEAKING

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Sam. 23:2

GOD DESIRING TO CONTACT MAN

The book of Genesis shows that man fell and was corrupted when he lost his connection with God. Man became empty and corrupt when he lost God. After man fell, God came to look for man and to communicate with man (3:9). Even though man rejected God, God came to search for man. Even though man did not want God or have God, God still wanted to be with man. It is God who desired to recover a relationship.

After the fall God could not contact man based on His status as the God who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). God is great and holy, and man is small and sinful; no man can stand before God. Some people foolishly say, "Please show me God, and I will believe." They do not have the realization that if God really manifested Himself as God, they would not be able to stand. He is too great and too holy, and we are too small and too defiled. If we have no way to approach Him, how can we see Him? Because God cannot manifest what He is in Himself to man, He has to find another way to contact man.

THE WAYS THAT GOD CONTACTS MAN

God can contact man in one of two ways: He can contact man indirectly through an intermediary, or He can come in a way that allows direct contact. The former way involves speaking to man through various channels, such as the prophets, but the latter way points to His coming as a man to be among men. It is possible for us to contact one another by telephone or telegraph, but the best way to contact one another is face to face. If God desired to contact man, surely He must have spoken to man. Consequently, there would be a record of His speaking to man among all the books in human history. There are over six thousand years of human history, and during these years there must have been some record of His speaking, His word. If God desired to

contact and communicate with man, He would not have remained silent for six thousand years.

THE BIBLE IS THE BOOK OF GOD

Consequently, we should investigate the books that have been written throughout the six thousand years of human history to see which book contains the speaking of God. However, we need to consider several criteria in order to have a standard for assessment. First, the book should clearly state that it is the speaking of God. This may be compared to a person signing his name at the end of a letter. If a book contains God's speaking, it should clearly state that it is God's speaking. Second, if a book contains the speaking of God, it should clearly speak of the origin of the universe, the progression of mankind, and the final destiny of heaven and earth. Third, it should contain prophecies concerning matters in the future, and every prophecy must be shown to have come to pass. Fourth, this book should contain a standard of morality that is quite high. Fifth, this book should be especially powerful. Sixth, the speaking of God in this book, while mysterious, should be very easy to comprehend.

Based on these six criteria, it is easy to see that only the sacred writings of various religions need to be considered. Of these writings, the sacred writings of Buddhism cannot be considered as God's word because they do not speak of God. Since there are numerous religious systems that do not revere God, their writings cannot be considered as being the word of God. The only religions that truly revere God are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Judaism is based on the Old Testament, and Christianity is based on the Old and the New Testaments. Much of the content of the Koran is drawn from the Bible. Therefore, the only book that uniquely states that it is God's speaking is the Holy Bible.

The Bible Declaring Itself to Be God's Speaking

In the Old Testament the phrase *thus says the Lord Jehovah* is included over a thousand times. This is enough to prove that God has declared that this book is His word. In the New Testament the apostle Paul says, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, according to the first criterion, the Bible has a proper claim to be God's word.

The Bible Unveiling the Origin, Progression, and Final Destiny of the Universe and Mankind

Second, there is no book in the world that speaks of the origin of the universe, the progression of humanity, and the final destiny of heaven and earth in such a clear and complete way as the Bible.

The Prophecies and Fulfillments of the Bible

Third, no book has as many prophecies as the Bible. In fact, the prophecies in the Bible account for much of its content. These prophecies address many matters. For example, the Bible prophesied two thousand years ago concerning the condition of society in the last age. The prophecies in the Bible have either been fulfilled or are being fulfilled.

Concerning the situation in the last age, 2 Timothy 3:1 says, “In the last days difficult times will come.” *Difficult* also means “perilous.” The days in which we live today are perilous; they are not peaceful. All of us admit that these days are truly perilous. Verse 2 says that “men will be lovers of self.” If we compare this generation with previous generations, we can see that people in this generation love themselves and care for themselves much more than before. People today not only care for themselves; they are lovers of self. This verse also speaks of “lovers of money.”

In this age people become lovers of self and then become lovers of money. Young people today all desire to be rich, and money is the most attractive thing to them. They think that money is so powerful that it can even influence people, demons, and the “gods” behind their idols. Actually, the money of this generation has no real value, but more people love this worthless money than ever before because of its ability to influence others. This is not the situation of only the people in China, because people in every country are lovers of self and lovers of money. People in every country are selfish and love money.

Verse 2 of chapter 3 also speaks of those who are “boasters, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents.” In previous generations there were not many who were boastful, arrogant, reviling, and disobedient to parents. But among young people today, the level of boasting, arrogance, and despising of parents is almost beyond control. Even though this is a cultured age, there has not been a generation with as little restraint as the current one. The people of this

generation are “unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, not lovers of good, traitors, reckless, blinded with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (vv. 2-4). Look at the theaters, dance halls, bars, restaurants, and public places of entertainment. Even with a devaluation of currency and difficulties in earning a livelihood, many are crowding into entertainment establishments, lining up to buy movie tickets, and eating in restaurants. People love pleasure and love to be carefree.

This situation is a result of the fact that people do not want to be “lovers of God” (v. 4). People choose to be lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. When a person does not love God, he has no joy; when there is no joy, he looks for other sources of happiness. He enters into sin in order to find happiness; sin becomes his only option.

In 1937 I was preaching the gospel in Nanking. A young woman came to me after the meeting, expressing a desire to believe in Jesus if I could give her a satisfactory answer to her question. She asked, “After I believe in the Lord, can I still attend the theater?” I realized that if I said she could not, she would not accept the Lord, but if I said she could, this would not be proper either. So I asked her, “If your child is holding a knife and playing with it, what would you do?” She answered, “I would spread some candy on the floor so that he would drop the knife in order to pick up the candy.” Then I said to her that Jesus is just like the candy and that she did not need to focus on the knife in her hand but on the sweetness of the Lord Jesus.

Today people are searching for happiness apart from God. They are like children playing with knives. They take risks because they do not have Jesus. The thirst of those who do not have Jesus is like the unquenchable thirst associated with the lake of fire. In order to quench their thirst, they go to places of entertainment to dance and watch movies. They are drinking “poison” in order to quench their thirst. This situation is prophesied in the Bible.

James 5:1 says, “Come now, you rich, weep, howling over your miseries, which are coming upon you!” This is the situation of society today; tragedy and sufferings are upon the rich. The portion continues, saying, “Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten; your gold and your silver have rusted, and their rust will be a testimony against you and will eat

your flesh like fire” (vv. 2-3). According to these verses, the rich will be condemned, and their riches will eat their flesh. Many rich people speak of the pain that money brings to their life. Verses 3 and 4 say, “You have stored up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the workmen who mowed your fields, which have been withheld by you, cry out; and the cries of those who reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts.” These vivid descriptions are prophecies written in the Bible two thousand years ago.

After World War I ended in 1918, a peace treaty was enacted in June of the following year. The whole world celebrated, and certain newspapers and magazines commented that mankind had entered a civilized age in which there would be no more wars but only lasting peace. In 1920 the League of Nations was established, and later, a treaty was formulated specifically for maintaining international peace. On the surface it seemed as if world peace would not be a problem. Soon after this I was saved, and I started to read the Bible, which says that wars would increase more and more. At the same time, I also saw that many books did not agree with the view that there would be lasting peace in the world.

Within ten years Japan initiated the “Incident of September 18” in 1931 in Manchuria. Even though this incident was not the direct cause of World War II, the fighting throughout China began to spread. There was intermittent fighting for ten years, which continued during World War II. This fighting lasted until 1945 when Japan surrendered. In all, there were fifteen years of war, six of which were included in World War II. In this great war the manpower, material resources, and financial resources of many countries were devastated. Germany collapsed, Japan was defeated, and China suffered great devastation from innumerable attacks. The whole world was filled with the smell of gunpowder. Yet even today the brutality of this war has not caused the human race to be vigilant to keep peace, and many countries are still preparing for war. There is much money and scientific research involved in the preparation for war.

God is also keeping His word that the Jews would be blessed in Palestine. Whereas they were once dispersed among the nations because they did not listen to God’s word, they are now returning to Israel. The experience of the Jews has been different from people in other countries conquered through war. For example, India was conquered by England, and Korea was conquered by Japan, but even though they were conquered by another nation,

the Indian and Korean people still remained in their own country. Only the Jews were dispersed to other nations after being conquered. Before the restoration of Israel, the Jews were dispersed throughout the world; they lived in every country of Europe, in America, and even in China. Although they were dispersed and had no country of their own, they did not assimilate into these countries. Although they were Germans and Americans by national citizenship, they remained as Jews ethnically and culturally. Because the Jews would never assimilate, Hitler was able to persecute and massacre them and to seize their properties. This brought the Jews tremendous suffering and forced them to flee in all directions. This was a fulfillment of the prophecies in the Bible regarding the dispersion of the Jews and their sufferings. What is more amazing is that the Bible prophesied that the Jews would eventually be restored to their country. This matter has been fulfilled; the Jews have formed the nation of Israel.

The Bible Having the Highest Standard of Morality

The principles of morality spoken of in the Bible are higher than the standards of morality contained in any other book. Not only does the Bible speak of loving others as one's self but even of loving one's enemies (Matt. 5:44). When Jesus was being crucified and suffering unbearably on the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). This shows the high standard of morality in the Bible.

The Bible Having Extraordinary Power

Not only have many prophecies in the Bible been fulfilled, but the Bible also has special power, especially the power to change people.

The Bible Being Profound and Mysterious yet Plain and Easily Understood

The Bible has been translated into over one thousand languages. Even primitive people have a Bible to read in their language. Furthermore, if the books written about the Bible were laid side by side, the distance would be greater than the width of the Pacific Ocean.

Furthermore, the Bible is also the deepest and most mysterious book. Some people devote their whole life to study the Bible, and at the end they still do

not understand its mysteries. However, the Bible is a book that is easy to read and not difficult to comprehend.

Of all the books ever published, only the Bible meets the criteria of being the word of God. The Bible is surely God's word; it is a book of revelation from God. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." Second Peter 1:20-21 also says, "No prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation; for no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit." Only through the Bible can we know God Himself and touch His intention concerning man. Through the Bible we can contact God, fellowship with God, and gain and enjoy God Himself.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37-38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12;
1 Pet. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:1-2

We must consider the matter of baptism. In general, people have a wrong concept concerning believing in Jesus. They think that believing alone is sufficient for salvation and that baptism is of little importance. Nevertheless, the Bible shows that baptism and salvation are related.

SEEING THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible regards the matter of baptism very highly. The Lord clearly said, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). In order for a person to be saved, he needs to believe and be baptized. At Pentecost, when the people heard the word of Peter, they were pricked in their heart, and they asked what they should do. Peter answered, “Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is related to the forgiveness of sins. Later, Ananias said to Paul, “Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (22:16). This shows that baptism is related to the washing away of sins. In the matter of Paul’s baptism, the Bible confirms that Paul “rose up and was baptized” (9:18). Furthermore, according to Romans 6:3-4, we are baptized into the Lord’s death and are buried and resurrected with the Lord. First Peter 3:20-21 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 both associate salvation with water, not merely with blood. Thus, baptism is related to salvation. According to the Bible, whenever someone receives the Lord through the preaching of the gospel, we need to tell him to be baptized.

BELIEVING AND BEING BAPTIZED MAKING SALVATION COMPLETE

Let me give an example to show that salvation is related to baptism. A believer who had a university education once questioned me, saying, “I have been told that I was only half saved because I have not been baptized. How can we have only a half salvation?” I answered, “The salvation we obtain depends on the salvation we receive.” I then asked him what led him to realize his need for the Lord. He said that he realized that he had a problem with sins and with the weakness of his flesh. He indicated there were other problems, but he could not articulate them. When I mentioned such matters as the world, culture, and customs, he admitted that they also were problems.

Then I told him that he needed salvation from sins, the flesh, and the world, and only when these problems were dealt with would his salvation be complete. When I asked him which of these problems had been solved, he could only say that his sins had been forgiven. The problems related to the weakness of his flesh and the world had not been solved. I said, “In this case, you are not even ‘half saved’ but merely ‘one-third’ saved.” I told him that he had received only a minimal salvation and that he needed to receive more of the Lord’s provision for salvation in order for his salvation to be complete. Receiving the forgiveness of sins by believing is the first step in salvation, but receiving salvation from the flesh and the world by being baptized is a further step. It is not sufficient to receive salvation merely by believing, we still need to receive the salvation that is related to baptism. Just as there is an aspect of salvation related to believing, there is an aspect related to baptism. Only through these two steps can we have a complete salvation.

BAPTISM BEING A BURIAL THAT SEPARATES US FROM THE WORLD

In God’s salvation there is an element related to death. Only a dead person does not sin, because death terminates his ability to sin. Death is the termination of sin just as death is the termination of debt. Although death is terrifying to many, it is truly wonderful in God’s salvation because our death in Christ terminates all our problems.

People are enslaved to sin and experience various sufferings because they are alive. But with death, everything is terminated. Therefore, death completely “solves” their problems. Death is a part of God’s salvation in order to deal with all our “unsolvable” problems. God saves us not only by the life of Christ but also by the death of Christ. Romans 6:3-4 says, “Are you ignorant

that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death.” Christ’s death solves our problems, and the meaning of baptism is death, that is, burial. Because we have believed into the Lord, we have died with the Lord Jesus, and because we have died with the Lord, we need to be buried with Him. Baptism is our burial with Christ.

When a person dies and is buried, he is spontaneously freed from the darkness of the world. Baptism is not a ritual; rather, it is a burial. The waters of baptism forever separate us from the world.

BAPTISM BEING THE GREATEST AND THE MOST THOROUGH DELIVERANCE

Baptism is the greatest and the most thorough deliverance. With the blood we escape God’s wrath, and with the water we are separated from the world. The blood of the passover lamb enabled the Israelites to escape God’s wrath, but they were freed from the usurpation of Egypt and Pharaoh, that is, the bondage of the world and Satan, only when they crossed the Red Sea. When we receive the Lord by confessing our sins and repenting, we receive salvation by the blood; when we are baptized, we are delivered from the bondage of the world and Satan.

Noah was saved by being in the ark, but his whole family also was moved from a world that opposed God to another kingdom through the flood waters. Noah was saved by the ark and also by the flood. Those who have been baptized are the same as Noah. Having passed through baptism, we have been delivered from numerous forms of bondage, whether these forms involve sins, weaknesses, sicknesses, habits, frustrations, or anxieties. Complete deliverance involves both death and burial; this is the significance of baptism.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 15:22, 45-49; Rom. 5:18-19; 6:3-11

Identification with Christ is a great matter. From our point of view, there have been many people who have lived on the earth from the ancient days until now. Even though we know that the world's current population is a few billion, we do not know how many people have died or how many people are yet to be born. All we know is that there are a few billion people who are alive today. From God's point of view, however, there are only two men in the whole world.

ADAM AND CHRIST

According to the book of Romans, there are only two men in the world: Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:12, 15, 17). Adam is the first man, and Christ is not only the second man but also the last man (1 Cor. 15:45, 47).

The first man is Adam. The second man, however, is not Cain but Christ, because those who came after Adam came out of Adam. The second man is Christ, and because there is no man after Christ, He is also the last man. Adam is the first man, because there was no man before him; Christ is the second man and the last man, because there is no man after Him. There is no one between Adam and Christ, because Adam is the first and Christ is the second.

Everyone in Adam Being a Sinner

There are only two men in the universe. There was no man before Adam, and there is no man after Christ. In God's eyes every man is in Adam, comes from Adam, and belongs to Adam, which is to say that every man is identified with Adam. Before we were saved, our name was Adam. Whoever is not saved is in Adam. A person should not think that he is not a sinner because he has not committed some specific sin. When Adam committed sin in the garden of Eden, we were in him. Adam's sin made every man a sinner.

The Chinese people arrived in China by passing through the Pamir Mountains. Although we may not have personally passed through the Pamirs, we passed through the Pamirs when our ancestors passed through the Pamirs. Likewise, when Adam sinned, we also sinned. Consequently, all who are from Adam have sinned. Therefore, we all are sinners.

Everyone in Christ Being Saved

In God's eyes every man who has believed into Christ is saved because a saved person enters into Christ and is identified with Him.

Although the Bible speaks of Noah and his family passing safely through the flood (Gen. 8:13-19; 1 Pet. 3:20), strictly speaking, it was the ark that passed through the flood. Noah's family passed through the flood only because they were in the ark. Hence, eight people did not pass through the flood, but rather, one ark with eight people passed through the flood. In God's eyes there was only the ark. God saw the ark passing through the flood; He did not see eight people passing through the flood.

When God looks at a saved person, He sees only Christ. God does not see Mr. Chang or Mr. Lee; He sees only Christ. Everyone who is saved is in Christ. Apart from Christ, God does not see any other person; He sees only Christ.

One day the Word, who was with God and who was God, became flesh; that is, God put on humanity, and His name was Jesus. Jesus was God, yet He put on the human nature. When the Lord Jesus responded to Philip's request to see the Father, saying, "Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me?" (John 14:9), He was speaking of both His divine nature and His human nature. When He went to the cross, He put His human nature on the cross. When He died on the cross, He died as a man. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was split in two from top to bottom. The veil being split signifies the Lord being split, (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:20). The cherubim embroidered on the veil were also split. The veil signifies Christ, and the cherubim embroidered on it signify the creatures. The splitting of the veil signifies that all creatures died with Christ.

The Jews think that the death of Jesus was just the death of a rebel, but a saved person knows that Jesus died to bear his sins. Those who have a further understanding of salvation know that Jesus also bore all the old creation in

His death. His death, however, was not an end, because He resurrected after three days to become the Spirit. Therefore, whenever anyone calls on His name today, the Holy Spirit enters into him. Thus, Christ and man are identified.

Before His ascension, Jesus was Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23), meaning “God with us”; after His resurrection, He is with us even more. Now He lives in us until the consummation of the age (28:20). Everyone who is saved has Christ. Once we were in Adam, but now we are in Christ. Once we were in a kingdom of darkness, but now we are in another kingdom. There are only two kingdoms in the universe: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Today we have been transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God.

Once we were only in Adam, but through the second birth, that is, regeneration, we have entered into Christ and are now in Christ. However, even though we are in Christ, we still bear Adam’s resemblance. Nevertheless, God sees only the ark, not us. When we see ourselves, we see the old creation, but when God sees us, He sees only Christ.

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST BEING THE WAY TO SALVATION

Noah’s family passed through the flood because they were joined to the ark. Redemption is based on union. We must be joined to Christ in order to be saved. In order to be joined to Christ we must be delivered from Adam. From Adam we have inherited sin and death, which must be judged. Therefore, a person must be freed from the sin in Adam in order to be joined to Christ.

BEING IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST AND LIVING IN THE LAW OF LIFE

For those who are in Adam, sinning is easy and natural. Sinning is as easy and natural as breathing. Those who are not saved do not need to prepare to sin or even make an effort to sin, because sinning is easy and natural. Although it is easy to sin in Adam, it is impossible not to sin in Adam. No matter how much force and effort we exert, we will sin because the law of sin and of death is a part of Adam (Rom. 7:23; 8:2).

There is also a law in Christ, and in this law of the Spirit of life, we have been freed in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death (v. 2). This is because the death of Christ, which dealt with sin, and the resurrection of Christ, which dealt with death, have been given to us through our identification with Him.

It is natural for a person in Adam to sin. It is also natural for a person in Christ to be freed from sin and death. It is also natural for a Christian to obey God's will in Christ. Whenever we behold Christ, we are freed from sin. Whenever we behold Christ, we become holy. It is natural for us to obey God's will and to practice the goodness of God in the law of life. This is to be identified with Christ; this also is the way of a Christian.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:12-18, 21-25; 8:1-2

The law of the Spirit of life is the highest item in the New Testament. If we would know God's relationship with us in Christ, we need to know this law. Utterance concerning the law of the Spirit of life does not exist in the thoughts, the classical writings, or the philosophies of the world. Even among Christian publications in general, there is not much utterance. Nevertheless, because of his considerable spiritual experience related to the law of the Spirit of life, the apostle Paul spoke of it in detail. Romans 7 and 8 speak of the climax of Paul's spiritual experience in relation to this law. Regrettably, most Christians neglect the law of the Spirit of life and pay attention only to the Holy Spirit.

It is only in the recent decades that we in the churches of God have discovered the experience of the law of the Spirit of life in our study of the Word. Even though we had some experience of this law, we did not have adequate knowledge of it or adequate utterance related to it. Thank the Lord that we have discovered this item in the Bible in recent years. This has enabled us to see more things related to the path of life. I have been saved for twenty-five years, and during these years I paid a great price to pursue spiritual growth and an overcoming life. Nevertheless, it was difficult to see this matter, and only in the last ten years has the Lord shown me and given me greater understanding of the law of the Spirit of life. Those who desire to advance in the spiritual life must know the law of the Spirit of life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

In a Christian's personal life, the most mysterious and crucial matter is the law of the Spirit of life. If one merely wants to be a zealous Christian who preaches the gospel enthusiastically or wants to be an ethical person, it is not necessary to know the law of the Spirit of life. However, if we sincerely want to know how to fellowship with God and to know the meaning of the Lord's living in us and our living in the Lord, we need to know the law of the Spirit of life.

FOUR LAWS IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

The word *law* is mentioned in Romans 7 and 8 numerous times. Romans 7:21 says, “I find then the law with me who wills to do the good.” Verse 22 speaks of “the law of God,” and verse 23 speaks of “the law of my mind” and “the law of sin which is in my members.” “The law of sin which is in my members” in verse 23 is the “law of sin” in verse 25. In Romans 8:2 there is “the law of the Spirit of life.” According to the preceding verses, there are four laws: the law of God, the law of the mind, the law of sin, and the law of the Spirit of life.

While psychologists consider man to be of two parts—soul and body—the Bible speaks of man as having three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). The body is the flesh, which is common to all creatures; the soul is man’s “self,” which consists of the mind, emotion, and will; and the spirit is the innermost and deepest part of man.

Let us consider these various laws as they relate to the parts of man. First, the law of the mind is in the soul; it is a law that belongs to the soul. This law is not the law of sin, because it wars against sinning and because it wills to do good; hence, it is a law of good. This law, which is related to the soul of created man, is derived from the God-created human life. Man was initially created by God to be good, and this law of good is related to our human nature and human life.

The second law, the law of sin, is the law related to our members, that is, our body. This law is void of any good, and it comes from Satan. When Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he utilized his body. Hence, this law became a law of sin and evil in his members. This law is even the evil one himself. After man was created, he listened to Satan’s word, and Satan entered into his members, becoming his fleshly passions and evil desires. What Chinese philosophers call the “war between rationality and lust” is, in fact, the war between the soul and the body.

The third law is the law of the Spirit of life. Man is involved in the story of creation, the story of the fall, and the story of salvation. When man was created, he received the law of good in his soul. When man fell, he received the law of sin in his body, and when man is saved, he receives the law of the Spirit of life in his spirit. This law transcends both good and evil.

A believer can experience each of these laws. In the morning he can be in his soul, behaving like a man. In the afternoon, he can be in the flesh, living and acting in a devilish manner. However, in the evening, he may turn to his spirit and bear God's image. In the beginning man was put in front of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At this time life was separated from good and evil. When man partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, good and evil were mixed together in him. When man is saved, however, the Spirit of life enters into him so that good, evil, and life exist simultaneously in him. Therefore, these three laws are present in every saved person: the law of good in his mind, the law of sin in his members, and the law of the Spirit of life in his spirit. This is the difference between a saved person and an unbeliever: a saved person has the law of the Spirit of life in addition to the law of good and the law of sin, but an unbeliever has only the law of good and the law of sin. Consequently, a saved person can live by the law of the Spirit of life in his spirit.

In addition to these three laws, there is the law of God that is above man and outside of man, that is, the written law of God. We do not need to learn how to do good or try to avoid evil, because we are no longer limited to the realm of good and evil. We can live by the law of the Spirit of life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE FLOWING OUT OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:4; Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 4:7-11; Gal. 2:20

THREE LAWS IN MAN

In the previous chapter we saw the law of the Spirit of life as a principle. In this chapter we will fellowship about the practical application of this principle. Every person is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. When man was created, the element of his human life was good. Thus, the law of good is in man's soul. When man was tempted and fell, the element of the life of Satan, the devil, entered his body. Consequently, the law of sin and of death, which opposes God, is in man's body. However, when a man is saved, God's life enters into him; hence, the law of the Spirit of life is in a believer's spirit. This law is higher than the law of good and the law of sin and of death.

THREE KINDS OF LIFE IN MAN

In man's soul there is the human life, in man's body there is the devil's life, and in man's spirit there is God's life. When Adam was created, he had only the human life. He was very simple. In the fall man's situation became complicated because the life of the devil came into his body, which is opposed to the law of good in man's soul. Chinese philosophers speak of this opposition as a war between reasoning and lust. Humans with a weak will commit the most sins. In contrast, those with a strong will are more successful in temporarily denying the lusts in the flesh, but they can never fully overcome the lusts of the flesh. This is the reason that ancient Chinese sages spoke of the need to cultivate an overcoming ability. A person who is not saved is quite complicated because he has two lives—the life of man and the life of the devil. After he is saved, he receives yet another life—the life of God.

When man was created, he obtained the human life. After the fall the life of the devil was added, but with salvation man received the life of God. Every believer is like a miniature of the garden of Eden, having the created human

life, the life represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the life represented by the tree of life.

A saved person has three kinds of life, and every life has a law. A law is a natural power that cannot be changed merely because one has a will to change it. The law of good is in our soul, the law of sin and of death is in our flesh, and the law of the Spirit of life is in our spirit. None of these laws can be changed by an act of the will. The nature of the law of good is to do good, and the nature of the law of sin and of death is to do evil (Rom. 7:21-23). A person strives to do good in his soul, but he cannot refrain from doing evil in his flesh. As a person grows, his flesh grows, and the expression of evil grows. This is altogether beyond the control of his will. Even though an unsaved person may be able to do good temporarily, he will do evil in the end.

In addition to the law of good and the law of sin and of death, however, believers have the law of the Spirit of life (8:2). This law of life goes beyond good and evil and is above the law of good and evil. Only this law is able to deliver us out of sin and death. Confucius's teaching related to the bright virtue is an attempt to cultivate the law of good in man's soul. However, Christ's salvation involves much more than this.

CHRIST'S SALVATION BEING TO EXPRESS GOD BY THE LAW OF LIFE

The center of Christ's salvation is God Himself, and the purpose of salvation is to express God, not to express good. Christ's salvation is not related to living by the law of good to express morality; Christ's salvation is related to living by the law of the Spirit of life to express God Himself. Therefore, the cross of Christ deals with both our fallen soul and our lustful body. In the salvation of God the passions and lusts of the body must be crucified, and our soul, our self, must be denied (Gal. 5:24; Matt. 16:24). If the lusts of our body are not crucified and our soul is not denied, the life within our spirit cannot be expressed.

THE SOUL AND THE BODY NEEDING TO BE DEALT WITH IN ORDER FOR THE LIFE OF GOD TO FLOW OUT

In order for God's life to flow out, the soul and the body must be dealt with. The soul must be denied because the human life is incapable of accomplishing the good that it desires to do. Without the life of God there is no way for man to do good. Moreover, the good that comes out of the life of God is far above the good that is related to the life of the soul.

According to the Bible, there are three different kinds of good or goodness. The first kind of good is related to the good that is reflected in the creation of man. God regarded His work of creating man as being very good, and this good was expressed through the goodness of man's soul. The second kind of good is related to the good that is a part of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the good that can be distinguished from evil. The third kind of good is related to the good that is God Himself (Mark 10:18). This is the good that God wants us to express. Of these three kinds of good, only the good of God is the true good. It is not even possible to work out the other two kinds of good without God's life. The good of God can be worked out only by the law of the Spirit of life. Whenever life flows out, the good of God is lived out. Hence, the good in God can flow out only when Christians are subject to the law of the Spirit of life.

Before a man is saved, he may not treat his wife well. But after he is saved, he will make up his mind to treat his wife well. His determination is related to his will to do good. If he could succeed in this determination, he would fulfill the law of good through his soul. But if salvation could be obtained through the fulfillment of good by the soul, there would be no need for the law of the Spirit of life. Our need for the law of the Spirit of life proves that our will to do good cannot succeed. The good desires of the soul can never be accomplished by the soul. Consequently, God has no desire for us to focus on cultivating our soul; instead, He wants us to deny the soul because it hinders the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit. If a man makes up his mind to treat his wife well, his efforts will end only in failure. In contrast, the law of the Spirit of life is perfect. It goes far beyond the good things related to our human life. The purpose of the law of the Spirit of life is not for us to do good or even for us to avoid evil; it is for us to express God by letting His life flow out. Only in this expression is there a true overcoming.

GOD DEALING WITH EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS LIFE

Christians should let God's life flow out. The first step of salvation involves the cross dealing with all our sins. The second step involves the cross dealing with our soul. Salvation is related to Christ living out of us by flowing out of us as life.

If a person is governed by his emotions, God will deal with his emotions. If a person is controlled by his strong will, God will deal with his will. If a person lives by his complicated mind, God will deal with his mind. God will deal with everything that hinders the flowing of the divine life so that His life can be expressed.

The real hindrance to the flowing out of God's life is not sin or evil but the goodness in man's soul. The real hindrance to the flowing out of God's life is not a hot temper or pride but the meekness and humility of the self. God must deal with the goodness that comes out of the self. If a person's self hinders God's life from flowing out, God's hand will surely come upon him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 15:5; 1 John 2:27

The Gospel of John and the first Epistle of John contain numerous references to abiding in the Lord (John 15:4-7; 1 John 2:24, 27-28; 4:13). Since John's writings are focused on life, we must be clear about the matter of abiding in the Lord. Abiding in the Lord is the fellowship of the divine life. When we speak of electricity, we often use the word *flow*, which is a good description of fellowship. Although a room may have many lights, there is only one electrical current. Every light in a room shares the same electrical current as the other lights. This means that an electrical current is flowing through all the lights. The same is true of the divine life. In Christ there is only one life, and the life within one believer is the life within another believer. Our life is the very life that is in the Lord. Even though there are many believers, we all have only one life. Therefore, we must know the mutual flow, the fellowship of life. This fellowship is the fellowship in Christ.

An electric light shines because it has "fellowship" with a power generator, and there is an electrical current "abiding" in the power plant. The same is true of Christians. Even though a Christian lives on the earth, he has fellowship with the heavenly Christ, and even though he lives on earth, he is in the heavenly Christ. Although a Christian lives on the earth, the heavenly, divine life within him can flow when he abides in the Lord.

Lights shine when electricity is transmitted to them. The same is true of the divine life. All Christians are connected to the heavenly Christ, and when we abide in the heavenly Christ, the fellowship of life flows. This is a great thing.

LIFE BEING CONNECTED TO GOD

When I was working in Chefoo in 1943, China and Japan were still in a state of conflict. The Japanese military disliked the church, and they suspected that I had a special political assignment. At that time there were over one hundred brothers and sisters who were preparing to migrate to the northwest. This aroused even more suspicion from the Japanese. In my briefcase I had

contact addresses and letters from Canton, Chengtu, Chungching, and even places in Southeast Asia. These items were always with me and never left my side. Forty to fifty days after my activities caught the attention of the Japanese, a brother came from Beijing to distribute toothbrushes to me and to the responsible brothers in Chefoo. I piled the toothbrushes on the table in order to distribute them according to the names on my contact list. I took the name list from my briefcase and gave it to a brother so that the toothbrushes could be distributed. A day later, as I was meeting with the brothers about our work, Japanese agents intruded unexpectedly. They seized my briefcase and interrogated me carefully. During this time I was exercised to be in the fellowship of the divine life. Eventually, they could not find anything and left, and I was full of praise and worship to God.

The divine life within us is connected to God. However, there can be barriers to our fellowship with Him. Hence, we need to continuously contact the Lord, live in His light, and abide in the fellowship. When we obey the teaching of the anointing within us, the fellowship of the divine life flows within us. The most important matter for a Christian is to maintain the fellowship of the divine life. In this fellowship we have rest and joy. It is possible, however, that there can be an interruption in the fellowship. This is especially true if we do not care for the teaching of the anointing. Hence, we must learn to obey the anointing. We must consider every matter in the light of our fellowship with God, not according to our own view or even the views of others. No matter how good our view or the views of others are, we should not do anything without fellowshiping with the Lord. We have to learn to obey the Lord, learning to do all things according to His will.

It is also possible for our fellowship to not be fresh. If our fellowship is not fresh, we need to consecrate ourselves again and deal with every hindrance, whether the hindrance is within us or outside of us. If we do this, the fellowship of the divine life within us will be restored, and the divine life will begin to flow again.

When we have fellowship with God, we surely have fellowship with the brothers and the church. If we avoid contact with God's children, contact with the church, and contact with the Word, something is wrong with our fellowship with God. When an electric light is not connected to the source of electricity, it will not shine. In order to abide in the Lord, Christians must live in the fellowship of life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

SERVICE ACCORDING TO REVELATION

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-9; 10:9-16; 13:2; Gal. 1:16; 2:1-2; Eph. 1:17

SERVICE ACCORDING TO NATURE AND SERVICE ACCORDING TO REVELATION

What is revelation? In Greek, the word *revelation* means “unveiling,” which is the opening of a covering, a veil, so that people can see what is inside. Therefore, to reveal is to open a veil so that others can see. In theology there are two categories of religion: natural religion and revealed religion. In this instance *religion* actually refers to service. Hence, we prefer to use the term *service* in this chapter.

Service according to nature is derived from the conditions of nature, and the knowledge concerning God that is associated with it is acquired through study and research. On the contrary, service according to revelation comes from God’s direct speaking. All the religions in the world are related to the category of natural service. True worship and service are revealed by God Himself, and they bring us to Christ.

We can use medicine to see the difference between an understanding that is according to nature and an understanding that is according to revelation. If a sick person tries to determine the best remedy for his sickness based on his own research and analysis, rather than a doctor’s judgment, his understanding will be incomplete and natural. However, if a sick person receives a prescription from a doctor who is able to confirm its benefits, the sick person’s understanding of the medicine will be according to revelation. Natural service is incomplete and inaccurate, but service according to revelation comes directly from God; hence, its completeness and accuracy are beyond question.

The Bible is a record of God’s revelation; it is God’s opening the veil to reveal Himself to us. The Bible is like a prescription given to us by a doctor. Even though we have light from the Bible, there are still many people in

Christianity who are involved only with natural service to God. We have to pay much attention to this matter.

Service according to revelation is a service that God grants us to see and touch. Service according to revelation is different from service according to doctrine. When I was in Kaohsiung recently, the brothers asked me to speak something, and I had a feeling to speak about consecration. The speaking was full of the anointing, and this speaking was according to revelation. However, if I were to give the same message in Taipei simply because I enjoyed much grace when I spoke in Kaohsiung, my service would be natural rather than according to revelation. My speaking in Kaohsiung was truly a service according to revelation, but if I spoke the same subject in Taipei without an inner leading, my speaking would be according to doctrine.

Any service that is rendered according to the will of man or according to the environment is a doctrinal service, a natural service, no matter how well it is done. Service according to revelation is a service that comes from contacting God and touching God's will in fellowship with Him. It is a service involving subjective spiritual experience.

Any service that results from the fashion of the times and from outward demands is natural service, not service according to revelation. If we receive an anointing as we open ourselves and fellowship with God, the resulting service will be according to revelation. We should not be influenced by the environment; instead, we need to have direct fellowship and contact with God.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICE ACCORDING TO REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Example of Saul and Ananias

Before Saul met the Lord on the way to Damascus, he served God zealously, but his service was a natural service. Before he met the Lord, he never truly touched God. However, on the way to Damascus, he heard a voice from heaven. Although he was zealous for God in the heavens, he thought that he was only persecuting Christians on the earth. When he heard the voice, he asked, "Who are You, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). In his mind Saul had been persecuting Stephen and John, not the Lord in heaven. Nevertheless, through

the Lord's speaking, Saul realized that he was persecuting Jesus when he was persecuting Christians on earth. After he fell to the ground and was blinded, he was able to rise up only when others led him by the hand. The eyes of many in the world should similarly be blinded in order for them to learn dependence. Saul needed others to lead him by his hand, the same hand that arrested and persecuted Christians. He could no longer depend on himself. This was the start of his service according to revelation. Ananias's looking for Saul is also an example of service according to revelation (vv. 10-12).

The Example of Peter

Another example involves Peter's service. Even after spending three and a half years under the Lord's leading, Peter still could not break away from his natural service to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. However, when he received a revelation from God in chapter 10, he went to Cornelius's house to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This service was according to revelation (vv. 9-16, 24-43). Service according to revelation is not derived from doctrinal consideration; it comes out of the revealed will of God.

HOW TO RECEIVE REVELATION

In order to receive revelation, we need to go before God and open to Him, consecrate everything to Him, and live in fellowship with Him. In this way we will receive revelation from Him. We should not hold on to our own views or be influenced by our background, traditions, customs, and circumstances. We should condemn whatever God shines on, and we should obey God's will. In this way we will spontaneously receive revelation from Him. There must be the shining of light, and there must also be seeing in order for revelation to become a vision. All the service of a believer and of the church should be according to revelation.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11

THE NEW TESTAMENT SERVICE

BEING THE CORPORATE SERVICE OF THE SAINTS

The service of the church is the corporate service of all the saints in a local church. In the Bible the church refers to both the house of God and the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:19; 1:22-23). The house of God is a matter of enjoyment, whereas the Body of Christ is a matter of service. In the house of God every saint should have enjoyment, and in the Body of Christ all the members should carry out their function and serve one another. The New Testament service is not an individualistic service, a service of individuals; rather, it is a corporate service, a service of all the saints (Rom. 12:3-8). It is not an individual move but a corporate move.

Concerning the saints' service to God, the Bible does not give any ground to individuals. When we serve God, we must serve as members one of another. God sees the church on the earth as the Body of Christ, and all the believers are the members of the Body. Hence, the saints cannot serve God individualistically. Every member has a function, and all the members must be coordinated together in order to manifest the beauty of the Body. If some members are not coordinated, they will be separated from the other members and be unable to manifest their function. If there is only a hand on the table, it will not be able to function, and it will also look quite frightening. In the service of God the saints can never act alone, serving as individuals, because we are not individuals. In our service we cannot be individualistic or be separated from the other members.

A member that is detached from the body not only looks ugly; it even frightens people. No matter how great the function of a member is, he is only a member; and no matter how small the function of a member is, he is still a member. Our status will forever be as a member, that is, a member of the Body; as such, we cannot be separated from the Body and exist by ourselves. Hence, our service should always be as members one of another; it should be

the service of the church, not a service of individuals. In the church all the members are equal, and all are in the Body of Christ.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IN SERVING GOD BEING UPON EVERY SAINT

When Western missionaries first came to China, they worked as if they were running a school. The Chinese church members were similar to students who merely listened to sermons and donated money. God, however, does not want His children to serve Him in this way. God does not want a few men to run the church; rather, He desires that every one of us would serve Him. The responsibility of the church to serve God rests with every saint, not with just a few people.

Recently, when I visited a church in southern Taiwan, I was so delighted to see the brothers and sisters serving God corporately. I have seen the same thing in the churches in northern Taiwan. Rather than a few saints doing everything, all the saints are serving corporately. All the saints in the localities are keeping the principle of serving God corporately. In each locality the saints are rising up to serve God corporately.

GOD DESIRING TO RECOVER THE SERVICE OF ALL THE SAINTS

In order for God to have a way to go on, all the saints in all the localities must rise up to serve God corporately. In the early days there was the service of the apostles as well as the service of the saints; the apostles were in the midst of the saints. Today God has to recover the service of the saints, which is the corporate service of the saints. From the time of Martin Luther until now, the recovery of the church has been moving toward the recovery of this matter.

In 1943 the saints in the church in Chefoo were willing to migrate to the northwest to serve, and the church made arrangements for this. There were over one hundred people in the first group who went, consisting of tailors, shoemakers, rickshaw drivers, and other saints who were common laborers. Most of them went to the regions of Paotou and Shanpa; now there are four to five hundred saints serving God there. Today there are dozens of places in Suiyuan that have the Lord's table. This was not the work of a few individuals

or preachers; rather, it has come out of the corporate service of the saints. Hence, the service of God is not just a service of a few preachers but a service of all the saints. Since 1943 God's hand has confirmed this matter of service through migration. Due to the political situation, many saints from mainland China came to Taiwan. This environment was arranged by God, and it caused the saints to migrate to Taiwan in great numbers and in different ways.

GOD'S BLESSING BEING UPON THE SERVICE OF THE SAINTS

The service of the saints involves more than preaching the gospel, helping people, and perfecting people. Even miscellaneous affairs, such as cleaning chairs, sweeping the floor, and preparing meals, are part of the service. Even if there are specific people serving in relation to specific items, there should always be an opening for other saints to serve. There is a spiritual element in every kind of service. The heart and prayer of the saints for the service will always bring in God's blessing.

For example, the responsibility to preach the gospel does not rest upon a few brothers who preach or the responsible brothers in the church; it rests upon all the saints because the gospel is a corporate service of the saints. In 1942 there were only about one hundred thirty brothers in the church in Tsingtao. After two months of all the saints serving, the number increased to over two hundred; in the second year there were more than six hundred. This shows the blessing upon the corporate service in a locality.

God's work in China is to raise up saints to serve Him and to have the saints rise up corporately to serve God. In order to serve God, we must learn the lessons of being dealt with and being broken. A person who has learned the lessons in the Holy Place is a person who has learned the lessons in the church, and he is also a person who has learned the lessons in the service. In the service of the church, God does not require us to be efficient; rather, He requires us to be dealt with, to be broken, and to learn to be submissive, being able to be subject to authority and to obey His leading.