

**LIVING BY
THE LAW OF LIFE**

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by Watchman Nee

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CHAPTER ONE

SIN AND THE BODY

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Romans 6:6 and 11 through 14 explain the relationship between sin and the body in the clearest way. We want to look at this portion briefly.

Verse 6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." Before we were regenerated to be a new man, though we did not admit it, we were simply an old man. Only when we received the new man was our old man exposed. This old man includes everything we have in the old creation. In His crucifixion the Lord Jesus was a substitute for our sin and death. He also brought every sinner to the cross. His death was the death of the entire human race because through incarnation He became one with man. His death was the death of our old man because through faith we are one with Him. It is a fact that "our old man has been crucified with Him." The Lord Jesus accomplished this for us.

What is the purpose of our crucifixion with Him on the cross? It is so that "the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." Here we see the relationship between sin and the body. We "serve sin" because "the body of sin" has not been "annulled." All the power of sin is in this body. The base and stronghold of sin are the body. Man is a slave of sin because the body is a slave of sin. If the body is not dealt with by the cross, our whole body will be entangled by sin.

Other verses in the Bible also link sin and the body together because the body is the dwelling place of sin. Romans 7:17-18 says that sin "dwells in me...in me, that is, in my flesh." Verse 23 says, "Making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members." Colossians 3:5 says, "Put to death therefore your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and greediness."

From God's point of view, the body of man is actually the body of sin because sin is the instigator of the body. By reading the foregoing verses, we can see how closely sin and the body are related. All sins committed by man are affected by the body. Understanding the reason for this is not very difficult because "the lust, having conceived, gives birth to sin" (James 1:15). The root of sin is lust, and the hiding place for lust is the body. The Bible speaks of "the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Actually, countless numbers of sins originate from our physical body. Because a certain kind of lust exists in the body, the corresponding sin issues forth.

If a man wants to be delivered from the power of sin and to no longer be a slave of sin, he must overcome his body. In Romans 6:6 the apostle tells us how the Lord saved us from the bondage of the body: He took our old man with Him to the cross, thus annulling the body of sin. According to the original text, the meaning of the word annul is to "disable," "dull," and "wither." By His accomplishment on the cross, the Lord has disabled and withered our body of sin, so that we no longer need to be the slaves of sin. The body still exists; it is not annihilated or totally dissolved. But all the lusts that come as a result of our physical make-up are withered away and made of no effect by the Lord. Although we all have our natural weaknesses inherited from our physical make-up, we can still have complete victory through the cross.

Verse 11 says, "So also you, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus." Verse 6 tells us three things: a fact, a purpose, and a result. To die together is a fact, to be annulled is the purpose of dying together, and to overcome sin is the final result. But verse 11 teaches us the way to practice verse 6, by reckoning what the Lord has accomplished as real. Verse 6 says that our old man has been crucified with Him and that the body of sin has been annulled. Now, by believing this to be true, we receive that work of the Lord's cross which deals with our body. And soon we shall see all the passion, evil desire, and natural disposition and affection of the body put to death by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 12 says, "Do not let sin therefore reign in your mortal body so that you obey the body's lusts." The salvation of the Lord Jesus is complete in that He has crucified our old man; "therefore," we can be liberated now. If sin still reigns in our mortal body, it is no longer because we have to obey sin; rather, it is because we choose to allow sin to reign. The whole question now is a

matter of the choice of our will. Since the Lord Jesus has crucified our old man, the problem is no longer whether or not the body of sin can be overcome. The question now is how do we choose? If we "do not let" sin reign in our body, the evil desire in the members cannot force us to surrender. On the other hand, if we do not use our will to choose what the Lord has accomplished for us, we may still serve sin as slaves in our experience, even though the Lord has crucified our old man. Many believers do not understand why they do not see the effectiveness of their co-death, even though they have believed the truth of co-death. I believe that not a few have made their mistake here. Though we believe that the fact in verse 6 is true, our will must resist the reigning of sin as stated in verse 12. Only then will the fact accomplished by the Lord become effective. Otherwise, if our will responds to sin, our believing will be of no effect. Formerly, the body and sin were deeply united (hence the term "the body of sin"). Now, however, because of the Lord's salvation, believers need not let sin reign in their body any longer. Although the body still has its lusts, the believers need not obey them.

Verse 13 says, "Neither present your members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness to God." Here we have the word "neither" which follows "do not let" in verse 12. "Do not let" is related to the body, and "neither present" is related to the members. The first verse refers to the whole, while the second verse refers to the parts. The first verse refers to a denial of the place of sin in the entire body, and the second verse refers to a denial of the reigning of sin in the individual members.

What a relationship we can see here between sin and our body with its members. Sin needs the body to be its dwelling place and the members to be its instruments. Without the body and its members, there is no place for sin to be expressed. If believers want to overcome sin in their body, they must reject its reign. If they want to overcome sin in their members, they must not be its instruments.

In the following verses there is the matter of two presentations. One is the presentation of ourselves, and the other is the presentation of the members. The phrases "do not let" and "neither present" are on the negative side, whereas the two presentations mentioned in verse 13 are on the positive side. Presenting ourselves is presenting our entire body. It is to completely present to God our entire being through the exercise of our will, allowing God to be

Master over everything. Presenting the members means consecrating every individual member to God to accomplish righteousness. These presentations are all in the realm of resurrection. If the believer wants to overcome all the natural lust, addiction, and inclination of his body, as well as all the weakness, uncleanness, and sin which come from his physical constitution, he must rely on the fact that he has died together with the Lord and must exercise his will to oppose and reject the authority of sin in his body. He must not allow sin to use any of his members as an expression of its power. Moreover, based upon the resurrection of the Lord, he must yield himself to God so that he may employ his members positively in accomplishing righteousness. If a believer merely has faith in the co-death but does not exercise his will in rejecting, his faith is dead and is of no effect. On the other hand, if a believer merely exercises his will to "not let," and does not take as a foundation the fact of our co-death with the Lord, the exercise of his will is in vain. After he has thus properly taken care of the negative side, he must also believe on the positive side that he is resurrected with the Lord. Then he must yield himself and his members to God.

Presenting oneself positively is the most important step in overcoming the body. Our will must be subject to God. Otherwise, there is no possibility of overcoming. We must not only renounce sin but also pursue God. It is not enough to stop committing sin; we must also desire righteousness. The positive going forward will keep us from the negative sliding backward. If we act according to the order God has set forth and specifically present ourselves and all our members to Him who has called us unto consecration, He will surely accept such a presenting of ourselves. He will saturate us with Himself and cause us to do His will in all things. We must present ourselves continuously and believe that the resurrection life of Christ is being lived out of us in reality. The result of this practice is verse 14: "Sin will not lord it over you."

CHAPTER TWO

THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH

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Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:1-4

These four verses can be considered the most important passage in the whole Bible. A certain believer once said that the whole Bible is like a ring studded with a precious stone. The book of Romans is the precious stone on the ring, and chapter eight is like the light that shines from that stone. This may seem descriptive, but those who have experience will admit that it is true. Although Romans 8 is very clear, it is also very deep. Although it is very easy, at the same time, it is very hard. Romans 8:1-4 occupies a special place in this chapter. There are four chapters in Romans which are quite important; they are chapters five through eight. Chapter five speaks of forgiveness in Christ. Chapter six speaks of union in Christ. Chapter seven speaks of the flesh not being able to keep the law of God. And chapter eight speaks of the fulfillment of the righteousness of God's law in Christ. Romans 8:1-4 embodies the meaning of these four chapters. Verse 1 speaks of having no condemnation in Christ. Verse 2 speaks of union in Christ. Verse 3 speaks of that which the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh. Finally, verse 4 speaks of being able to do in Christ what otherwise could not be done. Hence, these four verses are the crystallization of the salvation that we have received.

Before I speak on verses 1 through 4, I would like you to pay attention to one thing. What does Romans 7 speak about? Romans 7 says that "to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (v. 18). Brothers and sisters, is this not true? Many times, we make up our mind to do good, but we cannot work out our will. We know to do good, but we cannot do it. We do not want to love the world and we want to serve God, yet we cannot. Romans 7 can be summarized by one word: "cannot." Please remember that above every person's head the word "cannot" is written in big letters. If you have never tried to do good, you will not realize your inability. But if you seriously try to overcome, you will find that you cannot. Not only are you unable to perform

things as profound as serving God, but you cannot even do a small thing such as getting up early in the morning to pray. You may want to read the Bible uninterrupted every day of the year, but you cannot. These may be small things. Yet many Christians cannot do them. They may be able to do them for a day or two. At most they can do them for a week, after which they fail again. You may be well aware of a sin, yet you cannot remove the sin. For example, you may have a temper which is very difficult to overcome. There was once a believer with a bad temper who knew that he should not have such a temper. One day, one of the best vases in his house was broken by his servant. He was afraid of losing his temper if he looked at the broken vase, so he went to bed and covered his head with a blanket. But what is the difference between a temper under the blanket and a temper outside the blanket? Many Christians want to speak truthfully and not exaggerate. Yet they cannot. They fall once and they fall twice. Although they do not want to fall again, they find themselves falling still. They do not want to love the world. Yet they cannot avoid it. They want to live fully for God. Yet they cannot. Although they want to work for God, their hearts are distracted whenever they think of what others have achieved. Numerous experiences have proven to us that we cannot. In Romans 7, Paul told us only one thing: "cannot." He was desperate, and he said, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Brothers and sisters, how many of you sitting here want to be free from jealousy and pride, and find that you cannot do it? How many of you do not want to love the world and find that you cannot stop loving the world? How many of you have willed to do good and found that you cannot do good? How many of you have failed once, twice, until you have given up trying to overcome? Is this word of mine merely a law which does nothing but serve as a mirror to expose you? No, here is the gospel.

Romans 8:1 says, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." "Now" means that yesterday is over and that there is a way. Now in Christ there is a way. How precious this is!

A scholar in Greek demonstrated that according to reliable manuscripts the word condemnation has two kinds of usages. The first is in the legal sense, while the other is in the civil sense. The civil sense is the common usage. According to the civil sense, the word condemnation means "powerless," and "restricted." Brothers and sisters, from this verse we can find immeasurable comfort! Indeed, a person who is in Christ is no longer condemned legally, and as far as his flesh is concerned, he is powerless no more. There are no

more restrictions in Christ. What Paul complained he was unable to do can, now be done in Christ.

Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Please notice that it speaks of two laws here: the law of the Spirit of life and the law of sin and of death. Why does it say "the law of the Spirit of life" in Christ frees us from "the law of sin and of death," rather than "the Spirit of life" frees us from "sin and death"? What is the difference between "the Spirit of life" and "the law of the Spirit of life"? What is the difference between "sin and death" and "the law of sin and of death"?

Sin is an inward power. The law of sin is the habit of sin. For example, there is the force of gravity. Whenever we drop something, it is attracted by the force of gravity. The force of gravity becomes a law because it pulls down everything by habit. If I drop a book here, it will fall to the ground. If I drop the book in another place, it will still fall to the ground. This is the effect of a law. If a book falls when it is dropped here, but does not fall when it is dropped elsewhere, then it is not governed by a law. Anything habitual, anything that produces the same result from the same action is a law.

Sin is one thing, and the law of sin is another. We sin because within us there is the law of sin. This is like a book falling to the ground because there is the law of gravity. Brothers and sisters, have you seen this? Our sinning is a law. We do not sin or fall by accident. To sin is a habit, and to fall is a habit. Both sinning and falling have become a law. A law is something that will give the same result anywhere and in every way when given the same action. If our sinning is accidental and not caused by a law of sin, there are still ways to solve it. For example, if you sin because your environment is bad or your job is bad, you can change the environment or change jobs, and you will then stop sinning. But brothers and sisters, this book, the Bible, tells us that we do not sin by accident, but by a law of sin. Suppose you lose your temper easily. You would lose your temper easily in Shanghai, and you would lose your temper easily even if you go to Hangchow. You lose your temper easily in your business. But if you change your job, you will still lose your temper easily. No matter when or where, your temper will break out. Brothers and sisters, the Bible shows us that a law of sin has firmly grasped us. It may be possible to overcome sin, and it may be possible to overcome death, but it is impossible to overcome the law of sin and of death!

Why does the Bible say "the law of sin and of death" instead of "the law of sin" and "the law of death"? This is because sin and death are just one law. The law of sin and of death are not two laws, but two aspects of one law. With respect to sin, this law has a habit to positively commit many sins. With respect to death, this law deprives one of the power to keep the demands of the law. This is on the negative side. Many people do not understand the meaning of "death." "Death" means to be weak to the uttermost, to be without any strength, and to be without life. Death is a law because weakness and powerlessness are our habitual experience. Romans 7 emphasizes these two things. Paul said, "I do not do the good which I will"—this refers to death, and "the evil which I do not will, this I practice"—this refers to sin (v. 19). All the problems we encounter daily within ourselves are the result of the law of sin and of death. Many times, we do not have the strength to do what we desire to do, and we do not have the strength to not do what we do not want to do.

Brothers and sisters, we need to see how evil the law of sin and of death is! Not only should we hate sin, but we should hate the law of sin and of death. We are so helpless before this law. But praise and thank the Lord, He has a total salvation. God's salvation does not deal with our individual sins. God's salvation deals with the root, the law. Formerly, when we encountered the same temptations, we produced the same results. But we do not have to have the same results now. This is the difference between having the law of the Spirit and not having the law of the Spirit. Apart from this, there is no victory.

Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Where are we freed from the law of sin and of death? We are freed in Christ Jesus. I have to say "Hallelujah! All is well in Christ Jesus." The Bible does not say that in Christ we will be condemned, nor does it say that in Christ we will sin. It says that in Christ there is no more condemnation, and in Him we are free.

What does it mean to be in Christ? To be in Christ means to be joined to Him. We cannot be joined to Christ by ourselves, but when Christ died, God joined us in His death. We have died in the death of Christ and have been resurrected in the resurrection of Christ. When we believed in Christ, we believed into Christ. John 3:16 says, "That every one who believes into Him...would have eternal life." To believe means to believe into. By faith we are joined into Christ. Romans 6:3 says, "All of us who have been baptized into Christ..." When we believe and are baptized, that baptism puts us into

Christ. This is faith. Although you cannot understand how you have been joined to Christ, it does not matter, for when you were baptized through faith, God joined you to Christ. There is not one saved Christian who is not in Christ; every one of them is in Christ.

What have we received in Christ? Romans 8:1-2 reveals two things were done that are most precious, and for which we can thank and praise God! Christ dealt with our sins through His crucifixion, and Christ dealt with our death—our utter spiritual weakness—through His resurrection from the dead. In the same way that Christ overcame sin, we will overcome sin. In the same way that Christ overcame death, we will overcome death. We are freed in Christ, which means that we are liberated in Christ and are delivered from the law of sin and of death.

I do not know what kind of law you have inside that does particular things, but I know that within you there is a law of sin and of death. You have your own particular law of sin and of death, but I can tell you that the law of the Spirit of life has freed you in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death. The law of the Spirit of life is the law of resurrection, which is the same law that caused the Lord to resurrect from the dead. The life that we received on the day we believed in the Lord is a resurrection life; it is also the regenerating life. When we believed in the Lord, we received not only a resurrection, we also received the law of the Spirit of life. This law frees and delivers us from the law of sin and of death. When we believed in the Lord, the Holy Spirit entered into our heart and dispensed to us the Lord's life which overcomes sin and death, so that we can overcome sin and death through the Spirit of life. Brothers and sisters, perhaps you do not understand this, but that is all right. All that you have to do is to lay hold of God's Word. You can say to God, "Your Word says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Does the Bible say that we are about to be freed? No. Does it say that we will be freed? No! The Bible says, "Freed!" I was like one who was imprisoned, and the law of sin and of death chained me with a chain that was even stronger than a jailer's chains. The law of sin and of death surrounded me, more than a prison cell surrounds a prisoner. But now, the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ. I am like one who has been released from prison. When a man receives the order that he will be released from prison, does he come out joyfully or does he come out wailing and weeping? The minute he is released, the very same minute, he comes out joyfully. It is the law of the Spirit of life that has freed me and has delivered

me from the law of sin and of death. The freeing is the work of the Spirit, while deliverance is the result we have received.

Brothers and sisters, would you hold onto God's Word by faith? Do you know how much this life includes? God not only saves you from sin and death, but He also saves you from the law of sin and of death. Are you ensnared by filthy thoughts, jealousies, and tempers? Would you believe that "the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death"? Let me ask, "Are you in Christ?" If you are in Christ, you are freed and delivered from the law of sin and of death. Would you believe that the sin that ensnared you, ensnared you even yesterday, has been unshackled in Christ? Even if you are the greatest sinner among one million people, would you believe that as soon as you lay hold of the Word, "the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death," that there is nothing that you cannot do? If I merely exhort you to be good today, what difference is there from the men of the world who exhort you to be moral and ethical? What difference is there from exhorting you to keep God's law? We thank God that the Bible tells us what God has done for us in Christ. As long as we believe, everything will be all right. There is not another way to victory in the whole world. You can buffet your body and deny yourselves. You may be able to overcome sin and death in this way. But you will not be able to overcome the law of sin and of death. Brothers and sisters, we can lift up our heads to thank the Lord, saying, "The law which causes me to constantly sin has been dealt with by You." There is no other way. All we have to do is to believe that, at the time we were saved, God freed us from the filthy and weak law through the Spirit in Christ. Once we believe, we overcome. As soon as we believe, the Holy Spirit will immediately work, and the law that has been enslaving us will not be able to control us any longer. I know that I have sinned, and I know the seriousness of the law of sin and of death. But I believe that in Christ the law of sin and of death will not have power over me.

Gravity is a law, but if you hold a book with your hand, the power of the hand overcomes the law of gravity. It does not mean that the law of gravity is removed; it merely means that another law has overcome it. In the same principle, the law of the Spirit of life frees me from the law of sin and of death. The law of sin and of death has not been annulled, but another law prevents me from being ensnared by the law of sin and of death. Consequently, I do not feel that there is a law of sin and of death. Suppose the government has a law that forbids robbery. If I never have the inclination to be a robber, the law has

nothing to do with me. It does not mean that there is no such a law; it merely means that I have never wanted to be a robber; therefore, I never feel the existence of the law.

Sin is an outward act, while a law is an inward demand. If a man overcomes sin, he has only overcome isolated acts. If he overcomes the law of sin, he has overcome the demand of the law of sin. Suppose a man loves to drink. He can force himself once or twice not to drink, but he cannot remove from within him the desire for wine. I have a friend who was addicted to theatrical shows before he believed in the Lord. As soon as the gong and the drums sounded, he would be moved in his heart. Once in a village near our school, there was a theatrical show in honor of the idols, and the plays went on for three days and three nights. He attended the shows the whole time and did not go home for three days and three nights. When he became too tired, he fell on the floor and slept. After he woke up, he watched the shows again. He did this continuously for three days and three nights. After he believed in the Lord, the Lord delivered him from the law of sin and of death. Now he does not have to force himself not to go; there is something within him that makes him not want to go. This is how God delivers us from sin and death. God delivers man first from within so that man will not be bound by the inward law. After this, there will spontaneously be good conduct without.

God frees us from the law of sin and of death; He does not make the law of sin and of death depart from us. Suppose that I do not want this book to fall on the ground. I do not have to exert all of my strength to remove the force of gravity. All I have to do is to hold this book. The law of gravity may still be there, but the gripping force in my hand has overcome it. Although the law of gravity is still there, it has been made of no effect. God's way of salvation is not to remove the fiery serpents, but to set up the bronze serpent (John 3:14).

We thank and praise God that He can save us to such an extent that we can overcome the demand of the law of sin. Even if I have not given a good sermon today, as long as you hold onto God's Word, everything will be all right. God says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death. I have been freed from the law of sin and of death. From now on, I am a freed man. However, after you have believed this way, and you have gone home, the law of sin may appear to still be there. You may ask yourself, "In the meeting I believed that I am freed from the law of sin and of death. Why does it seem to still be there?" At such times Satan will

come and accuse you, saying, "What difference has believing made to you? When you did not believe, you were like this. Now that you believe, you are still like this." At such times your faith is being tested. If you ignore your feelings and the accusations at such times, you will overcome. You cannot keep yourself by being more cautious or alert. God's word will keep you. What God says counts. When the first temptation comes and you stand fast, you have overcome. God has to test your faith to see if it is real, and you also have to test if the salvation in God's Word is real. If the faith is not real, you will not receive God's blessing. But if we believe and say to God, "I hold onto Your Word. What You say counts. For this reason, I believe that I am freed from the law of sin and of death." When God removes the veil, you will see what facts have been accomplished in Christ. Please remember that your eyes have to be set on God and not on yourselves. The Bible has never asked you to look at yourselves or to look at your experience. The righteous live by faith. We need faith to be saved, and we need faith to overcome. We have to glorify God at the time of temptations. Satan will say, "After all the believing, you are still the same." You have to say, "After all that you have done, I still believe." Satan will say, "God's Word may not be true." You have to say, "God's Word is true, and only the devil is a liar."

Brothers and sisters, I truly feel that it is easy to tell people to do good, but it is most difficult to exhort people to believe in God's Word. I have to tell you that without believing in God's Word, there is no victory.

Why does verse 1 say that we are no longer powerless in Christ? Verse 2 explains the reason clearly. The reason is that we are in Christ and freed from the law of sin and of death. The reason for our powerlessness and bondage is the law of sin and of death. This law has entangled us and has caused us to do the things that we wish not to do. When we are in Christ, His resurrection life and the Holy Spirit free us and deliver us from the law of sin and of death. When we are in Christ, we are no longer powerless. But we have to remember that this freeing is in Christ. Therefore, this experience of no longer being powerless must also be in Christ. We cannot expect God to do something within us that will make us feel that we are quite good, sufficient, and can now overcome. There is no such a thing. We can only have the experience of no longer being powerless when we are in Christ. Once we are out of Christ, we are as powerless as before. This is why John 15 commands us to abide in Christ all the time.

Romans 8:3 states, "For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This verse tells us that since the law could not do anything because it was weak through the flesh, God sent the Lord Jesus to the world to accomplish the work of redemption. On the one hand, He became a sacrifice for sin and died for us. On the other hand, He brought our sins to the cross and judged them there. In this way, sin has power no more.

Romans 8:4 states, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit." This verse tells us that when we are in Christ, we will fulfill the righteous requirement of the law, accomplish God's will, and please God. Thank and praise the Lord. We believe today, we have power today, and we have victory.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DISCOVERY OF A LAW

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 45:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (5), Chap. 142

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:21-25a

PAUL'S DISCOVERY

In Romans 7:21 Paul said, "I find then the law with me." This was a great discovery, which Paul discovered through much experience. In this world statistics are useful because we can use them to find out the facts and the true nature of things. Paul's spiritual experience has something to do with statistics. Through his many years of experience, he discovered that whenever he tried to do good, evil was present with him. If, out of the thousands and thousands of times that he tried to do good, evil was present every time, it meant that he was experiencing a law. If something repeatedly happens, the phenomenon constitutes a law. Paul discovered that sin was not something accidental or incidental, nor was it a careless mistake. He discovered that sin was abiding in him; there was a constant repetition of it. Through this he discovered sin as a law. This is a great discovery.

The amazing thing is that many Christians have never discovered such a law. This does not mean that this law does not exist in them. It merely means that they have not discovered it yet. Sin is not just an act, but a law. Since sin is a law, it does not matter how many different kinds of sin one commits. (This, of course, does not mean that I am telling you to sin more.) The fact is that a man never commits many different kinds of sins. You may be susceptible to a few sins, and I may be susceptible to a few other sins, but the number is never big. Every person commits, at most, a few major sins; these sins are especially powerful in him. It is these special sins that he frequently commits. Sin is a law, and since it is a law and not just an act, victory over sin cannot be accomplished through an act, but through another law.

Paul was defeated by one sin—greed. This refers not only to the coveting of others' possessions as prohibited by the Ten Commandments, but to a lust in

one's heart as well. Many people think that the sin of covetousness is what a thief commits when he enters into another person's house to steal. Actually, sin is something that dwells within man. Whether such a sin is turned into an action or not, the fact is that it is still sin. For example, if one has a temper within him, whether or not this temper is manifested, it is still temper. Those who are talkative are always talking whether or not they open their mouth, and whether they are standing or sitting down. Those who are proud are, of course, arrogant when they accomplish something, but they are also arrogant when they cannot do anything. They are proud before those who are inferior to them, and they are also proud before those who are superior to them. The only time when they are not proud is when they are no longer themselves.

One young man is very talkative. Whenever others see him, they find him talking. Whether or not you want to listen to him, he still wants to talk to you, and he always insists that you listen to him. One day I met this man with another sister and a host. I thought that he was going to talk, and I was preparing to listen, but he did not speak that day. Everyone was silent for about ten minutes. Later, I learned that the reason he did not speak was that he was sick. Talkativeness is a law in this person. He only stopped speaking when he was sick and too weak to speak. Many people only know of sin as a kind of weakness. They do not see that sin is a law. If something remains the same way all the time and in every place, it is a law.

One man was very proud. Whenever he sat down, others around him could sense his arrogance. He was arrogant even when he tried to speak in a humble way. While he was speaking, his words may have sounded humble, but his person remained proud. His humility was forced. This kind of arrogance and false humility is actually worse than pride. With many people their sacrifice is worse than their parsimony, their love is worse than their hatred, and their humility is worse than their pride. This is because their sacrifice, love, and humility are all artificial.

Before I was saved, it was easy for me to lose my temper, and it was easy for me to be proud. After I believed in the Lord, I discovered that I still yielded easily to temper and pride, and I tried my best to deal with these sins and to overcome them. Yet I discovered that patience was something bound by time. I could temporarily put off my temper, but I could never be free of my temper. It is foolish to try to fight a law. In order to be free from sin, the prerequisite is understanding that sin is a law. As long as a man continues to consider sins as

isolated and incidental weaknesses, he cannot be free from sin. Paul experienced deliverance when he discovered sin as a law. The turning point for Paul was in verse 21, not in verse 25. Verse 21 is like a bridge with a stretch of road on both sides. In Romans 7:7-20 Paul gave a testimony of his own history. He was continually defeated, and he found it useless to try to overcome by his will. Verse 21 is a grand conclusion to his failures in verses 7 through 20. It was also the beginning of a great discovery of a law. He said, "I find...." Such a discovery was an inward discovery; it was not a mental discovery. The law in Romans 7:7-20 refers to the outward Ten Commandments. After verse 21 the law becomes something spiritual and inward. Many people are familiar only with the law at Sinai. They try their best to do good and satisfy the demands of the law, but they fail again and again. God's demand comes as a law. Man's failure to answer to such a law is also a law. Moses gave the law to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and Paul also passed on a law to us in Romans 7.

THE WILL NOT BEING ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE LAW OF SIN

The statistics of sin are the cumulative experiences of all our sins. When they are exhibited before our eyes, we can do nothing but bow down and confess our failure. Paul struggled so hard that he eventually discovered sin to be a law. Sin is not something accidental or incidental; it happens spontaneously. Unless many people first experience the "I find..." in 7:21, they can never have the "thanks be to God" in verse 25. Without discovering this, they find themselves going around in circles for many years.

A man can have a tooth removed when it bothers him, but he cannot get rid of a law with an operation. For example, consider the traffic lights at a crossroad. You can run the red light once, twice, or many times without being caught by the police. But you cannot run the red lights all the time. Sooner or later you will be caught by the police. Halting at a red light is a law, and one cannot forever go against this law. Sin is not the result of an accidental weakness in the will. Do not try to fight with sin, because sin is a law. This law of sin is very real within man, and it is impossible for man to overcome the law of sin with his own strength. Once you realize that sin is a law, you should no longer try to fight it. If you try to fight it, you will lose because a law cannot change; it remains the same forever.

Romans 6 and 7 are the foundation for spiritual growth. Unless sin is dealt with, nothing can be accomplished. Yet it is impossible for us to overcome sin by our will. A man can hold up a hymnal by his will, but he cannot do this forever. At the beginning he may not feel the weight of it, but gradually it becomes heavier and heavier. Actually, the hymnal has not increased in weight, but the force of gravity operates on the hand and wears it out. If you try to be good and love others by yourself, you will be like the hand in the illustration above. Sooner or later you will become tired, and sooner or later you will have to resign. It is a losing proposition to fight the force of gravity. It is also a losing proposition to counter this evil law with our good will. Our need today is to acknowledge our corruption in Adam and our newness in Christ.

THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE

The way of deliverance is to realize that sin is a never-changing law. When we lose hope in ourselves, we will breathe a sigh of relief just like Paul did. Salvation does not depend on any resolution we make within ourselves; it depends on our Savior. The law of sin has no effect on our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only free from sin; He is a sinless man. In Him there is no law of sin. Today this Christ lives within us as our life, and we have a new law. The law of sin does not exist in Christ; He is like a helium balloon that is constantly ascending. We can hold down a helium balloon for a while, but we cannot hold it down forever. Today Christ lives within us, and there is a new life and a new law that overcomes the law of the will of the old man. Yet many people have not yet discovered this. This is like a person who has never opened a gift that he has received. It is very precious to realize the blessings that come from a genuine regeneration. What we have received is not just a life, but a new law, and this law is able to overcome the law of sin.

One brother once remarked, "When I exercise my will, I lose my temper less and sin less. Not exercising my will would be unthinkable." But this is not the Christian way. The Christian way is not in the exercise of the will, but in the discovery of another law. In the illustration of the hymnal and the hand, it matters little where you put the hymnal; the law of gravity operates everywhere. If you are not regenerated, it is true that you should not let go of your will. You must control yourself before you can behave in a more proper manner. Once you let go, you will sin, just as the force of gravity will act on any object that is placed in your hand. A regenerated Christian, however, will

not need to struggle or strive to do good or to free himself from sin. There is a law within him, the law of life. A Christian first discovers the law of sin and then the law of life. Without discovering the law of sin, one cannot discover the law of life. Today many people do not know that sin is a law. As a result they do not know anything about the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8. I am not merely teaching; I am helping you to know this law. First we must realize that sin is a law, and then we must realize the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8. This is the way we will overcome sin.

Prayer: Lord, in the past we considered sins to be isolated events and countable acts of transgressions. We did not realize that sin is a law. Today we have seen that these seemingly isolated sins are actually a law. Lord, these words may be repetitious, but may those who have heard them receive blessing from them.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LAW WITHIN US

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Scripture Reading: Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:10-12

We have read this passage in Hebrews 8 over and over. If we study this portion carefully, we will see that it contains three promises: (1) The law will be imparted into the mind and inscribed on the heart, to the effect that God will become God to us, and we will become God's people. (2) The result of the law within our heart is that we will know God. We will not only know God's will and God's commandment, but know God. (3) Not only will God be propitious to our unrighteousnesses, but will forgive our sins. The items that we listed [in the fifth message on the new covenant] reverses this order. We had cleansing as the first item, knowledge the second, and life and power the third. This was according to our spiritual experience. We are first cleansed and forgiven, then made to enjoy God's life and power, and finally know God.

The thought in Hebrews 8:10 continues through the end of verse 11. Verse 12 is another beginning. At the beginning of verse 12 there is the word "for." This means that forgiveness has been accomplished. God is propitious to our sins and forgives our unrighteousness, then He puts the law into us and inscribes it upon our hearts, with the result being that we know God. This knowledge of God will fill the earth as the water, and no one will teach his neighbor or brothers to know God. Therefore, the order of our spiritual experience is: (1) cleansing, (2) life and power, and (3) knowledge.

In Philippians 3, Paul told us his experience. First he received God's righteousness --he was justified apart from his own righteousness. Then he considered all things as loss in order that he might gain Christ and know the Lord. The knowledge of God came after forgiveness. Forgiveness is once for all, but the knowledge of God goes deeper and deeper. Day by day we know God more and more. However, I will not speak about knowledge today but

about the second aspect of our spiritual experience, which is life and power. We will not cover life and power completely; we will only speak on the part about life.

HOW TO HAVE LIFE AND POWER

Hebrews 8:7 says, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought for a second." In God's eyes, the first covenant had faults and was weak; it did not have the power and way for us to keep God's commandments. As far as the first covenant is concerned, Paul also said in the book of Romans that the law was holy but was not able to do many things (7:12). As far as the power of the first covenant is concerned, it also had faults. This is why there is the need for the second covenant.

Why did the first covenant have faults? Let us read 8:8-9, "For finding fault with them He says, `Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will consummate a new covenant upon the house of Israel and upon the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.'" The Lord said that when He took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, they did not continue in the Lord's covenant. This means that they should have continued to be faithful. However, they were not able to be faithful day after day. Even though they made up their minds to follow the Lord, they could not faithfully follow Him every day. Even though they were revived once, they could not be revived every day. They might have promised to read the Bible every day, but they could not. This was the problem with the old covenant.

Exodus 19:5 says, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." This is God's word to the Israelites. Verse 8 says, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Immediately they said that they would keep the words. Let us read again Exodus 24:8, "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Everything recorded from chapter nineteen to 24:8 are the words of God's covenant. Moses said that this was the blood of the covenant, and the people answered saying, "All the

words which the Lord hath said will we do" (24:3). Brothers and sisters, in Exodus 19 through 24, God's law says that we cannot have other gods and worship idols. Please remember that the contents of Exodus 19 through 24 are the whole covenant. But by chapter thirty-two, before Moses delivered the tablets of the covenant from Mount Sinai, the Israelites had made a golden calf and started to worship the idol. The tablets of the covenant were still up in the mountain, and the Israelites had already betrayed the covenant! They were worshipping the golden calf at the bottom of the mountain. This shows that they could not keep God's law. This is the shortage of the old covenant.

Therefore, the old covenant means that we can temporarily make up our minds and be excited; we can shout to God that we will do His will. But even if we keep the law for a few days, this will not last. We can find out the teachings in the Bible, but cannot keep its commandments. We can behold God's glory on Mount Sinai, but sin at the bottom of the mountain. We can rise up early to read the Bible and pray, but we forget about God in the office, hospital, school, or at home. This means that even though there may be good beginnings, there are no good endings. This is the old covenant. However, God has given us the new covenant which is within us. Second Corinthians 3 says that the law was previously written on tablets of stone; now it is written on the tablet of our heart. Today the new covenant is the best gospel. The new covenant is entirely different from the old covenant. In the new covenant, the One who gives the command is God, and the One who is responsible to keep the command is also God. In the old covenant, the One who gave the commandment and the law was God, but we were the ones who kept them. In the new covenant, the One who made the law is God, and the One who keeps the law is also God.

Today Christians everywhere are very ignorant of this gospel. However, the gospel of the forgiveness of sins can be found everywhere. Everyone knows about the death of the Lord and the blood He shed to save us and forgive us of our sins. Many people have faith in this and can lay hold of this. They believe in this part of the new covenant and preach it. They know that God is propitious to unrighteousness and sins. But it is amazing that only one third of the new covenant has been believed by men. The other two thirds are set aside. An ignorant sinner thinks that he has to try his best to do good before he can be saved. He thinks this way because he has never heard the gospel. But we will not think this way anymore. We know that we are children by promise and not by works. We know that God has promised to forgive and

forget all our sins through Jesus Christ. We know that when we believe in Him according to His Word, we will receive forgiveness. It is amazing that we know that we are saved by the Word of God and not by ourselves, but in the matter of overcoming, we think that we have to strive, struggle, and wrestle.

Brothers and sisters, both salvation and overcoming are in the same covenant. This covenant gives us the power to go on in the way ahead of us. Overcoming sin, obeying God, and the filling of the Holy Spirit are all included in this covenant. The way we receive the grace of forgiveness is the same way we receive the grace to overcome sin. The way our sins are forgiven before God is the same way we overcome our sins before God. Just as we felt that we could not have forgiveness in ourselves, we should feel that we are weak and are unable to do good and overcome sin in ourselves. The old covenant was God holding the Israelites' hands and bringing them out of Egypt. Today God is holding our heart and leading us out of Egypt. Formerly God put the law in their hands. Now God is putting the law in our hearts. Today there is something mysterious that tells us what is and what is not of God.

First, let us consider how God puts the power within us, and how He strengthens us to overcome. Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 are similar passages. Ezekiel 36 refers to the salvation of the Jews during the millennium. Jeremiah 31 refers to the same thing. However, in some areas, Jeremiah's words are clearer, while in other areas, Ezekiel's words are clearer. Hebrews 8 is a quotation of Jeremiah 31. Therefore, the last two are similar.

Ezekiel 36:25 says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." This means the same thing as in Hebrews 8 when it says that He will be propitious to our unrighteousness and cleanse us from our iniquities.

Verses 26 through 27 say, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Please pay attention to the word cause in verse 27. This is a strong word. It is a verb. Can you see the glory in verses 26 and 27? This explains Jeremiah 31. Verse 26 mentions our spirit, while verse 27 mentions God's Spirit. The second Spirit is not our spirit, but is something that God gives to

us. Therefore, we have a new spirit, a new heart, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to do God's will and keep God's laws. The law written on the tablets of stone is outward. There is nothing within ourselves that is compatible with the law on the stone tablets. This is why we cannot keep God's commandments. Today God has written the law within us. Not only has He written it within us, He has given us a new spirit, a new heart, and the Holy Spirit which cause us to obey Him. This is regeneration. Not only do we have a new spirit which enables us to fellowship with God, but we have a new heart which enables us to love God and everything spiritual. This new heart causes us to develop a love for God; it is contrary to the heart of stone. Not only do we have a new spirit and a new heart, but the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit causes our new heart to have the strength to love God and our new spirit to have the power to fellowship with Him.

Some have asked, "Why does God have to give us the Holy Spirit in addition to the new spirit and the new heart?" If we know the function of our body, we will know. With our body, there are the voluntary actions and involuntary actions. For example, moving our hands and feet requires the exercise of the will; these are voluntary actions. In addition to these actions, there is digestion by the stomach and metabolism by the cells which are not under man's control; these are involuntary actions. Voluntary actions are controlled by the will, and involuntary actions are spontaneous and controlled by a natural law. When we were saved, we received a new spirit and a new heart; these are "involuntary"; they spontaneously operate according to their new functions and new desires. However, God has not only given us these things. He has also given us the Holy Spirit so that we can be led by Him wholeheartedly, receive revelation from Him wholeheartedly, and trust in His power wholeheartedly. These must all be done through the exercise of the will and through conscious effort. God desires that, spiritually, we have an involuntary living as well as a voluntary living. If we do not understand God's will and do not follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will be grieved, and we will be hindered from receiving guidance and revelation from the Holy Spirit. This will cause the voluntary action of the spiritual life to cease. Of course, the spontaneous and involuntary actions of the spiritual life will not cease. However, without the power of the Holy Spirit, the new spirit and the new heart would be very much weakened.

God has not only given us a new heart and new spirit, He has also given us the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, He has put the law within us and inscribed it in

our hearts so that our life will spontaneously crave God. At the same time, the Holy Spirit of God within us enables us to carry out what the spirit understands and what the heart desires.

In Kuling, Kiukiang, there was a brother who was an electrician. Originally he was a nominal Christian who was not even clear about his salvation. He did not know if he was saved. Once after I studied the Bible with him, he became clear that he was saved. I have known him for five or six years. This year while I was speaking on the experience of the Holy Spirit, to my surprise, he told me that he had experienced what I was speaking about even though he had never read this verse before. He said that he had a "steward" within him (this is what he called the Holy Spirit) which tells him if something is right or wrong. He was half illiterate. When he first believed in the Lord, he could hardly read a few words of a verse. Yet he had the Holy Spirit within him leading him, instructing him, and being a steward to him. This is a living example. Should this not be the experience of every Christian?

Many times, we do not know what we should do concerning the things that we encounter. Yet many times, before we act, we know that something is wrong. Our conscience is not telling us this; the conscience only works after something wrong is done. But, in this case, we know that something is wrong because the law of God tells us within. Sometimes when we are talking to someone and excited concerning what we are talking about, something within stops us and forbids us to say some further words which may not even be unscriptural or morally corrupting. But we just feel that something within us is giving us a pinch and telling us not to say anything more. We do not know why. If we take care of this and obey it, we will have the peace. Otherwise, when the words come out, our conscience will tell us that we have done wrong. This is the law within us. Subconsciously, it will stop us and issue a warning to us.

Let me tell you another story. A certain Christian was an active believer. He loved to offer hospitality to other believers and Christian workers. He always did his best to either invite the preachers that he met to meals or to give money to them. Once, a pastor who graduated from an American school was preaching in his chapel. He was preaching the social gospel and not preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus. After the meeting the brother wanted to go over to greet the pastor and talk to him. But he felt something was nagging at him. He hesitated for a while and did not walk forward. Finally he decided to forget

about the pastor and just went home. Brothers and sisters, this is the law written within us; it is not the law written on a tablet of stone. Later this brother asked me if he could associate himself with the pastor. I did not tell him my opinion. Instead I only quoted Galatians 1:8, which says that if any man preaches another gospel that is different from ours, he should be accursed (a strong word of rebuke in Greek). Not only did Paul say this, even John said the same thing. John was called the apostle of love. Love should make a person foolish. Yet John said that if any man does not preach this teaching, we should not receive him into our house and should not greet him (2 John 10). The brother then said, "Now I know that the leading within me and the law within me were right."

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible. The Holy Spirit also gives us the inspirations within. If we would be faithful and honest to follow the inner leading, God will surely lead us on. Sometimes we can be mistaken through our prejudice. I am not telling you to not pay attention to the Bible. I am telling you to link the Bible with the inner leading and judge what we do as right or wrong according to this way. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is not leading believers today, nor does it mean that the believers have no leading from the Holy Spirit. The pitiful thing is that they are not willing to be led by the Holy Spirit. Many read the Bible like reading a dead book. Reading the Bible to them is like memorizing the Ten Commandments, because they cannot see any leading of the Holy Spirit there. I do not despise the Bible at all; I am very concerned that the leading of the Holy Spirit must match the teaching of the Bible. Yet it is a bad phenomenon today that many people seem to have no leading apart from the Bible. They are following the Lord without any speaking from the Lord.

The reason many brothers and sisters cannot receive new truths is that they have refused and rejected the leading of the light. As a result, God puts aside the light. God has placed the law within us, and He is constantly testifying to the truths. If we reject these testimonies, day by day we will find ourselves more and more in darkness. But if we are willing to be led, day by day we will become clearer and clearer. Someone has said that the enlightening of the Holy Spirit is the light, while our inner being is the glass. If the glass is not cleaned, it will become more and more darkened and receive less and less of the light. The reason why many people cannot receive truths is that they have rejected the truths once before. Many people cannot believe in the truths,

because they have once refused the truths. The Holy Spirit is responsible within us to show what is and what is not of God.

THE BASIC DISTINCTION IN THE LEADING OF GOD

Everything from man, the world, Satan, or the flesh comes from the outside. Everything from God and the Holy Spirit comes from the inside. If we encounter something and this thing arises from our head and occupies very little weight, it must be from the outside. If it is God's leading, deeper than feeling, it is always from the inside and is a sensation that cannot be removed or ignored. If we have a feeble mind, we may easily forget the verses we have memorized. If we are tired, we may be unable to read the Bible. Sometimes when we are faced with some situation on the street, we may not have time to ask for the advice of others and consult a teaching from the Bible. But within us there is a living law leading us, whose leading is spontaneously compatible with the teaching of the Bible. This can be confirmed by the experience of many. If we repeatedly follow God's leading, which comes from the inward law within us, we will gradually be clear about the leading which comes from God's law within us. If God has made a covenant to put the law within us and to lead us, we can take hold of God's covenant and say to God: "I have Your law within me. Therefore, I will surely know Your will."

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S WILL AND GOD'S HEART

We have to know God's will item by item. But knowing God's heart is different. One English brother with deep experience in the Lord and who knows God well once said that we not only can know God's will, but also His heart. We do not despise God's will. In order to know His will, we have to seek after Him wholeheartedly. But God's heart has been given to us already; it is something that we know without consciously seeking. One Western missionary said that when he drinks milk, he prays to see if he should put one or two cubes of sugar in the milk. This is unnecessary. We should have God's heart, and we should know His heart. God has not only given us the Bible for us to keep, but He has given us the law within us so that we can know His heart. When we encounter a crisis, we should surely seek God's will. In our daily life, we can act according to God's heart; there is no need to purposely

ask God. We are those who have God's heart within us already, so we know what we should do to conform to His will. Can you see the glory here?

Men in the Old Testament had to consult the law or a prophet before they could be clear about God's will. But we have a Prophet within us today. He will tell us everything. We also have a law which is not outward. An outward prophet or outward regulations have not been put upon us. Rather, we are instructed by God within us, who gives us an unspeakable sensation, a feeling which, at the same time, is not quite a feeling. This is what believers experience every day. Do we have such an experience? We may not have it every day, but at least we should have experienced it a few times.

THE LORD JESUS BEING THE ARK

The first stone tablets which Moses received were smashed to pieces. The second tablets which he received were placed in the ark. The ark is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. God ordered that blood be sprinkled on the ark, His glory was manifested from above the ark, and He spoke to man from above the ark. All these are pictures of the Lord Jesus.

Do we see the ark-life in the Lord Jesus? "The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works" (John 14:10). "For I have come down...not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). We can see how the Lord Jesus obeyed God's word and did His will. He was not only acting according to the teaching of the Scripture but according to the inner law within Him. It is better to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit than the leading of the Bible in a dead way. Consider John 12. John 11 speaks of the Lord's raising up Lazarus. Chapter twelve speaks of the most glorious day the Lord had on earth. Not only was Lazarus resurrected, but the Greeks came to the Lord Jesus also. But whether or not they came to Him, whether or not Lazarus was resurrected, and whether or not He received glory when he entered Jerusalem, 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). Later He said: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me out of this hour. But for this reason I have come to this hour" (John 12:27). This word of the Lord Jesus was from His heart! Others might have considered that this was His best time. But He considered that a grain of wheat would abide alone if it did not die. In His heart He said, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say?" He did

not immediately say what He wanted to say, but instead cried out: "Father, save Me out of this hour." But was that possible? No. Because it was for this hour that He had come. What then did He do? Verse 28 says, "Father, glorify Your name." The Lord did not say, "Father, deliver Me from this hour." Brothers and sisters, here we see the life that is within the Lord Jesus. He is led by the Spirit of God. He is truly the ark.

The ark was covered with gold on the outside which signifies the divinity of the Lord. Within the gold was the acacia wood which signifies the Lord's humanity. Therefore, the Lord has both the body of a man and the holiness of God. But within Him, there is the law which is more significant than the outward attributes that are seen and understood by men. The failure of the Pharisees was in the fact that they only saw the law placed in a high place in the synagogue. They did not see the law within the Lord Jesus. Among us today, there are some who do not know God's will and do not know how to act in this and that matter. Let me say that forgiveness is not the only item within the new covenant. His leading and law, which are within the new heart and new spirit, as well as the Holy Spirit of God are also within us and are part of the new covenant. It is a pity that many people only cling to the part about salvation. In many places, people are satisfied as long as they hear the gospel and are saved. But God has not only given us a gospel of salvation. Why would we not build a full mansion on the land that is allotted to us according to God's deed? Why do we have to build only a small hut on one little corner of the lot and leave the other parts deserted?

We should pray about many things. But with many things, we are clear even before we pray about them. I am not saying that the teaching of the Bible is not important. I am saying that the inner leading is more precious than outward leadings. Many people have said that they do not know what to do with this and that, and what should they do if they find out that they have made a mistake. My answer is that you have God's new heart, new spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the law within you. Some have often asked, "How in our experience and actual daily life can we still live like the Israelites in the Old Testament? Why do we still need the outward leading?" Let me ask, "Why was the book of Hebrews written?" The book of Hebrews was written for the Christians among the Hebrews. They were New Testament Christians living Old Testament lives. They were clearly men of the New Testament, yet they lived Old Testament lives. So there was a need for the book of Hebrews. Its purpose is to tell us that we do not have to live the Old Testament life

anymore. The goal of Hebrews is to lead men out of the experience of the Old Testament into the experience of the New Testament. Do not be surprised that many Christians still live a life according to the Old Testament. Their experiences of salvation, receiving of the eternal life, and forgiveness are all real, yet they still live the Old Testament life. Praise God, He is no longer leading us out of Egypt by holding our hands, but by holding our hearts.

Some have asked why it is that in the Old Testament, men could see God and hear His voice directly, while we cannot today. We have to thank God that men in the Old Testament saw God with their physical eyes and heard Him with their physical ears. But today, in the New Testament, we do not have to do this. God has hidden Himself. He is within us now and is no longer outside of us. I know what I am saying. The deeper we go, the more we will realize that all the outward excitement and activities are gone. We will realize that everything has become inward. More and more, we will become normal, and men will not be surprised when they see us. The more we go on, the deeper our experience will be, the more blessing we will receive from God, and the more we will have the experience of knowing God. The more we go on, the more subjective experience we will have and the more we will gain God. Please remember that this knowledge is part of God's covenant. Whoever has not received this leading can cling to the covenant and say to God, "This is what You have said in Your covenant, and I want it." Do not say that we will not have it. Because of this covenant, we can receive what we should receive every day. God has to give it to us. The blood of the Lord Jesus has purchased this covenant, and God's faithfulness and righteousness guarantee that everything in this covenant will be ours. Therefore, we can cling to this covenant, speak to God, and pray to Him by standing on this covenant in faith.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 46:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (6), Chap. 169

In reading the Epistles it is necessary to differentiate between "law" and "the law." Where the definite article is used, the word refers to the Mosaic law; when there is no article, the word refers to law as a principle. Our deliverance from "the law" is based on our deliverance from "law" as a principle. God no longer deals with us according to the principle of law. As a result, we have no connection with the law of Sinai. "Law" as a principle is greater than "the law" as a thing. Law as a principle includes "the law" as a thing. What do we mean when we say that God does not deal with us on the basis of law? We mean that He makes no demands upon us. If I am living according to the principle of law, I am seeking to please God, but this seeking to please God is displeasing to Him.

The story of the prodigal son gives a supreme illustration of the way to please God. The father said, "We had to be merry and rejoice" (Luke 15:32). The matter that was supremely joyful to the father's heart was not the elder brother's incessant toiling for the father, but the younger brother's willingness to let the father do everything for him. What was pleasing was not the elder brother who wanted to be the giver, but the younger brother who was willing to be the receiver. When the prodigal returned home after wasting all of his substance on riotous living, the father did not have a word of rebuke concerning the waste or a word of inquiry regarding the substance. He did not sorrow over all that was spent; he only rejoiced that the prodigal's return afforded him the opportunity to spend much more. God is so wealthy that His chief delight is to give; His treasure-stores are so full that it is painful to Him when we refuse Him an opportunity to lavish His treasures upon us. It was the father's joy that he found a willing applicant in the prodigal son for the robe, ring, shoes, and feast; it was his sorrow that he found no such application in the elder brother. It is a grief to the heart of God when we try to give things to Him, because He is so rich. It is a joy when we simply allow Him to give and give to us. It grieves Him when we try to do things for Him,

because He is so able. He longs for us to simply allow Him to do everything. He wants to be the Giver and the Doer eternally. If only we saw how rich and how great He is, we would leave all the giving and doing to Him.

Do we think that our good behavior will cease if we stop trying to please God? If we left all the giving and working to God, do we think the result would be less satisfactory than if we did some of it ourselves? When we seek to please God, we are according to the works of the law. Our works are hateful to God—even our "good works." All of our works are "dead works" and need to be repented of. As soon as we stop giving, we will prove what a Giver He is. As soon as we stop working, we will see what a worker He is. The elder brother and the prodigal son were equally far removed from the joys of the father's house. The elder brother, though not in the "far country," was only at home positionally. His theoretical position could never become experiential, as it was in the case of the prodigal, because he refused to forsake his own good works.

What is the meaning of the Lord's word: "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt. 5:20)? He was not speaking of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, but of their righteousness. According to Philippians 3, their righteousness was the righteousness of the law. In contrast to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord referred to "your righteousness." What is this? Some theologians say that this is the righteousness of Christ, but the verse does not say "His righteousness" but "your righteousness." The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was according to a certain standard, and "your righteousness" is also according to a certain standard. From the context, we can see that the difference between these two righteousnesses was a difference of standards. "It was said to the ancients....But I say to you" (Matt. 5:21-22; cf. 27-28, etc.). The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is based on the law; "your righteousness" is based on what "I say." Note how much higher the second standard is. After men sought for centuries to attain the first standard and failed, how could the Lord dare to raise the standard higher? He could raise it because He believed in His own life. He was not afraid of placing tremendous demands upon Himself. We should find comfort in reading the laws of the kingdom in Matthew 5—7 because they show the utter confidence that the Lord has in His own life. These three chapters set forth the divine taxation of the divine life. The greatness of the demands He

makes upon us reveals the greatness of His confidence in the life that He has put within us. We realize very little of the terrible grip that law has on us. It has penetrated to our very bones; it permeates our entire being. God is working in us day by day to liberate us from it.

CHAPTER SIX

FREE FROM LAW

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 46:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (6), Chap. 170

(Editor's Note: The following message was given by Watchman Nee in Denmark in 1938. Part of this message is incorporated in chapter nine of The Normal Christian Life.)

We have seen that in delivering us from sin God did not deal with sin directly, neither did He touch the body of sin; rather, He crucified our old man. The picture in Romans 6 is of a slave and his master. God's way of delivering the slave from the tyranny of his master is not to slay the master, but to kill the slave. The master may still live and be the cruelest of masters, but he can no longer touch the slave, because the slave has been taken out of his way by the cross. The mastery of sin cannot reach the other side of the grave.

In Romans 6 the subject is one of deliverance from sin; in Romans 7 the subject is one of deliverance from the law. Many Christians see the necessity of being delivered from sin, but they fail to see the need for deliverance from the law. In my early years I was told by many teachers that I must be freed from the law, and I read books which taught the same thing, but I did not understand my need for this. It was clear to me that I needed to be delivered from sin, but why I needed to be delivered from the law was beyond my comprehension. Praise the Lord, I see it now! He who makes no mistakes deemed it necessary to deliver us from the law, and now I see that only by being redeemed from the law can we be kept from lapsing into sin again.

What is the meaning of the law? The existence of the law implies that God requires certain things of us. Let us be perfectly clear that there is nothing wrong with the law. Paul said, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). There is nothing wrong with the law, but there is something decidedly wrong with us. The demands of the law are righteous, but the persons upon whom the demands are made are

unrighteous. The trouble is not that the demands of the law are unjust, but that we are unable to meet them. It may be right for the government to require payment of a thousand kroner [a unit of Danish currency], but I will be wrong if I have only ten kroner to meet the demand.

We are men "sold under sin" (v. 14). Sin has full sway over us. As long as others leave us alone, we seem to be rather fine, but as soon as others ask us to do something, our sinfulness comes to light. If we have a very clumsy servant who just sits still and does nothing, his clumsiness does not show. If he does nothing all day, he will be of little use, but at least he is doing no damage. But if we say to him, "Now come along. Do not idle your time away! Get up and do something!", the trouble will begin immediately. He will knock the chair over as he gets up, stumble over a footstool a few paces further on, and smash some precious dishes when he handles them. If we make no demands upon him, his clumsiness is never noticed, but as soon as we ask him to do anything, his awkwardness is seen at once. The demands were right, but the man was wrong. He was just as clumsy when he was sitting still as when he was working, but our demands made the clumsiness within him, whether he was active or inactive, manifest.

We are sinners by nature. If God asks nothing of us, everything seems to go well. However, as soon as He demands something of us, an occasion is provided for a grand display of our sinfulness. The law makes our weakness manifest. While others let us sit still, we appear to be all right, but whenever they ask us to do anything, we are sure to spoil that thing. If we are entrusted with a second thing, we will spoil that as well. When a holy law is applied to a sinful man, his sinfulness is fully displayed. We have seen both the law's demands and its effect, but what is the meaning of deliverance from the law? If the meaning of the law is the demands of God upon us, then the meaning of deliverance from the law is the deliverance from the demands of God upon us. Deliverance from the law means that God asks us to no longer do anything for Him. In other words, He ceases to make any further demands upon us.

In Romans 6 we see how God delivered us from sin. In Romans 7 we see how He delivered us from the law. In chapter six we are shown the way of deliverance from sin in the picture of a master and his slave. In chapter seven we are shown the way of deliverance from the law in the picture of the two husbands and the wife. The relationship between sin and the sinner is that of a master and his slave; the relationship between the law and the sinner is that

of a husband and his wife. Note that in the picture of our deliverance from law there is only one woman, while there are two husbands. The woman is in a very difficult position because she can only be the wife of one. Unfortunately, she is married to the less desirable one. Suppose a woman is married to a good man, yet the husband and wife are totally unsuited for each other. On the one hand, he is very particular and accurate to a degree. On the other hand, she is decidedly haphazard. Everything is definite and precise with him, but everything is vague and hazy with her. He wants everything just so, while she simply accepts things as they come. How could there be any happiness in this home? The husband is so exacting! He is always making demands of his wife. Yet there is nothing wrong with him. As a husband he has a right to expect something of her; all of his demands are perfectly legitimate. There is nothing wrong with the man or with his demands. But he has the wrong kind of wife to carry them out. The two cannot get along at all; they are utterly incompatible. The poor woman is in great distress. She is fully aware that she often makes mistakes, but in living with him, it seems as though everything she says and does is wrong. What hope is there for her? If only she were married to another man, everything would be well! He could be no less exacting than her first husband, but instead of just making demands, he could also help her carry them out. He could be very exacting, but also very helpful. She wants to marry him, but her husband is still alive. What can she do? Unless he dies, she cannot legitimately marry another man.

This picture is not drawn by me, but by Paul. The first husband is the law, the second husband is Christ, and we are the woman. The law requires much but offers no help in carrying out its requirements. The Lord requires just as much and even more (Matt. 5:21-39), but He carries out what He requires of us. The law makes demands and leaves us helpless to fulfill them; Christ makes demands, but He fulfills the very demands He makes. There is little wonder that the woman desires to be free from her first husband in order to marry another! But her only hope of release is through the death of her first husband, and he tenaciously holds on to life. There is no prospect of his passing away. "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" (v. 18).

The law will continue for all eternity. If the law never passes away, how can we ever be united to Christ? How can we marry a second husband if our first husband refuses to die? There is only one way out. If he will not die, we can die, and if we die then the marriage relationship will be dissolved. This is

exactly God's way of deliverance from the law. The most important point to note in the section of Romans 7 is the transition from verse 3 to 4. Verses 1 through 3 show that the husband should die, but in verse 4 we see that it is the woman who dies. The law does not pass away, but we pass away. By death we are freed from the law. Let us clearly realize that the law can never pass away. God's righteous demands remain forever, and if we live, we must meet those demands; but if we die, the law has lost its claim upon us. The law cannot follow us beyond the grave.

The same principle that operates in our deliverance from the law operated in our deliverance from sin. When we die, our old master, sin, continues to live, but his power over us only extends to the grave. Our master could ask us to do a hundred and one things when we were alive, but when we are dead he calls us in vain. We are forever free from his tyranny. This is also true in regard to the law. While the woman lives, she is bound to her husband, but with her death, the marriage bond is dissolved. The law may still make demands, but the power to enforce them reaches only to the grave.

Now the vital question arises: "How do we die?" The preciousness of the Lord's work comes in at this point. "You also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4). When Christ died, His body was broken, and since we are members of His body, we were broken as well. When He was crucified, we were crucified with Him. An Old Testament illustration will make this clear. The veil of testimony separated the Holy Place from Holy of Holies, and cherubim were embroidered on the veil, whose faces—of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle—represented the creation. (We have four phases of life—human beings, wild beasts, domestic animals, and birds, that is, the whole living creation.) God dwelt within the veil and man without. Man could look upon the veil, but not within it. The veil symbolized our Lord's flesh, that is, His body (Heb. 10:20). Man could only look upon the outward form of our Lord; he could not see the God who dwelt within. When the Lord Jesus died, the veil was split in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51) so that man could gaze into the Holy of Holies. Since the death of the Lord Jesus, God is no longer veiled; everyone can see Him. What happened to the four faces of the cherubim when the veil was split? God split the veil, and the cherubim were also split in the veil, because they were embroidered on it. It was impossible to split the veil and preserve the cherubim. When the veil was split, the four faces of the cherubim were also split with it. When the Lord died, the whole creation ceased to have any existence in the sight of God.

"So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4). The woman's husband may be very well and strong, but if she dies, he can make as many demands as he wants without her being affected in the slightest. Death has set her free from all her husband's claims. We were in the Lord Jesus when He died, and His inclusive death has forever freed us from the law. But our Lord did not remain in the grave; on the third day He rose again. Since He has risen, we have risen as well because we are in Him. Death could not hold Him, and because the experience of His body is our experience, death cannot hold us either. The body of the Lord Jesus speaks not only of His death but also of His resurrection. His resurrection was a bodily resurrection. By the body of Christ we are not only dead to the law but also alive to God.

God's purpose in uniting us to Christ was not merely negative. It was gloriously positive—"that you might be joined to another" (v. 4). Death has dissolved the old marriage relationship so that the woman who has been driven to despair by the constant demands of a husband, who never lifted a little finger to help, is now free to marry the other man, who becomes in her the power for the outworking of every demand.

The issue of this new union is "that we might bear fruit to God" (v. 4). By the body of Christ the foolish, sinful woman has died. By being united to Him in death she is also united to Him in resurrection. In the power of His resurrection life, she bears fruit to God. The risen life of the Lord in her empowers her to meet all the demands that God's holiness makes upon her. The law of God is not annulled, it is perfectly fulfilled, because the risen Lord now lives out His life in her, a life that is always well-pleasing to the Father.

Now that we have settled the doctrinal side of the question, we must come down to the practical issues. What does it mean in our daily life to be delivered from the law? It simply means that henceforth we are not going to do anything for God. We are not going to try to please Him. "What awful heresy!" you may say. But if we try to please God, we are immediately under the law. Being delivered from the law means that we are no longer under obligation to fulfill its demands. I broke the law, the law pronounced a death sentence, the sentence was executed, and now we have been set free from all its claims through death. The law still continues to make demands, but Another fulfills them in us. The law's demands are met, but we ourselves do nothing to meet them. God is satisfied, but it is Another who works in us that

which is well-pleasing to Him. Henceforth, we do not have to do anything through our power to serve God. God has said that we must please Him, but we failed to please Him; therefore, He consigned us to the cross. By doing nothing through our own energy to please God, we are admitting that He was justified in proclaiming us fit for the cross. By refusing to do anything in our natural strength, we agree to God's verdict upon our old man, and as we simply remain in the place of death, the Lord manifests His resurrection life in us.

We have discovered a simple formula for Christian living. Whenever the law makes a demand upon us, we should say, "Lord, I cannot do it. Lord, I will not try. Lord, I trust in You to do all that You require in me." When I am tempted to lose my temper, I simply say to the Lord, "Lord, I cannot be patient, and I will not try to be patient, but I trust You to be patient in my stead." Likewise, when I am tempted with pride, I say, "Lord, I cannot be humble, and I refuse to try to be humble, but I trust You to be humble instead of me." This is the real meaning of being delivered from the law and being "joined to another." We know that we cannot be patient, and we know that we cannot be humble, but we still try. Once we see clearly that we are delivered from the law, we will no longer try to fulfill its demands. The weakness of the law is not that it makes demands, but that it can do nothing to supply them. However, the Lord makes demands and supplies us for all the demands that He makes.

What happens when a woman marries? She no longer bears her own name; she bears the name of another, and she shares not only his name but his possessions as well! This is also true of our marriage to Christ. When we belong to Him, all that is His becomes ours, and with His infinite resources at our disposal we are well able to meet His demands. "So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ so that you might be joined to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God" (v. 4).

CHAPTER SEVEN

HAVING BEEN MADE DEAD TO THE LAW

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The Present Testimony (4), Issue No. 35

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:4, 15-19

Romans 7 is a very familiar chapter to us. Not only is it familiar to us in our reading, it is also familiar to us in our experience. We often read Romans 7 and often practice Romans 7. What the Lord wants me to speak on today is the way to be delivered from the demand of the law, that is, the way to be delivered from ourselves.

WHO CAN RECEIVE GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Before we speak on the subject of deliverance and the way to be delivered, I will first mention one qualification. What type of persons are qualified to speak about deliverance? Brothers and sisters, although God's deliverance is for everyone, not everyone receives deliverance. Although it is possible for everyone to be delivered from the law, not everyone is actually delivered. The problem is absolutely not with God but with man, because man does not want to be delivered and has not paid the price for deliverance. The apostle who wrote Romans 7 was eventually delivered because he paid the price; he hated something and he willed to do something. The biggest problem that confronts us today is that we are not yet delivered. Yet I would like to ask if we have deeply hated the temper that we have not been able to overcome. Have we deeply hated the sin that causes us to fall and the things that stumble us all the time? Or are we willing to say that sinning is something common to all Christians and is, therefore, unavoidable? Do we sense a hatred for the unclean thoughts, the sinful deeds, the entangling temper, and the evil lusts; do we look for deliverance from them? The apostle not only speaks of deliverance in this chapter but also of his feeling before his deliverance. Before he was delivered, he hated what he repeatedly did. He did not practice what he willed, and he did what he hated. The first question is whether we love or hate the things that we are doing. The apostle experienced deliverance

because he deeply hated and desperately sought for deliverance. He was so disgusted with his life of sin that he could no longer tolerate it; he felt that he could no longer go along with it. He hated it so much that he wished to die. He would not allow it to go on for a moment longer. He experienced the deliverance because he had such a determination.

Brothers and sisters, do you have such a hunger within? Have you ever said that you cannot continue to live a life that is bound and entangled with sin? Have you realized how loathsome such a living is? Brothers and sisters, the words which God commissioned me to speak this morning are only for those who desire deliverance and consider that the level of their Christian life is too low. My words are not for those who are self-satisfied and content with living in sin and failure. They are for those who seek deliverance and have not found the way. They are not for those who think it is all right to lose one's temper, to be lustful, or have unclean thoughts. Neither are they for those who think that they only need to confess when they have failed and that everything will be all right as soon as God forgives their sins. The victory in Romans 7 is for those who experience the failures like those in Romans 7. Anyone who is not saved cannot experience this kind of deliverance. Only those who hate their present living and do not wish to continue with such a living can experience this victory. Those who live in failure and sin, not realizing that they have to reject these things, will never find God's deliverance coming to them.

Every time a person wants to have spiritual growth in his life before God, he must first be dissatisfied with his present living. All growth begins from dissatisfaction. One must be pressed to such an extent that he feels he cannot go on anymore, that he has reached the end of himself, and that his living is unacceptable. He must consider that it is no longer acceptable to be bound by the self, the world, and sin; and it is no longer acceptable that what he wills, he does not do, and what he hates, he does. He has to recognize that such a contradictory life cannot go on and that there must be a way out. God will grant His deliverance only to those who are living under these conditions. Therefore, we have a great need before God to ask Him to give us the grace to not be content with our life of sin and failure. Every victory begins with a realization of our failure and wickedness. Everyone who desires deliverance must first be so pressed that he feels he cannot go on. Only then can he experience deliverance. I am merely telling the way; actual deliverance can only come from God. In other words, while I am giving the light, only God gives the revelation directly. Light cannot save; only revelation can save.

THE MEANING OF BEING DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

Romans 7 is a great chapter, and we cannot cover all of it today. We will only mention verse 4. In this verse, the first thing mentioned is: "So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law." In other words, we are dead to the law. Brothers, have we realized that we need to be delivered from the law? If I say that we should be delivered from sin, everybody understands because sin is loathsome, and it is right to be delivered from it. If I say that we should be delivered from the world, everyone also understands because the world has crucified our Lord and is indeed evil. If I say that we should be delivered from ourselves, everyone also understands because the flesh is something evil. If I say that we should be delivered from uncleanness or licentiousness, we can still understand. But if I say that we should be delivered from the law, some may say that they do not feel the need for such a deliverance. If the apostle says that we need to be delivered from the self, we say, "Amen." If he says that we need to be delivered from the world or sin, we would again say, "Amen." But when he says that we have been delivered from the law or that we are dead to the law, we do not know how to respond. We realize that what the apostle said cannot be wrong, but we do not understand why he said it. We understand deliverance from sin, from the self, and from the world. But we cannot understand the reason for deliverance from the law. Why did the apostle tell us that we are delivered from the law and that we are dead to the law? What does deliverance have to do with the law? It has a great deal to do with it. Deliverance from the law has a great deal to do with deliverance from the world, from sin, and from the self. Therefore, this is a very important matter.

Brothers and sisters, if we desire to experience deliverance, it is very important that we realize that God has no more hope in us. If we are seeking deliverance, we first need to understand ourselves and realize that we are hopeless. We have to clearly see how God evaluates us and how we evaluate ourselves. All of us belong to Christ; we are His. We may have been Christians for many years, but I am afraid that we have lived a life of failures and frequent stumblings and downfalls. But what happens after each failure? Almost everyone makes a resolution after a failure, saying to himself, "Next time I will do better and will not fail." Every failure brings another heartache and self-condemnation, and the question is raised once more, "Why did I do this? Why did I fail again? I am a believer and should not be this way. This is too poor!" You become very disheartened. After you fail, as with almost

everyone, there are two results. First, you resolve to do better the next time. Second, you feel sorry and sigh, looking back at what you have done and asking why you are so bad. This is what you do all the time. When you fail, you are heartbroken and ask, "How could I have fallen so low? I will never do anything like that again. Lord, deliver me from this!" Your experience is similar to that of Romans 7. Before one heartache goes away, another occasion for heartache comes. One resolution has not worked, but you still find yourself making a second resolution. This goes on time after time and things still do not improve. This is your situation. What is the reason for this? The reason is that you have not yet been delivered from the law, and have not yet seen what the law is, and what being delivered from the law is.

If you want to understand what it is to be delivered from the law, you must first understand the relationship that the law has with us. The law is God's requirement on our flesh. The law is God telling us that we should or should not do something. It is what God says concerning what we ought and ought not to do. It is what God forbids or commands us to do. Therefore, the law is God's requirement on us. In brief, the law is all the demands that God places on those who are in Adam and all the commands that God gives to those who are in Adam, commands that tell them what they should or should not do. (God does this to prove the corruption and the hopelessness of the flesh.) Not only can God put us under the law, but we, who are in Adam, can also put ourselves under the law, hoping that we can please God. We set up ordinances for ourselves to keep, saying, "I should not do this. I should not do that." In addition to the commandments that God has given us, we have also given ourselves many other commandments which are just as severe as the ones God has given. Therefore, God puts His demands on us, and we also put demands on ourselves. This means that we still have a hope in the things of Adam, thinking that we can improve and striving to advance and overcome. Brothers and sisters, God has put us under the law, and at the same time we have put ourselves under the law.

What does it mean to be delivered from the law? It is to entirely lose hope in ourselves. Not only should we entirely lose hope in ourselves, but we should not hope at all. Do not hope for anything concerning ourselves any longer. This is the way to be delivered from the law. God allows us to sin day after day in order to make us realize that we are corrupt and unclean, and it is impossible to improve. We cannot overcome, and we cannot keep the law. There is no possibility for us to be helped; we are completely useless, and we

are not improving. God wants us to realize that the reason He crucified us on the cross, which He did in Christ, is because we are corrupt beyond any hope. When we consider ourselves to be hopeless and realize that God considers us to be hopeless, we will only stand on the position God gives us. God says that we are corrupt to the core and hopeless. We need to say the same thing, that we are corrupt to the core and hopeless. All that we can do is sin. We do not cherish any hope about ourselves anymore. This is what it is to be delivered from the law. What a great deliverance this is! The unique way of deliverance is to consider ourselves as being hopeless.

The last time I was in Canada, I met a certain Mr. G. He was a good man and was also good in the gospel. God used him to save many sinners. Now he is old, over sixty years of age. One day we were walking on the street and talking, and we came to this topic. He said that this is the lesson we have to preach to others all the time. I asked him what he meant, and he began to tell me his history: "When I was a young believer, I was very zealous. I wanted to serve the Lord well, advance, and make myself good. But things always turned out the opposite way. The more I tried, the worse I became, and the more I realized that I could not make it. I was disappointed as well as bewildered. I found no solution. One day another brother said to me, 'Mr. G., God never cherishes the hope that you cherish for yourself. You have so much hope for yourself, but God has no hope in you!' I was very surprised and asked him what God had to say about me. He said, 'God knows that you are powerless and that you cannot do anything. You are hopeless. This is why He crucified you on the cross. What you deserve is only crucifixion and nothing else.' From that day on, the scales seemed to fall from my eyes. I saw that God has not required anything of me, and I saw that I could do nothing. This is why He crucified me on the cross. If that is the case, why do I still need to struggle?"

Brothers and sisters, in theory and in doctrine we know very well that the old Adamic life is irreparable and incurable. But the surprising thing is that in our experience, we still try to repair and improve it; we still cherish hope for the Adamic life. Many people say, "I am surprised that I still commit such a sin!" But I say that we should be surprised if we no longer committed such a sin! Is there any sin that we could not commit? We can commit any sin; the root of all sins is in us. God considers us hopeless and impossible to reform. This is why He crucified us on the cross. When the Lord died, we died also. God's crucifixion of us on the cross is His evaluation of us. In effect, God is saying that we deserve only death and annihilation.

Brothers and sisters, how different is our evaluation of ourselves from God's evaluation of us. We think that we are able to do something. We think that we can overcome, be holy, and make progress. But God does not cherish any such hope. All we are from head to toe is sin; we are absolutely useless. There is no way to save us except by the way of death. Without death, there can be no deliverance. We always think that there is still a chance for improvement and victory. But there is no such thing. Today we see the first fact, which is God's evaluation of us, how much He thinks we are worth. Brothers and sisters, the ones who see this are blessed before others. Countless numbers of Christians have experienced repeated stumblings, defilements, failures, disappointments, and journeys of hopelessness before they see that God has absolutely no hope in them. The sooner we see this fact, the better it will be for us, because this is the starting point of all deliverance. All genuine release of life begins here. We should see that we deserve nothing but death. The sooner we see this, the faster we will grow. The whole problem hinges on how we view the old Adamic life. We know and have mentioned this over a hundred times: the old Adamic life is irreparable and unalterable. But how many of us have really seen that we deserve to die? How many have seen that there is not another way besides death? Understanding the doctrine is one thing, knowing and seeing is another. Doctrines can only make us understand something in the mind, but seeing requires revelation in our spirit. All the things which do not come from God's revelation and from our seeing are the things that do not count; they are not effective at all.

The meaning of being delivered from the law is to be delivered from God's demands. This means that we have ceased all hope of pleasing God; this comes as a result of understanding the Adamic life and the work of Christ. We no longer hope to do anything to please God. As long as we still hope to please God by our own effort, we are not yet delivered from the law, and we will not be able to avoid heartaches and disappointments. The only way not to be disappointed is for us to know that God has no more hope in us.

HOW TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

We have seen that, first, we need to be delivered from the law. But how can we be delivered from the law? The only way is death. Death can deliver us from the law because as long as we live, the law will have a demand on us. A living person is not supposed to break the law because the law will punish him. This is what the apostle said, that as long as the husband lives, the law puts its

demands on the wife. However, if he dies, the power of the law will not reach her and will not make demands on her. Therefore, to be delivered from the demand of the law, there is no way except by death. As long as we live, the law will continue to put its demand on us.

For now, I will not speak of how God's law puts its demand on us; I will only speak of how we make demands on ourselves by our own enacted law. When do we do this? If we get up late today, we resolve to get up early tomorrow. We make resolutions to overcome when we are very defiled, when we struggle day and night with sin, when we are in the turbulent current of the world, and when we feel that our life is very wrong. We think that we can make it, that we are able to make it, and that we will make it. In this way, we consider ourselves still to be alive. But by doing this, we will not see the clear work of Christ in us. If we truly know God, we will realize that He has completely given up hope in us. This is why He had no other option than to crucify us on the cross. If we really see that we are only worthy of death, all our resolutions will be gone. I can speak the same thing for myself. Many times I resolved that I would never do such and such a thing again. But afterward, I asked myself again, "Are you not worthy of death? If you are, why do you still make resolutions?" Therefore, we must see that the way to overcome is not by making resolutions but by standing on the ground where God has placed us. We should not cherish the hope that the next time will be better. Instead, we only stand on the ground where God has put us. We should not make resolutions anymore, nor should we hope to advance. We should no longer struggle to overcome because we know that all these are the works of the old Adamic life. We have to put them in the place of death and ignore them. If we are truly standing in the place of death, we will overcome and experience deliverance from all these things. Therefore, death is our only way; it is the unique way of salvation. The world, sin, the self—nothing is able to touch a dead person. If we consider all these things as dead, they will not touch us anymore.

HAVING DIED IN CHRIST

Now we will go one step further to consider how we have died. Verse 4 says, "So then, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ." From this we see that our death is "through the body of Christ." In the same way that Christ died, we died. The time that Christ died is the time that we died. Christ has died, and we have died too. This is not a

spiritual suicide, in which we artificially consider ourselves to be dead. Nor is it a repeated declaration to ourselves that we are dead, in an effort to signal to ourselves that we are dead. Rather, when we see Christ's accomplished fact on the cross and realize that God has included us in this death of Christ, we are led to the inevitable conclusion that we have died. There are two spiritual experiences in this world which are most amazing. The first is seeing God's plan, that is, what God has planned for us and what God thinks we should do. For example, He has judged that we are dead. The second is to see what God has done in Christ for us. These two things are very wonderful. We see what God has ordained for us, we see how we have become one with Christ, and we see how, in Him, we can receive all that He has accomplished. When Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, we were included in His death because God has included us in Him. When His body was broken, we were broken as well. His crucifixion is our crucifixion. Therefore, we and Christ are one. This is why we pay attention to the matter of baptism. Many people say that baptism is only an outward ritual and not important. No, it is altogether a testimony of something inward. We believe that when Christ died, we also died. The first thing after a death is burial and this is why we bury ourselves in the water of baptism. If we do not believe that we are dead, we would not be buried. The fact that we are willing to be buried means that we believe we are dead. Therefore, baptism is to believe that Christ has died and that we also have died. This is why we bury ourselves. The burial is a proof that we are dead. Christ has been crucified. When He was crucified on the cross, we were included in Him. When the veil was rent, the cherubim were rent as well. The veil was rent from top to bottom; it was God who rent it from top to bottom. At the same time, the cherubim were also rent by God from top to bottom because the cherubim were sewn on the veil. We know that the veil is the body of Christ, while the cherubim are God's creatures. Therefore, when Christ died, all of God's creation died. This is what it means to be dead to the law through the body of Christ.

The way of deliverance is not to deliberately reckon ourselves dead. Those who have been preaching the doctrine of reckoning themselves dead are preaching the wrong teaching. What is the right teaching? The right teaching is to reckon ourselves dead in Christ. We do not die in ourselves; rather, we die through the body of Christ. Christ died, and since we are joined to Him, we also died. The secret to victory is never to look at ourselves apart from Christ and never to consider the self that is outside of Christ. This is what the

Lord meant in John 15 when He said that we should abide in Him. It means that we should never look at ourselves apart from Christ. What is outside is still very uncomely and cannot be improved. If we want to look at ourselves, we can only look at ourselves in Christ. Once we look at the self outside of Christ, we will immediately fail. Many times we forget the facts that Christ has accomplished. We become angry and frustrated at ourselves and ask why we are the way we are. We continue to fail, fall, and suffer disappointment with a resulting loss of heart. Please remember that these are the things that a person does outside of Christ. Today, in Christ, I have died to the law. If anyone has not received this deliverance and freedom, I would invite you to look at yourself only in Christ. In Christ, God has crucified us because He has judged us irreparable. There is no way to save us except by death. Therefore, God has judged us to be dead, and He has crucified us together in Christ. We are therefore free and delivered from the demands of the law. There are two facts here which we have to absolutely stand on. The first is that God has considered us absolutely hopeless. Only death can deliver us from the law. The second is that in Christ God has crucified us on the cross. The first has to do with God's plan, while the second has to do with God's work. The first is what God has destined, while the second is what God has accomplished. God knows that there is no other way of salvation except through death. We have been broken into pieces, and there is no way for us to become whole again. Herein lies the basis of our redemption—the cross. For this reason, in our daily life we should accept this fact all the time so that we can be delivered from the law. If we stand on this ground, we will not find obstructions. Of course, we should confess and ask God for forgiveness when we fail. But we do not need to look back, because all the failures and degradations come from the old Adamic life. In man's eyes, there is nothing better than to ask the Lord to give us the strength not to do the same thing again. But in God's eyes, this is redundant, because if we have died in Christ, there is no need to make any more resolutions. We have died; our history is over and all our ideas and decisions are also over. Man always thinks that making resolutions is a good thing. But these are like reeds; they cannot fight the enemy, and they are absolutely useless before God.

BEING JOINED TO THE RESURRECTION LIFE OF CHRIST

What we have seen thus far is that God has crucified us with Christ. This alone, however, is not enough; there needs to be something more. It is that we "might be joined to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God." Not only do we need a deliverance on the negative side, we also need a joining on the positive side. Without this, our work is still in vain. For this reason, God has not only crucified us on the negative side but has also joined us, who have been delivered from the law, to the resurrected Christ. Therefore, on the one side there is an exit, and on the other side there is an entrance. On the one side there is the severance, and on the other side there is the union. On the one side we are delivered from the law, and on the other side we are joined to Christ and belong to Christ. This is the resurrection that we have been speaking about. Furthermore, this is not something individual; resurrection brings all the sons into glory. John 12:24 says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Originally there was only one life. Now this life has entered into many seeds. Originally there was only one organism. Now it has become many organisms. Originally there was only one grain of wheat. Now this grain of wheat has become many grains of wheat. In the same way, when Christ died, He dispensed His life to all the believers. In Christ, there are also two facts. The first is that we have been included in the death of Christ. When Christ died, we also died. The second is that we were resurrected with Christ. God has dispensed His life to us. This is something that every regenerated person shares in common and possesses. I do not wish to say much about this; my emphasis is on the first fact.

We who are resurrected in Christ ought to bear fruit to glorify God. God has given us the life of Christ. By this we can live out His life. The one grain that was planted is exactly the same as the thirty, sixty, or hundred grains that will spring forth. If we plant barley, surely what will come out will not be wheat or cucumber. What is planted will be the same as what grows up; there will not be a change. If what is planted is wheat, surely wheat will grow up. How then can we live a life similar to Christ's life, a life that bears fruit to glorify God? There is only one way; we must allow Christ to be lived out of us and allow Him to live. Christ has not only died for us on the cross but also lives for us within us. How can we live a life of Christ? The only way this could be done is for Christ to give His life to us. Therefore, we must have the life of Christ before we can bear fruit to glorify God.

Today I have presented to you these things before God. May we see that God has given up hope in us and considers us incurable. Although we think that there is hope and strength in us, God has given up hope in us. He has crucified us on the cross. Whenever we are outside of Christ and feel that we are still alive and able, we will immediately fall. Therefore, we can only see ourselves in Christ. When we are in Christ, there are only two facts: we have died and we have resurrected. The resurrected part is in Christ. Therefore, God wants us to live by His life. At the same time, everything that is in Adam has died. If we lay hold of this fact, we are dead to the law. Please remember that we are not only dead to the world, the self, and sin; we are also dead to the law. In this way, we will no longer have any hope for ourselves but will stand firmly in the position where God has placed us.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LAW

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 41:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (1), Chap. 24

As believers, we live by the Holy Spirit, not by the law. Many people do not know what the law is. As a result, they do not know the Holy Spirit either. They do not know what it means to live by the law and what it means to live by the Spirit. The failure in our work is due to the fact that we work by the law and not by the Spirit. If we trust in the law, we will not have the power or the fruit because the law is something that the Lord has judged.

WHAT IS THE LAW?

The law is not just the Ten Commandments or the few hundred ordinances of the Old Testament. These are the Old Testament laws, but there are also New Testament laws. The Israelites in the Old Testament had their laws, and the church in the New Testament also has its laws. What is the principle of the law? When God has a will, and this will is written down on tablets of stone or on paper, including anything from one item to a thousand items of ordinances, we have the law. By walking according to these hundreds and thousands of items of the law, a man becomes clear what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. He also becomes clear concerning the way he should take. This is the law. It is lifeless. Once a man begins to walk according to this dead law, he can put God aside and ignore Him. This is like saying that a student can ignore the principal of his school as long as he abides by the school rules. This is the law. Good and evil, right and wrong, are known through the written code. The path that one has to follow comes entirely from his knowledge and not from the inner leading of God. When this happens we have the law.

Many people can tell the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, without ever fellowshiping with God. This knowledge, however, is useless. Those who live this way are still living under the law. If you measure everything according to this rule, you will find that many things are still under

the law. Man is naturally inclined to the law because he can easily tell from the law what is right and what is wrong. Most people are afraid of living by the Spirit. They would rather live according to some prescribed rules. Keeping the law is both legal and dead, but it is also something convenient. One can know how many laws he has kept and which ones he has come short of. The law turns man away from God. With the law, man does not need to contact God; he can put Him aside. After you have passed the gate of victory, you should no longer live under the law, but live by the Spirit (Rom. 7:6).

LIVING UNDER THE LAW

Let us consider the meaning of walking according to the law. I did not know what it meant to live according to the law until a few years ago, that is, until 1928. I had been a preacher for many years, but I did not know what it meant to keep the law. It is true that I could explain the law to others according to my theological knowledge. But in my practical experience I never understood this matter. There was a time when I was gravely ill. The Lord healed me. After I was healed, I rested and recuperated by the seaside. There I met Brother Simon Meek and stayed with him for a while. His health was not good either, and he wanted me to give him some advice. I asked, "What do you want me to help you with?" He answered, "Please tell me if it is scriptural to ask for healing." I said, "God does heal people. But Timothy had to use some wine, and Epaphroditus was not healed. Paul's eyes were not good and could not read small handwriting." I went on to tell him the experience of many people who were healed. Brother Simon Meek said, "Your answer is no answer at all." At that time, I realized what the law is. If the Bible tells us what to do step by step, all we have to do is to act accordingly in a simple way. This is keeping the law. However, God wants direct fellowship with us. He wants us to receive His revelation and then act according to His revelation. If we do not fellowship with Him, the Spirit will have no outlet for His work.

Man likes to have clear instructions from the Bible concerning everything he does. For example, in the matter of divine healing, he wants a clear yes or no from the Bible. However the Bible shows us that some sicknesses were healed and some sicknesses were not healed. The Bible does not have any rule regarding this matter. God has no intention for the church to hold on to some dead letters and forsake Him. He wants to see men seeking, praying, and waiting quietly on Him. He does not want us to have any trust in something apart from Him.

The law speaks of God's past will; it is not God's present will. However, man always wants to know God's present will according to His past will. God wants man to fellowship with Him and understand His present desire through the Holy Spirit. He does not want us to merely keep the law. This is why we need to have fresh fellowship with God every day. Only then we can know His will.

The second aspect of the law is that it dictates how we should live. God does not want to decide how the church should live from day to day. He wants the church to fellowship with Him moment by moment so that the church can know His desire. If I prescribe everything that one of my employees should do and the way he should live, he can abide by my prescriptions for a day, a week, or even a month without fellowshiping with me or asking me anything. This is the principle of the law. The law is doing God's will without communicating with Him.

When I was in Shanghai, I had a servant who also was a brother. One day I considered how the Lord wants us to exercise our spirit and not follow the law when working for Him. I wanted to see if it would work if I were to deal with my servant by the Spirit and not by the law. It is convenient to lay down laws in our daily life. If I laid down some laws, it would be easy for my servant to work for me. Of course I have to abide by the same laws as well. I began to talk with my servant and told him that he should check with me in everything and not make any proposals of his own. Neither would I give him any prescribed rules. While I was talking with a friend, the servant came in a few times and asked each time, "What do you want to eat? What do you want to drink?" I said, "Just wait a while." Later, the servant confessed that it was easier to work according to some laws than to ask for instructions in everything. From this we see that it is easy to keep the law, but it is not easy to work according to the leading of the Spirit. Easy or hard, however, this is God's desire, and we cannot take the easy way. We have to take the God-ordained way, which is not being under the law but under the Spirit.

LIVING IN SPIRIT

A living that is according to the Spirit does not follow any fixed rule. All dead rules are set aside, and one seeks after God's will directly. After my servant finished cleaning the floor, he did not know what to do next. When twelve o'clock came, he did not know if I wanted to eat. This is the way one lives when he is in the Spirit. He moves when he has the revelation of the

Spirit and waits on the Lord otherwise. How do we know if a person is saved and ready for baptism? We can quiz him about the truth concerning salvation and baptism, and he may answer everything correctly. If we then say that he is eligible for baptism, we are acting according to the law. Suppose there is an old lady from the countryside who cannot read or say any of the biblical terms. She cannot answer any question concerning regeneration, repentance, or forgiveness. Yet she has the peace in her heart. Should we baptize her? The issue is not whether the candidate for baptism will pass our test and answer our questions. The issue is whether or not she is regenerated. Many village folks do not know any terminology, yet they have peace and joy inwardly. Such ones may not understand anything in their mind, but they are genuinely saved.

At our Lord's table meeting in Shanghai, we often have visitors joining us unannounced. How long should we ask them to wait before we invite them to break bread with us? Should they wait a week or a month? Actually, if we know that a person is saved, we can invite him to break bread with us immediately. There is no need to wait.

The co-workers must never lay down any laws. We have to allow the Holy Spirit to operate and work within each person separately. Everything in the Bible is living, but it is living only when it is in the Spirit. If we make a thing an ordinance, it immediately becomes dead. The truth of the Bible must be realized in the Spirit; only then will it be living. In conducting conferences, we sometimes receive a message from the Lord and speak it. This may result in the salvation of many people. However, the next time we conduct another conference, we may think that we should do the same since so many were saved last time. We may then proceed to deliver the same message, and to our surprise no one is saved. We think that if a message saves people one time, it will save people all the time. But the result is not what we expect. A message saves people when it is delivered in the Spirit. The same message repeated according to the law will not save anyone. Here lies the difference between walking according to the Spirit and walking according to the law.

Everything that is not done according to the living guidance of the Spirit is a kind of law. We often take yesterday's leading as today's guidance. But applying yesterday's guidance to today is to walk according to the law. We should not think that just because the Spirit was leading us a certain way in the past that He will lead us the same way today. Imitating the leading of

yesterday is being in the law. It is even possible to walk according to the law in obeying the biblical truth. If we want to be baptized just because the Bible says so rather than as a result of the leading of the Spirit within, we are following the law. We must walk according to the Scripture, but our leading is only proper when this walk is confirmed by the inner guidance. If anyone says that something is right because the Bible has never said that it is wrong, he is completely in the realm of the law. Many people write to me to ask if this or that is right. I write back and ask whether they have the Holy Spirit within. If they do, they should learn to follow the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit. I am not a fortune-teller or a diviner; I cannot know God's will for you. You have to learn to know the inner guidance of the Spirit yourself.

In learning to follow the guidance of the Spirit, we have to ask what the Spirit is saying before we ask what the Bible is saying. The first thing we should ask is what the inner registration is telling us. However, most people today first ask what the Bible says and do not ask what the Spirit within says. This is not normal. A New Testament believer has the Holy Spirit residing within. This is a precious thing. We have to learn to know the inner leading of the Holy Spirit within us. There is a difference between the principles and commandments in the Bible. A believer must not only obey the commandments in the Bible, but also walk according to the principles that are behind the commandments. Consider the matter of the head covering. If you cover your head merely because 1 Corinthians 11 says so, you have not covered your head in reality. Unless a man obeys the Bible according to the leading of the Spirit, his obedience is the same as his disobedience. The main thing is what the Lord is saying within a person. If the Lord is leading you to obey a certain truth in the Bible, and you act accordingly, this is true obedience to God.

In the Old Testament there was the dispensation of the law, but today we are in the New Testament dispensation. Yet there are still too many "Jews" in the church today. They keep the law and make the Bible a book of laws. Many people ask others what they think of this or that. This means that they do not know how to ask the Spirit within them. This is not normal.

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT BEING CONFIRMED BY THE BIBLE

Every sheep knows its shepherd's voice. Many people think that if they do not know the letter of the Bible, they will not know how to live. Does this mean that they will sin every day? In actuality, if we follow the leading of the Spirit, we will experience just the opposite. It is much better to follow the leading of the Spirit than to follow the Bible alone. We can forget, but the Holy Spirit will not forget. We may ask, "If the work of the Holy Spirit is so crucial, does this mean that we do not need the Bible anymore?" Theoretically, the leading of the Holy Spirit within is good enough, but in following this inner leading, it is possible for us to make mistakes. Therefore, we still need the Bible. In other words, we are not following the leading of the Bible; we are following the leading of the Spirit within. However, we are checking this daily inner leading with the Bible. Only when we obey both the inner leading and the outward leading are we truly obeying God. We cannot obey only the teaching of the Bible. We must follow the leading of the Spirit within and then compare it with the Bible. If the leading cannot be confirmed by the Bible, it is not a leading from the Spirit but a work of the emotion. The real issue is the inward registration.

In Chefoo two people asked me if they should leave the denominations. I answered, "I do not know." They said, "Does this mean that you are opposed to us leaving the denominations?" Then I asked them, "How does the life in you feel when you are in the denominations? Do you feel that the life within is blossoming when you stay in the denominations? If you feel that way, you should stay in the denominations. If not, you should leave." It is absolutely not a question of right or wrong but a question of life.

There was a famous Western missionary in Chefoo who came three times to discuss the question of sects with me. The first two times I avoided her and did not talk with her about the subject. The last time she came she insisted on talking about it. I felt that there was the leading of the Spirit, and I talked with her for five minutes. After our talk we sat down for tea. I told her that I was in a big circle, but that she was in a small circle within the big circle. After our talk, I escorted her out. Two days later, she came to me early in the morning and said, "Last night I sent out three letters of resignation." I told her, "You should not be influenced by me. Such a matter can only be decided by God alone. Only God can call you out of a denomination." She said, "I inquired of God last night and saw that the small circle within the big circle is man's choice and that man's choice is a sin. I felt that it is God's will that I should leave my denomination. That is why I got up last night and wrote the letters of

resignation." I shook her hand. From that point on, she began to go on positively in the way of the Lord and was not bothered by any negative element.

As workers for the Lord we should be careful not to lead others merely according to the Bible. We should allow the Holy Spirit to personally guide them from within. We do not need to make all the saints identical according to some outward standards or to maintain some outward order. If we do this, the Holy Spirit will not have the ground or the freedom to work. We must not be a Moses, dispensing letters and the law to others. Our law is just the Holy Spirit. He is our absolute guidance. We have to learn to follow the guidance of the Spirit within. If a man keeps the law, he can go on without God. But if a man lives by the Spirit, he will not be able to leave God for a moment. Once he leaves God, he will die.

CHAPTER NINE

DELIVERANCE

CWWN, The (Set 3) Vol. 49:

Messages for Building Up New Believers (2), Chap. 25

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:15—8:2

It is possible for a person to be free from sin immediately after he has believed in the Lord. However, this may not be the common experience of all believers. After believing in the Lord, many people fall back into sin instead of being freed from sin. It is true that they are saved. They belong to the Lord and possess eternal life. However, they are still troubled by sin and are unable to serve the Lord as they wish.

It is a very painful experience for a person to be continually troubled by sin after he has believed in the Lord. A person who has been enlightened by God has a sensitive conscience. He is sensitive toward sin and has a life that condemns sin. However, he may still be bothered by sin. This results in much frustration and even discouragement. It is indeed a very painful experience.

Many Christians try to overcome sin. Some think that if they try hard enough to renounce sin, they will eventually be free from sin. As a result, they try their best to reject the temptations of sin. Some realize that sin should be overcome, and they continually wrestle with sin in the hope of overcoming it. Others think that sin has made them a captive and that they must strive hard to free themselves from its bondage. However, all these are man's thoughts; they are not God's word or teaching. None of these methods lead to victory. God's Word does not tell us to struggle with sin by our own efforts. It says that we should be delivered from sin, that is, be released or freed from sin. Sin is a power which enslaves man. The way to deal with this power is not by destroying it ourselves but by allowing the Lord to free us from it. We have sin, and there is no way to separate ourselves from it. The Lord's way is not to vanquish sin. He is saving us from sin's power by moving us away from it. New believers should know from the start the right way to be delivered from sin. There is no need to travel a long and tortuous path to find deliverance

from sin. We can take the way of freedom as soon as we believe. Now let us try to deal with this matter according to Romans 7 and 8.

I. SIN BEING A LAW

Romans 7:15-25 says, "For what I work out, I do not acknowledge; for what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do...For to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not. For I do not do the good which I will; but the evil which I do not will, this I practice. But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out...I find then the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members...So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin."

In verses 15 through 20, Paul repeatedly uses the word will and the phrase do not will. The emphasis is on willing or not willing, resolving or not resolving. In verses 21 to 25, there is another emphasis on the law. These two things are the keys to this passage of the Word.

First, we need to understand the term law. The common understanding of a law is that it is something that remains the same all the time, something that allows no exceptions. Moreover, there is power in a law. This power is a natural power, not an artificial power. All laws have power. For example, gravity is a law. If you throw something up, it will eventually fall back to the ground. You do not have to pull the object down with your hands; the earth has a force that pulls it down for you. If you throw a stone up, it will fall. If you throw an iron up, it also will fall. If you throw something up in China, it will fall. If you throw the same thing up in other countries, it will fall. An object in the air will fall the same today and tomorrow. Any object in the air, as long as nothing is holding it, will fall regardless of time and space. A law remains the same all the time and allows no exceptions. It is a natural force which requires no human effort for its perpetuation.

Romans 7 shows us that Paul was trying to be victorious. He was trying to free himself from sin. He wanted to please God. He did not want to sin or to fail. However, he eventually admitted that his resolutions were all futile. He said, "To will is present with me, but to work out the good is not." He did not

want to sin, yet he sinned. He wanted to do good and walk according to God's law, yet he could not do it. In other words, what he willed he could not do, and what he resolved to do, he was unable to accomplish. Paul willed again and again, but the result was only repeated failure. This shows us that the way to victory lies not in the human will or human resolution. Paul willed and resolved again and again, but he still failed and sinned. Obviously, to will is present, but to work out the good is not. The best that a man can do is make resolutions.

The willing is present but not the good, because sin is a law. Following verse 21 Paul showed us that he remained defeated even after he made numerous resolutions. This is because sin is a law. This law of sin was present with him every time he resolved to do good. He was subject to the law of God in his heart, but his flesh yielded to the law of sin. Whenever he willed to obey God's law, a different law rose up in his members, subjecting him to the law of sin.

Paul was the first person in the Bible to point out that sin is a law. This was a very important discovery! It is a pity that many who have been Christians for years still do not realize that sin is a law. Many people know that gravity is a law and thermal expansion of objects is another law. But they do not know that sin is a law. Paul did not know this at first. After sinning repeatedly, not voluntarily but involuntarily by a potent force in his body, Paul discovered that sin is a law.

Our history of failure tells us that whenever temptations come, we try to resist them. But we are never successful in this resistance. When temptations come again, we again try to resist them, only to end up in another defeat. This experience repeats itself ten times, a hundred times, or a thousand times, and we still find ourselves defeated. This is the story of our failure. We fail again and again. This is not something that happens by chance; it is a law. If a person committed only one sin in a lifetime, he could consider sin as something incidental. However, those who have sinned a hundred or a thousand times will say that sin is a law; it is something that continually drives them on.

II. MAN'S WILL BEING UNABLE TO OVERCOME THE LAW OF SIN

Paul failed because he exercised his will to make resolutions. After verse 21, Paul's eyes were opened. He saw that the enemy he was dealing with—sin—was nothing less than a law. When he saw that sin was a law, he could only sigh and say, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" He realized that it was impossible for him to prevail over sin by his will.

What is the will? The will is man's own volition. It is what man wants, determines, and decides to do. It is man's opinions and judgments. Once a man's will resolves to do something, he begins to carry it out. Man's will can produce some power. Therefore, there is power in the will.

But herein lies the problem. When the will comes in conflict with the law of sin, which one prevails? The will usually prevails at the beginning, but ultimately sin prevails. Suppose you hold up a book that weighs one catty [a Chinese measure of weight] with your hand. Gravity is pulling it down while you are trying your best to hold it up. But the unceasing operation of the law of gravity will eventually prevail, and the book will fall to the floor. You may try to hold it up with your hand. You may prevail for an hour, but after two hours you will feel tired, and after another hour your hand will no longer obey you. Eventually, you will let go of it. Gravity never tires out, but your hand does. The law of gravity is pulling the book down continuously, every hour, every minute, and even every second. Your hand cannot fight against the law of gravity forever. The longer you hold the book, the heavier it feels. The book has not become heavier, but the law of gravity has triumphed over the power of your hand, and you feel as if the book has become heavier and heavier. The same principle applies when you try to overcome sin with your will. The will can stand against sin for a while. But the power of sin far exceeds the power of the will. Sin is a law; it is not destroyed by the resistance of man's will. Whenever the power of the will slackens, the law of sin surfaces. The human will cannot persist forever, but the law of sin is always active. The will may prevail for a little while, but in the end it will always be overcome by the law of sin.

Before we see that sin is a law, we keep trying to overcome it by our own will. When temptation comes, we hold our breath and try to overcome, only to find that it has overcome us instead. When temptation comes again, we make a stronger resolution because we think that our last failure was caused by a faulty resolution. We tell ourselves that we will not sin this time and that we

will overcome. But the result is the same—we fail again. We do not know why our resolution cannot bring us victory over sin. We do not realize that overcoming sin by the will never works.

It is easy to see that temper is a sin. When someone says something unkind, you feel hurt and upset. If he continues to speak unpleasant words, you may hit your desk, blow up, exchange words, or do anything. Afterwards, you may feel that as a Christian you should not have lost your temper, and you may resolve to control your temper the next time. You pray and believe that God has forgiven you. You confess your sin to others, and your heart is once again filled with joy. You think that you will never lose your temper again. But a little later, you hear more unkind words and become upset once again. When these words come to you the second time, you begin to murmur within. By the third time, your temper explodes. Afterwards, you realize that you were wrong again, and you ask the Lord for forgiveness, promising Him that you will never lose your temper again. But the same thing happens the next time you hear unkind words; after a while, your temper flares up again. You exercise your will again and again, only to find that you fail again and again. This proves that sin is not an accidental mistake; it is not something that happens only once. It is something that happens repeatedly, something that haunts you all your life. Those who lie continue to lie, and those who lose their temper continue to lose their temper. This is a law; no human power can overcome it. Paul did not learn this lesson at first, so he exercised his will repeatedly to no avail. It is impossible for man to try to overcome the law of sin by his will.

Once the Lord grants you mercy and shows you that sin is a law, you will not be far from victory. If you continue to think that sin is an occasional act and that victory can be secured through additional prayers and struggles against temptations, you are far from victory. Paul's story shows us that sin is a law. The power of sin is strong; our own power is weak. The power of sin always prevails, while our own power always fails. As soon as Paul realized that sin is a law, he knew that none of his methods would work. His determination was useless; he would never overcome the law of sin by his will. This was a great discovery, a great revelation to him.

Paul saw that a man cannot experience deliverance by the exercise of the will. As long as a man trusts in the power of his own will, he will not turn to God's way of deliverance. The day will come when you will prostrate yourself

before God and acknowledge that you can do nothing and henceforth will do nothing. That will be the day you find deliverance. Only then will you understand Romans 8. Brothers and sisters, please do not belittle Romans 7. We must first have the knowledge of chapter seven before we can have the experience of chapter eight. The problem is not whether you understand the doctrine in Romans 8 but whether or not you have emerged from Romans 7. Many have buried themselves in Romans 7; they are still trying to deal with sin by their will. The result is nothing but failure. If you have not seen that sin is a law and that your will can never overcome this law, you are trapped in Romans 7; you will never arrive at Romans 8. Our newly saved brothers and sisters must accept God's Word as it is written. If you try to find your own way out, you will end up with nothing but sin. You will sin again and again, and your eyes will continue to be veiled. You will remain in your blindness. Your eyes need to be opened to see that all your willing and struggling is in vain.

Since sin is a law and the will cannot overcome this law, what is the way of victory?

III. THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE FREEING US FROM THE LAW OF SIN

Romans 8:1-2 says, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." The way to victory is to be freed from the law of sin and of death. This verse does not say, "The Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from sin and death." (I am afraid that many Christians think this way.) Rather, it says, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Many Christians see the Spirit of life setting them free from only sin and death. They do not see the law of the Spirit of life freeing them from the law of sin and of death. It takes many years for some Christians to realize that sin and death are a law in them and that the Holy Spirit is another law in them. When the Lord opens their eyes, they will see that sin and death are a law and that the Holy Spirit is a law as well. The realization of the Holy Spirit as a law is a great discovery. When we realize that the life-giving Spirit is a law, we will jump up and exclaim, "Thank God, Hallelujah!" Man's will cannot overcome the law of sin, but the law of the Spirit of life has freed us from the law of sin and of death. Only the law of the Spirit of life can free man from the law of sin.

Once we realize that sin is a law, we will no longer try to do anything by our will. When God grants us mercy to see that the Holy Spirit is a law, we will experience a great change. Many people only see the Spirit of life giving us life. They do not see that the Holy Spirit is another law in us, and that we can be freed spontaneously from the law of sin and of death when we trust in this law. There is no effort involved for this law to deliver us from the other law. We do not need to will, to do anything, or to hold on to the Holy Spirit. We do not need to be that busy when the Lord's Spirit is in us. If we fear that the Lord's Spirit will not work in us unless we rush in to help Him in times of temptation, we have not seen the Spirit as a law within us yet. May we see that the Holy Spirit is a spontaneous law within us. The way of deliverance from sin is not through the exercise of the will. If we exercise our will, we will end up in failure. God has given us another law which spontaneously frees us from the law of sin and of death. The problem of one law can only be resolved by another law.

There is no effort involved when we try to overcome one law with another law. We have mentioned before that gravity is a law. It pulls every object down to the ground. But helium is a gas which is lighter than air. If we seal it in a tight balloon, the balloon will rise up. It will rise spontaneously; there is no need to fan it or support it by any force. As soon as we let go, the balloon will rise. The rising is a law, and we do not need to do anything about it. In the same way, no effort is involved when we deal with the law of sin and of death by the law of the Spirit of life.

Suppose someone scolds you or strikes you without cause. It is possible for you to overcome the situation even without realizing what has happened. After the whole thing is over, you may wonder how you did not get angry when you were scolded. You should have been very angry at the other person's word. But surprisingly you overcame the situation without even realizing it! Indeed, all victories are unconscious victories because the law of the Holy Spirit is operating and upholding us, not our own will. This kind of spontaneous victory is genuine victory. Once you experience this, you will realize that only the indwelling Spirit can keep you from sin; you do not have to will not to sin. It is also the indwelling Holy Spirit who is enabling you to overcome; you do not have to will to overcome. Since this law dwells in you, you are delivered from the law of sin and of death. You are in Christ Jesus, and the law of the Spirit of life is in you. Spontaneously, you are free. As long

as you do not rely on your own will and effort, the Holy Spirit will bring you into victory.

Hence, victory over sin has nothing to do with our effort. We did not exert any effort when the law of sin directed us to sin. Similarly, we do not need to exert any effort in order for the law of the Holy Spirit to free us from sin. Genuine victory is one that requires no effort on our part. There is nothing for us to do. We can lift up our eyes and say to the Lord, "All is well." Our past failures were the result of a law and today's victories are also a result of a law. The former law is powerful, but the present law is more powerful. The former law is indeed potent in bringing us to sin, but the present law is more absolute in saving us from condemnation. When the law of the Spirit of life is expressed through us, its power is far greater than that of the law of sin and of death.

If we see this, we will truly be freed from sin. The Bible does not say that we can overcome sin with our will. It speaks only of freedom from sin: "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." The law of the life-giving Spirit has pulled us out of the realm of the law of sin and of death. The law of sin and of death is still present, but the one on whom it worked is no longer there.

Every saved person should be clear about the way to deliverance. First, we must see that sin is a law in us. If we do not see this, we cannot go on. Second, we need to see that the will cannot overcome the law of sin. Third, we need to see that the Holy Spirit is a law, and this law frees us from the law of sin.

The sooner a new believer realizes this way of deliverance, the better it is. In fact, no one needs to wait for many years before seeing the way of deliverance. You do not need to suffer many hardships before experiencing freedom. Many brothers and sisters have wasted their time unnecessarily; they have shed many tears of defeat. If you want to experience less pain and tears, you should realize from the start that the way to deliverance lies in these words: "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus." This law is so perfect and powerful that it will save you to the uttermost; there is no need to do anything to help it. This law frees you from sin completely, sanctifies you wholly, and fills you with life spontaneously.

Brothers and sisters, do not think that the Holy Spirit within us only expresses His life through us occasionally. If we think this way, it proves that we only know the Spirit; we do not know the law of the Spirit. The law of the Spirit expresses His life continuously. It remains the same at all times and in all places. We do not have to tell this law to behave in a certain way; it behaves the way it does without our guidance. Once the Lord opens our eyes, we will see that the treasure within is not just the Holy Spirit or a life, but a law as well. Then we will be released, and the problem of sin will be over.

May God open our eyes to see this way of deliverance. May He open our eyes to see this secret to victory, and may we have a good start on this straight path.

CHAPTER TEN

THE LAW OF LIFE

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 45:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (5), Chap. 136

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:18—8:2

THE POWER OF LIFE OR THE LAW OF LIFE

After a person is saved, he can have two different kinds of realizations about the new life he has received. He may regard this life as a power or as a law. There is a world of difference between these two kinds of realizations. Is the life that God has given us a power or a law? If a man does not have the proper realization of this subject, he may still live in sin and not be able to overcome. Before we became a Christian, we had no thought of doing good. But after we became a Christian, we began to strive to be good and practice good behavior. Disappointingly, however, we found ourselves powerless to do any good. Many people say, "Now that I am saved, I have the power to do good. Before I believed in the Lord, I did not have the power to do good. But now I can do good." But these ones frequently find themselves in Paul's condition in Romans 7: "For to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (v. 18). Every saved person has the life of the Lord in him, but when he tries to live according to the power of this life, he always fails. He becomes very bothered and even discouraged, thinking that God's life can do nothing more for him. But this kind of experience is abnormal and unnecessary.

We have to know that the life that God has given us is indeed powerful. But the life that has been given to us is not primarily for power. There is power in God's life, but this life has not been given to us primarily to be our power. Romans 8 shows us that God's life is given to us to be our law. It is one thing for life to be in us as a power, and it is another thing for life to be in us as a new law. There is a great difference between the two. If we only know God's life as a power without knowing it as a law, we will miss the greatest of all blessings. Paul's experience in Romans 7 was the experience of a saved person.

He said that to will was present with him, but to work out the good was not. Many people who try to live by the power of life end in failure. The law of life is far superior to the power of life. God's life within us operates in the way of a law; it is not merely for the purpose of giving us some power. Once we realize that life operates within us as a law, it will be very easy for us to be free from sin, and it will be very easy for us to do God's will and please Him.

THE LAW OF LIFE

What is a law? A law is something that acts a certain way by itself. For example, my keys fall to the floor because there is the law of gravity. The law of gravity pulls the keys downward to the floor. The force of gravity operates irrespective of time and space. If I drop my keys here, they fall down. If I drop my keys in Tientsin, they fall down there as well. If I drop my keys in New York, they still fall down there. If I drop them today, they fall down. If I drop them tomorrow, they will still fall down. This is a law. The force of gravity is a natural law. It acts the same way all the time. The action of the law is something spontaneous; there is no need of human aid or motivation. I have been preaching and praying for twenty years. I never need to preach to the law of gravity or pray to it. If you let go of your keys, you do not have to worry whether or not they will fall down. Falling is a law. A law does not require any preaching, praying, human resolutions, or wishes; it is spontaneous.

Today many Christians make up their mind to do good. They take life as a power, and they want God's life to give them the power to do good. Whenever they think of God's life, they think of power. If they cannot do good, they think that they have not trusted enough in the power of God's life. This is a wrong concept, and it must be corrected. A Christian does not perform good by making resolutions. His doing good is the result of the operation of the inner law of life. Making up one's mind to not lie, to not lose one's temper, or to not get angry is not what the Christian faith is all about. This is not the grace of the New Testament. Anything we do by exercising the will is not part of our faith. Our faith consists of God's life operating within us through a law. This operation results in our being able to live out the Christian life.

Today's scientific inventions are simply the result of discovering the laws that exist in the universe and then applying these laws. This is what Christians should do today; they should discover the spiritual laws and apply these laws. Christians should not look for God's commandments in the Bible and try to

carry these out by their will, nor even attempt to carry them out by the power of God's life. A Christian should discover the law of God's life and live by this law of life. This is the Christian life. Before I discovered this law of life, I often wondered why I sinned so easily and why it was so difficult to do good. I did not have to exert any strength to lose my temper, and I found it very difficult not to lose my temper. We only resolve to do good; we never resolve to do evil. But working out evil is easy, yet working out good is not. God's life is in us, yet the law of sin is also in us. The problem is that the law of sin is obvious, while the law of life is not obvious. I did not understand this. Later, I found out that our many resolutions were in the principle of Romans 7, and the result was nothing but failure. We failed because we did not know God's life enough. We only knew that there is power in this life; we did not realize that this life is a law. Once we realize that this life is a law, we will have patience as easily as we had temper. We will have humility as easily as we had pride. We will have love as easily as we had hatred. There is a new law within us—the law of the life of God. This law is very powerful. It is stronger than the law of sin; therefore, it can overcome the law of sin. Brothers and sisters, do you have such an experience? This should be our normal, daily experience.

NOT TRUSTING IN THE WILL

If we can sin effortlessly through the law of sin, we can surely live righteously through the law of life. Yet in actual experience, many Christians do not believe that God is in us as a law. If I let go of my keys and at the same time try my best to push them downward, this means that I do not believe in the force of gravity. This is the way many people live their Christian life. They strive with the sweat of their whole body to do good. They struggle strenuously and forcefully to be a Christian, but they still fail. It is a hard thing to try to muster one's will to act spiritual. It is also a hard task to act serious out of fear of becoming unspiritual. Such performances are not the conduct of a genuine Christian. When I was in London, I asked Brother Sparks about a certain person. He told me that this person was too serious. He meant that he was propping himself up with his will; he was trying to maintain a spiritual façade. Once the façade falls, however, everything falls apart.

If anyone tries to solve his problem by the will and thinks that he can deal with his problems as long as he has a strong will, he will experience what Paul experienced in Romans 7:24: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me

from the body of this death?" All those who strive with their will find that they cannot make it. They cannot satisfy God's demand. Asking them to be totally obedient to God's will is like asking a fish to fly in the air or a bird to swim in the water. The fish and the bird have their own lives, and the laws of the two lives act differently. Swimming in the water is a law for fish, and flying in the air is a law for birds. If a fish tries to fly by its will or a bird tries to swim by its will, they will both be dead in five minutes. Man's will can only be made subject to the law of life; it can never be put above the law of life. Man can only satisfy God's demand by living according to the law of God's life; he cannot accomplish this by the power of his own will.

TRUSTING IN THE LAW OF LIFE

Paul preached life, and he also preached the law of life. God has not only given us life, He has given us the law of life. Believers should not only trust in life, but in the law of life. Being a Christian is not a strenuous exercise. There is no need to strive, to make up our mind, or to pretend to do good. All we have to do is let go and allow the law of the inner life to operate within us. We have to be clear that the life a Christian receives is a law. This law is not under the control of our will. On the contrary, the minute we stop exercising our will, this law will operate and do good in a spontaneous way. May the Lord open our eyes to see that the life we received is a law, and may we see the futility of man's will. May the Lord forbid us from doing His will by our own will, and may we trust in the law of His life, allowing this law to operate in us in a spontaneous way.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE WILL AND THE LAW OF LIFE

CWWN, The (Set 2) Vol. 44:

Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (4), Chap. 115

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:27-30; Rom. 7:18-19, 21-25a; 8:1-4; Matthew 6 is on the physical life; Romans 8 is on the spiritual life.

THE LAW OF LIFE

Every life has its law. For example, a man can only grow to a certain height. He cannot add an inch to his stature. It is impossible for anyone to try to become taller by self-effort or will power. He can only be as tall as his natural life allows. This is also true of the spiritual life. What you are is what you are; you cannot increase your spiritual stature by the power of your will. Life is something spontaneous; it has what it has and is what it is. A short person can make himself look taller by wearing high heels, but he can only do this for a little while. When he takes the shoes off, his height decreases. The same difficulty arises when a man makes up his mind to humble himself. He can sustain this effort for a little while, but he cannot keep it up forever. Many people try to be the kind of person they are not. This is hard. They find it hard and strenuous to be a Christian. Before Paul became a Christian, he resolved again and again to do good, but the good that he willed, he did not do, and the evil that he did not will, that he did. This is because another law of evil was operating in his members. Many Christians feel that they are too talkative or too proud. They think that if they strive, restrict themselves, and cultivate themselves a little, they will improve. They do not realize that there is a law of sin within them which the power of the will has no control over and which can never be overcome.

THE LAW OF LIFE

OVERCOMING THE LAW OF SIN

The first three chapters of Romans is about what man as a sinner has done. Then Romans 7 tells us what man is in himself—a sinner. The first three

chapters of Romans talk about what man has done; this involves the need of forgiveness. Romans 7 and 8 deal with what a man is in himself; this involves the need of freedom. The first three chapters tell us that the evils that man has committed are forgiven through the redemption of Christ Jesus. Romans 7 and 8 tell us about the law of sin—that which is within man's being—and how man is released from it through the law of the Spirit of life. An unbeliever tries to walk according to the power of his will. But a Christian should not walk according to the power of his will. God delivers us from the first law through the operation of the second law.

During the Ching Dynasty, there was a toll tax which was a heavy burden to many people. The Ching Dynasty set up many toll stations throughout the country, and the toll officers possessed tremendous authority. In order for a load of goods to pass through several provinces, the owner had to pay a heavy toll tax. When the Nationalist government took over, a new law was decreed that replaced the old toll tax. Those who were suffering under the old law were relieved by the institution of the new law. They did not need to hope or pray for change any longer, because the new law had been instituted and had delivered them from the old law.

A LAW BEING SPONTANEOUS, AND THERE BEING NO NEED FOR THE WILL TO ASSIST IT

Consider man's physical life. Our eyes are cleansed by the blinking of the eyelids. This action is involuntary; one does not need to consciously activate it. Our heart, digestion, and breathing are all regulated and spontaneous. There are many laws that govern our body. Many people have forgotten the fact that God not only gives man life but also equips him with the functions of life. Many people think that God gives man only eyes, a heart, lungs, and limbs, etc. But God has given each of these organs their own movement and function. Some may think that even though God has given us life, we have to stir up the capacity of this life ourselves before we can do anything. The result of this stirring up is never satisfactory; man ends up not doing what he wants to do. This life operates by itself. There is no need for us to do anything. This is a law. A law is something that operates by itself.

Once I could not sleep well for five or six nights. Sleep is very much related to human metabolism. I was worried that if this went on, I would not have the energy and physical strength to work. Later, I prayed and looked up verses in the Bible about sleep, such as the Lord Jesus sleeping at the bow of the boat in the midst of a storm. But none of these verses helped me. Finally, the Lord told me that I should trust in the natural law of the body. When the body is tired it sleeps, and after it sleeps it works. I trusted in this natural law and did not worry about it any longer, and I was able to lie down and sleep very well.

As long as a man eats, he will be filled and not be hungry. He does not have to worry whether he will be hungry again or what would happen if he lost his hunger. Man's stomach feels hungry spontaneously. As soon as we feel hungry, we eat. A little later we become hungry again and have to eat again. In the same principle, there are laws in the spiritual realm. We read the Bible because the inner life has a spontaneous urge to read, and the more we read, the more we like to read and the sweeter it becomes to our taste. However, if we force ourselves to read, we will not have any taste for it. The same is true with material offering, testifying, and every other kind of spiritual matter. Walking according to the inner life is something very spontaneous. When trials and temptations come our way, the life within will spontaneously withstand them; there is no need to assist with human methods and human strength. Our duty is to pray to the Lord and to look to Him silently and calmly. A Christian does not need to be anxious for his life, because the life that he has resists Satan and rejects sin spontaneously.

COOPERATING WITH THE LAW OF LIFE

No Striving of the Will

All we have to do is calmly trust in this new law, the second law within us. However, the minute we exercise our own strength, we act against this law. Anything strenuous is artificial. A man does not need to exert any effort to be saved. This is also true concerning overcoming. Being a Christian is not a question of striving or struggling. It is the Lord's grace that brings us through all the circumstances and that bears us up in all things. The law of life within spontaneously regulates and carries us on.

According to the Law of the Spirit

What should we do about this new law? Romans 8 tells us that the Holy Spirit works to fulfill the righteousness of the law in a Christian. This righteousness is the very righteousness that the man in Romans 7 sought and tried to attain by resolving to do God's will. The secret of experiencing the law of the Spirit of life is to follow, which means to come behind. We cannot walk in front of the Holy Spirit; we cannot lead the way. We have to follow the Lord and walk behind Him. The Lord walks in front of us, and we should follow behind. We should let the Lord move first and then follow after. The Lord can do everything. We do not have to initiate anything. Instead, we can rest fully in the Lord.

At this point, a question often arises: "If I cannot make it when I try hard to hold myself back, would it not be worse if I let go?" If an unbeliever does not hold himself back, he will become worse because he will be taken over by the law of sin and of death once he lets go. He will die faster because there is only one law in him. But if a regenerated person lets go, the life within will usher him into the new law, the law of the Spirit of life, and once he goes along with this law, he will experience life and peace.

CHAPTER TWELVE

LIVING BY THE LAW OF LIFE

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Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:1-2

THE FAILURE OF LIVING BY THE WILL

In the Christian life an important principle is to live not by one's own will but by the law of the Spirit of life. Many Christians, especially the young ones, do not see this, nor have they learned this lesson. The strength of their living is dependent upon their will and sustained by their will. They dare not put aside their will for even a moment, because they know that they will stumble and their Christian living will cease. The living of many Christians is dependent upon their will. Brothers and sisters, even if you have been a Christian for many years, do not think that you no longer live by your will. Many still maintain their Christian living by their will. Perhaps you still do not know the extent to which your will occupies your living and how much ground you have given your will.

The person in Romans 7 is one who lives by his will. The "evil" is his acts, and the "good" is his will. Therefore, he says, "For I do not do the good which I will; but the evil which I do not will, this I practice" (v. 19). All of his "good" is in his will. He can comfort himself by saying, "I want God; I want God's will; I want to obey God's will." He can comfort himself also by saying, "I do not want to sin, I hate sin, and I want to serve Him; my sole purpose is to please God." He can say, "I want God's will and I want to please God; I want to do only things that are good, and I will glorify God's name." He may make many resolutions in his will, but he can do nothing more. There is a gross misconception in his thinking that whether or not a man can do good is dependent on whether or not he wills to do it. He does not see that doing good or evil is a matter of a law, not a matter of the will. He does not see that even if he has decided to do good, he will only experience failure and disappointment.

Quite a few brothers and sisters say, "I truly want God's will, I truly want to please God, and I am truly doing things according to God's law." A brother may be saying these things and at the same time wonder, "Why don't I receive what I seek before God, and why am I doing all the things that are contrary to my will?" Many brothers and sisters wonder and say, "Why can't I do what I will, and why do I instead do what I do not will?" Brothers and sisters, God wants to show you one thing in this situation: Your willpower cannot be the power of your living. Perhaps you still do not know how much you live by your will. Therefore, let us first take a look at how man lives by his will.

A clear sign of living by the will is refusing to let go. Many people refuse to let go of themselves. This does not mean that Christians do not need restrictions. But many Christians hold on to themselves; they will not let go of themselves. It is an arduous task being a Christian who puts a very tight grip on himself, thinking that a Christian must be careful in the way he eats, the way he walks, the way he rides a streetcar, and the way he talks with his family. From morning to evening he keeps a firm hold on himself in order to behave like a Christian and in order to walk, eat, and travel properly. It seems that one can only be a Christian when he firmly holds on to himself and carefully bridles himself! He thinks that once he lets loose of his grip, he will fail. This is the situation of many Christians who live by their will. They firmly hold on to themselves in an effort to live like Christians; they force themselves to act like Christians. This is like trying to make a stream flow upward. Many Christians are trying to make water flow upstream; they force themselves to behave like someone they are not. Many people compel themselves to be like someone else. They are not that kind of person, but they stubbornly try to be that kind of person. What do they do? They exercise their own will to put a tight hold on themselves. Many people strenuously try to be Christians this way. They make the strength of their will the power of their life.

We should remember that if we have to exert so much effort to be a Christian, we are surely not this kind of person. If we were this kind of person, we would not need to expend such a great effort. Oh, there are many things which are difficult to turn our eyes from! There are many things which are difficult to refuse, and there are many foods which are difficult to resist. How much effort do we need before we can control ourselves? How much effort do we need before we can refrain from speaking improperly? How much effort do we need before we can refrain from going places that we should not go? There are things that we naturally like to do, and we spontaneously do them.

If we want to stop, we must force ourselves not to do them. For example, if you were raised in Shanghai, do you need to say, "I am determined to speak Shanghainese; I must speak Shanghainese; I will speak Shanghainese. I need to be careful not to speak the Shantung dialect or the Cantonese dialect"? No, you do not need to will yourself to do this, because you are a Shanghainese, and you will naturally speak Shanghainese. But if you are not a Shanghainese and you want to speak Shanghainese, you need to exert effort to speak it.

To live by the will is to try to be a certain type of person when you are not. When you try to force yourself to be a certain type of person, the only thing you can do is exercise the will. We are land creatures, and it is natural for us to live on land; if we want to live in water, we must exercise our will.

There are two kinds of people who try to be Christians according to their willpower. First, there are those who have not been regenerated; they have not been born of God and have never received God's life. Therefore, they must exert considerable effort to compel themselves to be Christians. Many so-called Christians are actually not Christians at all; they are merely trying to be Christians. Since they want to be Christians, they sing a few hymns because other Christians sing hymns, and they say a few "hallelujahs" because others say hallelujah. But whether singing hymns or saying hallelujahs, they do it all with considerable unease. When other Christians speak, it is real, but when they speak, they do not feel a thing. People who are like this are pretending to be Christians; therefore, it is very unnatural for them. Second, there are those who are born again and who are God's children, but who do not believe in the life that God has given them. They have the life, but they do not live by this life. Their salvation experience is unclear; their regeneration experience is also not clear. They did not hear the complete gospel, and they have not fully believed in God's Word. They fail often and are weak to the uttermost. They cannot believe that the life within them can swallow up death. They are accustomed to sin and have failed constantly; therefore, they concede that no other experience is possible. They consider themselves as standard Christians. Thank God, they are absolutely wrong. Brothers and sisters, just because you have not experienced the mighty power of God's life, do not say that the life that God has given you is as weak and powerless as you are. Thank God that His life comes with great power! As long as a man dares to believe in God's Word, God's life will manifest its mighty power in him. God's life cannot manifest its mighty power in many people because they either do not have the

life or they have not fully believed. When one genuinely believes, he will testify that God's Word is fully trustworthy.

THE LIBERATION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

Paul cried, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?", and one day he experienced deliverance. Then he said, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2). This is not a new grace but a new revelation; it is not a new gift but a new vision; it is not receiving something new from God's hand but discovering something that God has already given. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us! According to the Greek "freed" is in the past tense; it is already "freed." The law of the Spirit of life has freed us! The verse does not say, "going to free," "will soon free," "can free," or "intends to free," but "has freed." The law of the Spirit of life has already freed us; therefore, we are delivered from the law of sin and of death.

We need to realize that the experience and the acts in Romans 7 are unnecessary. Hallelujah! There is no need to go through the experience in Romans 7, and there is no need to act according to Romans 7. The exercise of the will in Romans 7 is even more unnecessary. Suppose your surname is Wang. You have had the surname for decades, and every day your surname continues to be Wang. You do not have to exercise your will to call yourself Wang or resolve to be surnamed Wang, because your surname is Wang. If you are a Wang, you do not need to desire to be called Wang. If this is your desire, it means that you are not a Wang. Here you should see one thing: If you are in the Lord, the Lord will use a law—the law of the Spirit of life—to free you from another law. Once you see this, you will immediately say, "Thank the Lord! Praise the Lord! I do not need to exercise my will anymore. If I release my grip, I will not fall to the ground; I will fall into another law." Thank the Lord, this is a fact. All experienced Christians understand the meaning of these words.

Many Christians fear that if they let go or if they do not exercise their will to act like Christians, things will become unpleasant. Many Christians say, "I cannot let go of myself. If I let go of myself, things will be unpleasant. Even though I am keeping a tight grip on myself, I still cannot speak or walk properly; I am still weak and failing. What would happen to me if I let go?" Many Christians are obsessed with this fear and dare not release their grip.

But God's Word is very clear! If we believe in what God has already given us and release our grip, we will not fall to the ground; rather we will fall into a new law.

May God open our eyes to see that no one can resist the law of sin by his will; nor can anyone resist the law of sin by willing to do good. No one can do the will of God or resist the law of sin and of death by his own will. The will can never contend with the law of sin and of death! Thank and praise God! There is another new law that can contend with the law of sin and of death. Thank and praise God! This is not only a new life; this is also a new law.

Oh, what a joy that this life is a law! God has given us not only the Holy Spirit but also the law of the Holy Spirit. God has given us not only life but also the law of life. In the past we were dead in our offenses and sins; we had not only sin and death but also the law of sin and of death. We did not have to resolve or force ourselves to sin. Rather, there was a law that compelled us to sin. If God had only given us a life and nothing else, it would seem reasonable to be good sometimes and bad at other times. But God has given us a life-law; it remains the same all the time, and it never changes. Just as sin and death are a constant law that does not allow exceptions, the life that the Lord has given us is also a constant law that does not allow exceptions. There is a law of life, not just a life. This is why we can release our grip. Because we have seen that this is a law, we can release our grip. Because we have seen that there is a treasure laid in us, no glory goes to us; all glory goes to the Lord who raises the dead. If we have seen this, we will praise God. Brothers and sisters, if we live by another law, a new law, we will experience a wonderful thing—we will not feel the existence of the old law anymore. Remember the words of the Scripture which say, "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." It does not say that the law of sin and of death has been annihilated or abolished; rather, it says that we are freed from it. The law of sin and of death still exists, but we are no longer living under its power. We are living under another law.

Brothers and sisters, if you want to know what the law of life is, simply lift up your eyes and look at the birds in the air. How do they fly? They fly because their life has a law of flying. They have a life, and in their life there is a law. This law enables them to fly. Their life has a law which enables them to overcome the force of gravity and fly in the air. If there is a heavy snowfall one day and a crow or sparrow falls dead in your courtyard, you will see how great

the force of gravity is. Gravity draws it to the earth. The force of gravity is always present. The bird has life, and this life has a law which overcomes the force of gravity and enables it to fly in the air. When the life is gone, the law of life is also gone, and the law of gravity overcomes it. Thank the Lord! God has indeed given us grace and dispensed a new life as well as a new law to us. This renders the law of sin and of death of none effect. It is not destroyed; but it is rendered of none effect. God did not eradicate the force of "gravity"; rather, He gave us another law of life, so that the "birds" can now overcome the law of "gravity." We know that when we are strong physically, we do not feel the law of gravity. We only feel the law of gravity when we are weak. When we are weak, even walking, standing, or sitting makes us tired. We are relieved only when we lie down. Those who are the weakest feel the force of gravity the most. Thank God, our life is still with us today. This is why we do not feel the force of gravity so much. Someday when our life is nearing its end, the force of gravity will become stronger for us. If you have ever had to lift a corpse, you know how great the force of gravity is. You cannot make a corpse stand up straight; once you let go, the corpse will fall.

Some have been Christians for twenty or thirty years, yet they still do not know that sin and death are a law and that life is also a law. You need to know that God's way of salvation has nothing to do with resolving to be someone you are not. There is a life in you that delivers you from the law of sin and of death. God has no intention that you will, hope, desire, or purpose to be a certain kind of Christian. If you try to do it by your own will, it will seem as if you are hung up in midair; the endeavor will be quite strenuous. If you have ever seen a talkative Christian, you know how difficult it is for him to try to talk less. He knows that he should not speak so much, yet he cannot refrain from speaking. It is very difficult for him to stop speaking. Have you ever seen a quick-tempered Christian? It is really hard to ask him to be patient. If he tries to practice patience, sooner or later he will become sick from repression. But thank God! The way of salvation is not to be someone you are not; rather, it is living out a new law of life from within. When this law is lived out from within, sin will appear to be nonexistent and annihilated, and the power of death will seemingly disappear. If you are healthy, you will not feel the force of gravity when you are walking. You can lift up your feet because there is a greater power in you. This is the meaning of the law of life.

THE OPERATION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

On the practical side, we need to learn to know how the law of the Spirit of life operates within us. The Lord uses the law of the Spirit of life to deliver us from the law of sin and of death. He uses one law to overcome another law, and He uses today's law to overcome yesterday's law. How does this law manifest itself in a Christian? How can we detect the law of the Spirit of life in a Christian? We can examine several aspects.

We can consider first the aspect of knowledge. The law of the Spirit of life will manifest itself in God's children in the way of knowledge. There should not be any ignorant Christians. All Christians (referring to genuine Christians) should have proper knowledge. Whatever we encounter, the Spirit of life in us will give us knowledge concerning it. No Christian can say that he does not know. Every Christian has to admit that the Lord has spoken already. At the most we can say that we have not heard the Lord's speaking; however, we cannot say that the Lord has not spoken. Can we really say that we do not know the Lord's mind? Can we say that we do not know whether or not we can do a certain thing? We can never say this. We may be a weak believer, having just believed in the Lord Jesus and just received life into us. Yet as soon as we believe in the Lord and as soon as the Spirit of life dwells in us, the law will be instructing us within. Many servants of the Lord have met many of God's children in various places, and they have all come to the conclusion that there is not a child of God who does not know His will. There are no ignorant children; there are only disobedient children. When we talk too much, do we not feel something restraining us within? Sometimes when we open our mouth to speak certain things, is there not something within telling us to stop? Do we not have a feeling that we should stop? Brothers and sisters, this life is in us, and it is always manifested through its law.

It is strange that some of God's children think that they have received the life of God but have not received the law of this life. It would be strange for a man to have life without having the law of that life. We need to realize that both the life and the law of life are linked together. Where there is life, there is also the law of life. Life is inseparable from the law of life. Where there is life, there is also the law of life. If we have God's life, whenever we need knowledge, we will find it within. This is true not only with big matters but also with very small matters, matters that we feel are insignificant. Sometimes when we go to someone's house, our steps may be a little too heavy as we are walking up the stairs. A voice within may say, "This is not right." Walking upstairs is not a big thing, but when the sound of our footsteps becomes a little too heavy, our

inner being will tell us that this is not right. Sometimes we want to take a book from someone else's bookshelf and read it, but inwardly a voice says, "This is not right because the book does not belong to you. You have not asked, and you have not been given permission. How can you take it and read it?" Brothers and sisters, the law of life is in us; indeed, it is in us. The problem is that many are not willing to walk according to this law. If a person lives by this life, his feeling will become very sensitive. We have a law within, and this law will tell us that we cannot trespass against others. It will tell us that we cannot be so loud, that our laughter is not proper, or that our motive in saying a word is wrong. We may encounter tens of thousands of things, but the law within will tell us what we should do in each case. Even if a person is not refined or educated, the law of life will be in him as long as he has the Lord's life. The law of life will give him knowledge, and through this knowledge he will express God in his living.

Why do some Christians always stand in the wrong place and remain unaware of it? Why do some of them always do wrong things and remain ignorant of them? It is not because they do not have life or the law of life, but because they have not learned to follow the law of life within.

This law also manifests itself in love. Sometimes you feel that a certain brother is really troublesome and that you cannot settle things with him. You need to exert much effort to love him. You may say, "I will love him; I intend to love him. I will pray to the Lord to enable me to love him." But when you are with him, you simply cannot love him. It seems as if you can only nod at him. You may think, "I am a Christian, and I must speak a few words with him or else my conscience will not be at peace." Please remember that this is an act of your will. You are doing it by your will; you are not doing it out of love. If you are a Christian, you do not need to will to love others. Many times even prayer is not necessary, because there is a law within you. When you see such a brother, you know that you can never get along with him, you know that he is very troublesome, and you know that his very presence will irritate you. However, when you stand in front of him, you will spontaneously feel that it is wrong to hate him. Your inward being will not say "amen" to hating him. Instead, something within will love him and tell you, "He belongs to the Lord; he is your brother; he is the Lord's beloved." There is such a feeling within you. There is such a speaking within you. Brothers and sisters, when you are in this kind of situation, you do not need to do anything before the Lord; you do not even need to pray. All you have to do is lift up your head and

say to the Lord, "I cannot do it! You can do it." You do not need to exert any effort. You only need to say, "Lord, since You say that he is lovable, I will love him."

The biggest failure of many Christians at this point is exercising their will. When you feel that a brother is not lovable, you hastily exercise your will to treat him well. Whenever you have a problem, you exercise your will immediately to try to solve this problem. When you meet a person whom you cannot love, you immediately force yourself to love him. Yet in spite of your great effort, you still cannot love him. At such times, you should stop and say to the Lord, "I do not have any strength to love him. Lord, I know that there is a life in me, and this life loves him." Simply remain in His presence. There is no need to think or ask. All you have to do is say, "Lord, I want to live fully by the law of life." You do not need to exert any effort at all, because you believe that there is a law within you, a law that loves the brothers. This gives you the boldness to see him and talk to him. The strange thing is that when you do this, you will unconsciously (note the word unconsciously) converse with him. You will unconsciously love him and unconsciously treat him like a brother. You will talk with him and fellowship with him. Later, even you will be surprised, saying, "I did not do anything. Yet the Lord brought me through beyond my comprehension." Brothers and sisters, this is the law of life; it enables you to unconsciously overcome, without any need of your willpower.

If we know God, we will realize that the law of the Spirit of life, like the law of sin and of death, is spontaneous. Hallelujah! It is spontaneous. Sinning requires no exercise of the will; the law of sin does it for us. Neither do we need to set our will to do good; it is the law of the Spirit of life that does it for us. Lying, coveting, and losing one's temper require no exercise of the will. There is a law that causes one to lie, covet, and lose his temper. Holiness, righteousness, love, and purity also require no effort of the will; there is a law in us that produces all of these things. The exercise of the will is man's work, not the Lord's work. Herein lies the basic difference. The Lord has given us a law, and this law is spontaneous.

Many times you realize that you talk too much, speaking words that should not be spoken. You even feel sick and do not understand why you always talk so much. In the course of contact with other people, you worry and say, "I am a Christian. I need to glorify the Lord's name. I should not talk so much." Then what do you do? You exercise your will, and make resolutions, saying,

"Today I will be careful not to speak too much." You hold yourself back for an hour or two. You feel no freedom at all, and the longer you hold back, the more unbearable it becomes. You utter countless prayers, saying, "Lord, I should not be talkative. If I continue to be talkative, I will not behave like a Christian. Lord! Have mercy on me. Please protect me! Please watch over me!" However, your will is useless when it comes to controlling your speaking. The Lord lives in you, and the Lord's life is in you. This life has a law, and when this law is manifested in you, there is no need to worry at all. You can say to the Lord, "I am going to So-and-so's house. I will no longer make any resolution. I cannot control my mouth. I know what kind of person I am; I know that I talk too much. But Lord, I believe; I deeply believe that the law of the Spirit of life which You have given me has freed me and delivered me from that law of talking too much." This does not mean that when you go to that house you must continue to consciously say, "I believe the Lord's Word." If you do, you are exercising your will once again. If you really believe, you will forget it, set it aside, and go in a spontaneous way without even thinking about it. The strange thing is that when you do not exercise your will to hold yourself back and when you believe in the Lord's Word, you will not need to make any resolution, worry, or even think about it. Even when the thought of talking too much comes to your mind, it will not bother you any longer. You will be able to sit for two or three hours or even stay for two or three days without feeling troubled. When you come home and think about it, you will say, "I was not concerned and not paying attention to the matter. I did not have to consciously keep myself from talking too much. Why did I not talk so much?" Brothers and sisters, this is the operation of the law of life; it frees you from your incessant talking. This is the Christian life. It is not the work of the will; it is a law. This law is a life; it is spontaneous. The Christian life is a spontaneous life. The law of life in you, like the law of sin and of death, is a law. Just as the law of sin and of death is a very spontaneous law, the law of life that you have received is spontaneous as well.

O brothers and sisters, we can say much more about this matter. We can relate innumerable experiences to prove this point. Our victory is not a victory of the will but a victory of the law of life. When we need knowledge, there is a law in us that continually gives us knowledge of what is right and wrong. When we are faced with a task, there is strength within us which carries us through in a very spontaneous way. In all of our living, we see the effects of this law. Many Christians live in too much pretension and performance. Many

Christians "act out" their Christian life. Their daily life is nothing but a performance. Oh, the moment we see the law of life, the first thing we will do is drop our own work! Many people use spiritual terms and adopt spiritual behavior, yet they are the ones who are doing these things. Once a person sees the law of life, the first thing he will do is drop his own work. Performance is the most damaging thing to the Christian life. Many Christians who perform think that the better they perform, the better Christian they will be. The outward expressions of spirituality of many Christians are artificial; they are the work of the will. When we see the law of the Spirit of life, we will cease all of our outward performance. All of our expressions will be spontaneous; all of our words will be spontaneous; all of our prayers and our living will be spontaneous. With this law in us, how spontaneous our living will be! We will not need to expend any effort; our will will not be required to purpose anything; we will live very spontaneously. After going through a day this way, we will say when we lie down at night, "Today I did not try to be a Christian, yet I lived as a Christian. Today I did not try to do anything, yet the Lord brought me through." Brothers and sisters, when you put aside your will, you will not be any worse than you are today. When you throw aside the crutch of your will, you will not fall. On the contrary, you will become very spontaneous. Formerly, you prayed and asked for this or that from the Lord, just as Jacob did when he wrestled with God. But when you walk before God, you will see that you have become a soft person in His hand. You will not have to pretend to be soft; you are soft already. You will live a simple Christian life, yet throughout your life the Lord's name will be glorified. The Lord has given you life. It is a life that operates in you, a life that speaks in you. There is no need for your own striving or working.

In conclusion, let us return to Romans 8:1-2: "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." God uses the first law to deliver us from the second law; God uses a new law to save us from the old law. I would like to ask you a few questions. How much do you know of this new law? Is your Christian life governed by your will or by the manifestation of this new law in you? Are you living your Christian life, or is there a spontaneous law, a spontaneous power of life in you that directs you to live the Christian life in a spontaneous way? Brothers and sisters, you can boast about your knowledge; you can boast about your power; you can boast about your work; you can boast about your sacrifice; and you can boast about

your intelligence. You can be proud of all these things, but if you do not have this law, you have nothing to be proud of, because you have not learned the first lesson of the Christian life. The first lesson in the Christian life is that the Christian life is very spontaneous. The life in Romans 8 does not require any effort; everything is spontaneous in this life. Oh, may the Lord grant us grace so that we may truly say to Him, "I am willing to live in Your presence. I believe Your Word. I believe that I received the law of life when I was born again. This law is greater than the law of sin and of death. With the law of sin and of death, I sin spontaneously. With this law, I trust You spontaneously, serve You spontaneously, and glorify and praise Your name spontaneously!"