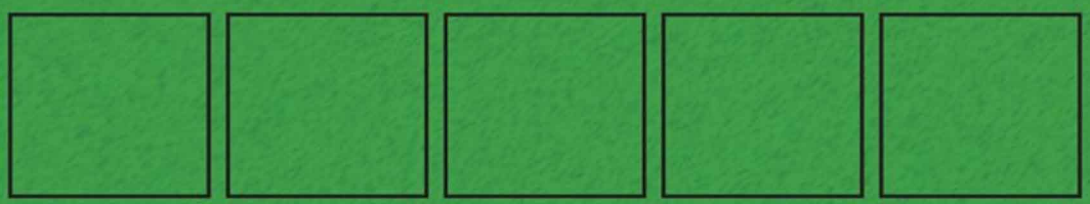
THE HEALTHY WORD

WITNESS LEE



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE HEALTHY WORD

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages shared by Brother Witness Lee in Atlanta, Georgia, in Miami, Florida, and in Toronto, Canada, during September of 1978. Chapters 1 through 3 were shared in Atlanta on September 5 through 7. Chapters 4 through 6 were shared in Miami on September 8 through 10. Chapters 7 through 9 were shared in Toronto on September 12 through 14.

CHAPTER ONE

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE WAY, THE REALITY, AND THE LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 1:1, 4, 14, 17; 8:32; 14:6

The book of John may be familiar to us, yet we can never exhaust the riches in this deep book. The first crucial point in this book is life. In 14:6 the Lord said, "I am the way and the reality and the life." In our experience we first gain the Lord as our life, then we have the reality, and the reality eventually becomes the way. In verse 6 the Lord mentioned the way first because the disciples had asked Him to show them the way to the Father (v. 5). He told the disciples that He is the way. However, before we can have the way, we need to have the reality, and in order to have the reality, we first need to experience life. Therefore, the Lord ultimately brought His disciples to life. Life is the basic Christian experience.

CHRIST BEING THE REALITY

Truth Being Reality, Not Doctrine

Most Christians understand the word *truth* to mean "doctrine." They think that truth and doctrine are synonymous. However, according to the Greek, the word *truth* in the New Testament means "reality" (1:14; 8:32; 14:6). Doctrine and truth are two different things and should not be confused. Nevertheless, it is sometimes difficult to separate truth from doctrine because every proper doctrine conveys a certain truth, and the truth is always in a certain doctrine. This is the reason Christians think that doctrine and truth are the same. Although doctrine conveys the truth, the truth is not doctrine. Let us consider some illustrations in order to see the difference.

Doctrines and the Truth concerning the Lord's Table

Concerning the Lord's table, there are doctrines, and there is the truth. The British Brethren studied many doctrines concerning the Lord's table. They

studied how often Christians should have the Lord's table, who is qualified to partake of the Lord's table, who is qualified to distribute the elements of the table, and whether the cup should contain wine or grape juice. They debated much concerning these and other doctrines. They studied whether to use one large cup or many small cups, leavened or unleavened bread, one large loaf or many small pieces. They also studied whether the bread or the cup should be passed first. They spent much time to study and write books concerning all these things. Regrettably, however, all these matters are only doctrine and not the truth.

The truth in the doctrines concerning the Lord's table is the Body of Christ, Christ the Head, and the death and resurrection of Christ. The loaf on the table signifies the Body of Christ, the church, and the Body points to the Head, Christ. The bread and the cup, which signify the Lord's body and His blood, being separate on the table display the Lord's death. The table also displays the Lord's resurrection through the bread, which is made of many grains that are produced in resurrection and that have been blended into one loaf. It is in Christ's resurrection that we were produced as the many grains to form Christ's Body.

When we are at the Lord's table, if we do not see the Body of Christ, Christ the Head, and the death and resurrection of Christ, we have only doctrine. It is very serious to have only a doctrinal Lord's table, meeting on the first day of the week merely to view the symbols of the loaf and the cup as a remembrance of the Lord. If we have seen the truth, the reality, of the Lord's table, we will touch the reality of the Body of Christ in our spirit when we participate in the physical symbols, and through the Body we will realize and enjoy Christ the Head. We will also touch the death and resurrection of Christ, realizing that His death has terminated our natural being and that we are now His Body in resurrection. In this way we not only keep a practice according to doctrine, but we also touch the truth within the doctrine. The truth of the reality of the Body of Christ, Christ as the Head, and the death and resurrection of Christ is conveyed in the doctrine of the Lord's table, but we are not destined by God for the doctrine. Rather, we are destined by God for the reality, the truth in the doctrine. The doctrine is an otherwise empty means to convey the truth. The truth is the real contents of the doctrine.

Doctrines and the Truth concerning

Justification by Faith

It is possible to know and even teach and preach the doctrine of justification by faith yet never experience the reality of being justified by faith. The reality of justification by faith is nothing less than Christ Himself. Christ is the real justification received by us through faith. Someone may know the doctrine of justification by faith yet not have Christ, the reality of this doctrine. Many ordinary believers do not fully know the doctrine of justification by faith, yet they have the reality of justification by faith. They have received and experienced Christ, and this living Christ becomes their justification received through faith. Regrettably, however, some have the doctrine, the shell, of justification by faith, but they do not have the reality, the content.

Doctrines and the Truth concerning Forgiveness of Sins

Every doctrine is a shell; the reality, the truth, is the content. For instance, we may learn all the verses concerning sinners needing God's forgiveness. We may even teach others concerning the forgiveness of sins. However, we may have never experienced the reality of the doctrine of forgiveness. Like justification by faith, forgiveness of sins is Christ Himself. If we have received the Lord, even if we do not know that our sins are forgiven, we have received the gift of forgiveness. Real forgiveness is not a doctrine but a gift (Acts 5:31).

In every doctrine there is the reality. However, many Christians care mainly for doctrines and neglect the reality. But others who do not have much knowledge concerning doctrines have opened themselves and received Christ. This Christ is all-inclusive—He is forgiveness, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. He is the reality of every proper doctrine.

Christ Being the Reality of Every Virtue

The Gospel of John concerns not doctrine but truth, reality. John 1:14 does not say that the Word who became flesh was full of grace and *doctrine*. Verse 17 does not say that grace and *doctrine* came through Jesus Christ. Most Christians understand truth to be doctrine, but it would not make sense to substitute the word *doctrine* for the words *truth* and *reality* in John. A brother may teach a certain outward practice as a doctrine, but the doctrine alone has no reality. The reality is Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified

with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." We are crucified with Christ, and it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. The reality of every virtue is Christ. Christ is real humility, real kindness, and real love.

John 1:17 says, "Grace and reality came through Jesus Christ," and 8:32 says, "The truth shall set you free." No doctrine can set us free; it is the reality contained and conveyed in the truth, the reality that is Christ Himself, that sets us free. There are many doctrines, but there is only one reality, the person of Jesus Christ. He is the living Lord, and He is the reality of every doctrine. However, because few Christians realize this, many do not have much experience of Christ as the reality.

We need the Lord to unveil to us the truth, the reality, of the doctrines concerning practices such as the Lord's table and baptism. We may keep the doctrines yet miss the reality. It is possible to have the Lord's table according to the Bible and thus be scriptural but still miss the reality. When we participate in the table, we should realize deep in our spirit that we are participating in the Body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head, and that we are enjoying and sharing in the all-inclusive and all-accomplishing death of Christ as well as His resurrection. We need to have such an inner apprehension of the reality, the truth, of the Lord's table. Whenever we come to the Lord's table, we need to experience the reality.

CHRIST BEING THE LIFE

We first receive Christ as our life, and as we experience this life, it becomes reality. Every genuine virtue is Christ. Our love and our humility should be Christ. We are able to have these virtues by experiencing Christ as our life.

Christ Being the All-inclusive Spirit for Our Experience

Most Christians realize that Christ is enthroned in the third heaven to be our Lord and our Master. However, Christ today is also the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit for our experience. Although we may know this, we may not daily experience it or live by it. Every morning after we rise up, we need to thank the Lord for another day to live Him. Then we may pray, "Lord, remind me throughout the day to reject my self, to not trust in my self, and to not live by

my self. Lord, strengthen me to live by You. Thank You, Lord, that You are within me to be my life. Lord, make this day a day for me to live You, to live by You, and to live You out, taking You as my everything." Such a prayer will never be in vain. We do not need to pray much for outward things, such as our job and the safety of our children. The Lord takes care of all these things. As branches in the vine, we need to have prevailing prayer each day for the Lord to strengthen us to live Him, grow Him, and produce Him.

In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." According to the context of this verse, Paul is saying that it is possible for us to move out of Christ and live in our self, speak by our self, and even do good and love others by our self. We should be in fear of this danger, this risk. The salvation mentioned in verse 12 is not salvation from hell but salvation from everything outside of Christ. We need to be saved daily, hourly, and instantly from anything other than Christ. We need to always be kept in Christ. This is to work out our own salvation, our instant salvation, to be saved from things other than Christ and to be preserved in Christ. This is the daily salvation that we need. We need to be in fear and trembling to work out such a salvation.

Living Christ Issuing In the Reality

We need to see that Christ today is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit in our spirit and that our Christian life is simply to live this Christ. Every morning, before we do anything else, we need to ask the Lord to keep us in Him. If we pray like this, we will live Christ—we will live by Him as our life. This is the experience of life, and it will be manifested in some situations as kindness, in other situations as humility, and in others as love or wisdom. We first have the experience of life. The experience of life then becomes lived-out virtues, the reality of which is Christ Himself. Our experiences of Christ as life become the reality. The reality of love, humility, kindness, wisdom, and every virtue is simply Christ experienced by us as our life. Thus, the experience of Christ as life becomes our experience of reality. This reality is the way.

CHRIST BEING THE WAY

A group of saints recently asked me about the proper way to preach the gospel, and I answered that we do not need any way. A way is wrong, because any way is a replacement for Christ. We preach Christ not by any way; we

preach Christ by Christ Himself as the unique way. We may think that to preach the gospel we must work hard and find the best way. It is possible to have many ways to preach the gospel yet not have Christ.

In some local churches a misleading word has been spoken that we must "get our hands dirty" in order to "catch fish." Some have taught that, according to this principle, we should go to various worldly places in order to gain new ones. Such ways are altogether not Christ. Christ should be our way of gospel preaching. In the Lord's recovery we do not care for any other way. Rather, we depend on Christ as our daily living. As branches in the vine, we live Christ, grow Christ, and produce Christ. If we continually live Christ, our relatives, neighbors, friends, schoolmates, and colleagues will see what kind of person we are. Then, according to the Lord's leading, the time will come to speak something to them. We will not need to endeavor, strive, or use any gimmicks to bring them to the Lord. We will be able to simply say a brief word concerning the Lord Jesus.

Of all our acquaintances who see our way of living, the Lord may work on one each year. Perhaps one year one of our cousins will become seriously ill. From within he will be reminded of us because he has seen for many years the kind of life we have lived. As a result, he may ask us to come visit him. When we go to see him, we do not need to work hard. If we simply say, "Let us pray to the Lord Jesus," he will pray with us. By praying a short prayer, he will receive Christ and be saved. Perhaps the next year a colleague who formerly mocked us for being a believer will be in a serious car accident and remember us because of the kind of life we live. He may recognize that we have hope and that he has none, and he may decide to ask us for help. When we speak to such a one, we do not need to say very much. We can simply say, "Yes, my hope is the Lord Jesus. You need Him. Would you pray with me?" Our colleague may pray with tears of repentance and be saved. This is to take Christ as the way to preach the gospel.

If we use gimmicks to attract people, most of them will not be remaining fruit. However, if we bring people to the Lord simply by living Christ and speaking a simple word as the Lord leads, our fruit will remain. This is the most prevailing way to preach the gospel. Apparently, we are not preaching the gospel, but we are living the gospel. Because we live Christ, Christ is our preaching. Christ is the way that we preach the gospel.

Instead of merely preaching the gospel, we should live the gospel as the Lord's living witnesses. In Acts 1:8 the Lord said to the disciples, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." As witnesses, our living is a testimony of Jesus, and this testimony will gradually bring others to the Lord. This is what it means for Christ to be the way to preach the gospel.

This does not mean that the church should not have special times of gospel preaching. We need such special times. The church may announce that a particular meeting will be dedicated to gospel preaching. Then we should each pray concerning which of our acquaintances the Lord would lead us to bring. This is the proper preaching of the gospel by taking Christ as the way. In God's economy and in the church there is no way but Christ. Christ is the unique way in everything. He said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). We do not have any other way.

Christianity is a composition of mainly four things: concepts, ways, activities, and organization. The doctrines of a denomination are its concepts. Every denomination is built upon a certain doctrine. For instance, the Baptist Church is built upon the doctrine of baptism by immersion. This doctrine is its concept. The Presbyterian Church is built upon the concept, or doctrine, of the presbytery. According to a group's concept, it finds a way to practice its kind of Christianity. In order to practice this way, the group will have certain activities. Finally, it will need to organize to carry out its activities. If concepts, ways, activities, and organization are removed from today's Christianity, there will be nothing left. We should never rely on these things in the Lord's recovery. We do not care for doctrines, ways, activities, or organization. We care only for Christ.

In the church life in the Lord's recovery we should know only Christ. Christ is our method, our speaking, our way, and our living. We live Christ, grow Christ, and produce Christ. The Lord's recovery is to fully recover the Christ missed by today's Christianity. In the Lord's recovery we are for nothing but Christ Himself. He is our life, our reality, and our way in doing everything. Even our way to pray is Christ. Christ is our unique way.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: I recently met some brothers who are in the same profession as I am. My tendency is to invite the brothers to work together for the gospel's sake. However, I wonder if this is the Lord or something of my self, my natural man, trying to organize or have an activity.

Answer: A tendency to try to organize something for the gospel comes from our natural life. We do not need to organize or initiate anything, because Christ is the Lord and the Head. We have no right to make a decision concerning what to do or what not to do. We are merely slaves of the Lord. We need to pray, "Lord, I am not the Lord. You are the Lord. I do not have the right to initiate anything. Lord, I just want to live You. I live because You live. If You go, I go. What You do, I do. If You stay, I stay." If we are truly living Christ, we even do not need to seek His leading in how to preach the gospel, for the gospel will be our living.

In this way we simplify our Christian life. We often complicate the Christian life by thinking about different ways and by initiating different activities. We should forget about all the ways and activities. When we rise up in the morning, we should simply worship the Lord and contact Him. When many Christians pray, they are trying to force the Lord to do something for them, because they have already made a decision and planned something. We need to realize that this kind of prayer insults the Lord's headship.

I used to plan and make decisions and then ask the Lord to help me. I regret that I insulted the Lord in this way. Today I have no plan, and I initiate nothing. Every morning I simply pray, "Lord, thank You for giving me another day to worship You, live You, enjoy You, walk with You, and take You as my life. Lord, strengthen me and hold me in Your hand." After praying like this, we should simply follow the Lord throughout the day. If the Lord leads us to work together with some other brothers, we should simply do it. If the Lord does not lead us to do something, we should not do it. As a result of living in this way, we will have no burdens, complications, troubles, or anxieties. We will have nothing but Christ.

In Matthew 11:30 the Lord said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." The Greek word for *easy* means "pleasant." The Lord's yoke is pleasant. Actually, we do not bear anything. We simply live Christ and enjoy Him. We should not complicate our Christian life. The Lord does not need us to do anything. If He wants something to be accomplished, He can do it simply by

speaking a word. Genesis 1:3 says, “God said, Let there be light; and there was light.” The Lord does not need us to accomplish something for Him, but He needs us to live Him. If we see this, we will be liberated from all burdens, complications, considerations, and anxieties. Moreover, we will be full of Christ as peace, rest, and enjoyment.

Question: Before I came into the church life in the Lord’s recovery, I met with different religious groups, which had different doctrines. Recently, when I began reading the Bible, I quickly became distracted, thinking about doctrinal matters. What should I do?

Answer: Because today’s Christianity has become complicated and confused, it is very difficult for a new believer to discern all the different teachings and practices. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly reveals that there is only one God, the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. One day God in the Son became a genuine man named Jesus. After living on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, He died on the cross for our sins to accomplish redemption for us by the shedding of His blood. After three days He resurrected physically and spiritually and ascended to the heavens. Now, as our Savior, Lord, and Master, He is sitting at the right hand of God, and one day He will come back to receive us. Moreover, He is now the life-giving Spirit in our spirit as our life. Therefore, today while He is in the heavens and we are waiting on the earth for His coming back, we can live by Him, taking Him as our life. We need to fellowship with Him, pray to Him, and read the Bible. The basic items of the Christian faith revealed in the Bible are simple. We need to come back to the Bible and to the Lord in a simple way.

We also need to meet with the saints in the Lord’s recovery in a pure, simple way. We should never bring in different concepts to complicate the Lord’s recovery. We must keep the Lord’s recovery pure and simple. For this reason we should not have different concepts, ways, activities, movements, or organizations. We should have only the Bible and the living God. We need only to live by Him according to the truth in the Bible.

We need to be simplified. Especially if we have spent time in different religious groups, thoughts will often come into our mind to bother, distract, veil, and cover us. Therefore, we need to pray that the Lord will cover our mind and thoughts with His helmet of salvation. Then the Lord will save us

from many distracting thoughts. If we pray in this way, we will be preserved in a simple and pure way to enjoy the Lord's presence and the church life.

Question: I desire to have a simple, uncomplicated enjoyment of the Lord. However, I often feel that there are many distracting complications in me. How can I get rid of them?

Answer: We do not need to get rid of these complications. We should simply ignore them. We need to reject the thought that complications are still in us. After we repent and ask the Lord to cover our mind, we should not believe that complications are still in us. According to our consciousness, they may still be in us, but this is a lie from the devil. We need to declare to the enemy, "Any sense I have of complications in me is a lie. Only God is the truth, the reality. There are no complications in me. The simplicity of Christ is in me. All I have is Christ." Furthermore, our human spirit is indwelt by Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit, and these two spirits are mingled together as one. We simply need to walk in this mingled spirit.

We should deny any distracting thoughts that come to us. If the devil comes to us with some accusation, we should not argue with him but flee to our spirit. Satan's occupation is to bother us, and he is very subtle. He will usually not do something big but will find a small way to bother us. As long as he bothers us, he is satisfied. We need to see through his subtlety and not respond to his proposals. We should deny any distracting thoughts and stay in our spirit, enjoying the Lord.

Question: I want to go on with the Lord and to express Him in my daily life, but it seems that I live two lives—one at my job and another outside my job. I am very busy the whole time I am at work. I do not know how to lay hold of the Lord in the midst of all that I have to do at my job. What should I do?

Answer: The subtle enemy often uses a fact related to our living to deceive us. The biggest lie is often told using the truth. Apparently, something spoken may be a fact, but the intention in speaking it is to deceive. You should not think that you have two lives. You need to tell the enemy and the whole universe, "I do not believe that I have two lives. I have only one life." Also, begin every day by worshipping and contacting the Lord, telling Him, "Lord, thank You for another day for me to live You. Lord, be with me today. Strengthen me, sustain me, and hold me in Your hand this whole day. I may

forget You, Lord, but You would never forget me. I do not trust in my ability or my faithfulness. Lord, I put my trust fully in You for the whole day." Pray in this way.

Many of us have been influenced by different doctrines from our background in Christianity. As a result, we have considerations that are frustrations and distractions. We need to deny, ignore, and not believe all these things. We believe only one thing, that is, the living Lord. Our trust is in Him. We do not need to plan or prepare how we will face different situations in our daily lives. We have no expectation, plan, or schedule. We have only the living Lord. All day, and especially in the morning, we contact Him and allow Him to sustain us. We do not need to be concerned for tomorrow. We never have tomorrow; we always have only today. Every day is today. The Christian life is simple, real, living, sweet, and joyful.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRUTH LEADING TO GODLINESS

Scripture Reading: John 1:17; 14:6; 17:17; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; 4:3b, 7-8; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:8; 4:4

In John 14:6 the Lord said, "I am the way and the reality and the life." The Greek word for *reality* in this verse may also be translated as "truth" (cf. 17:17). We first experience Christ as our life. This life experienced by us becomes our reality, and this reality is the way for us to do everything. The proper way to live, work, serve, and worship is the reality, the truth, which we have through the experience of Christ. We saw in the previous chapter that the way to preach the gospel is to experience Christ. The way for us to preach the gospel is not the demonstration of natural ability or the use of gimmicks, such as plays or musical performances. The unique and living way to preach the gospel is simply to live Christ, grow Christ, and produce Christ.

REALITY BEING A PERSON

John 1:17 says, "The law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." Truth, or reality, is not doctrine. This verse would not make sense if the word *doctrine* were used in place of *reality*. In this verse the apostle John places the law in contrast to reality, or truth. The law being given indicates that it is not a person, and reality coming indicates that it is a person. The law was a shadow, a type, a prefigure, or a picture; the truth is the reality. If I intend to visit some people who have never seen me, I may send them my photograph before I arrive. Thus, the photograph is given, but the person comes.

The Old Testament is called the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:40). Before Christ came, God gave many pictures of Christ in the books of the Old Testament. However, seeing pictures cannot substitute for meeting the real person. Therefore, we must not stop with the Old Testament. In the New Testament we have the person, Jesus Christ. The person came, and now He is present, new, and living in us. We have an active and energizing person living in us. This person is the reality of every positive thing.

In Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let Us make man in Our image.” Man being made in God’s image is a shadow, a picture. Man was made in God’s image, but the real image of God is Christ. Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. Thus, Christ is seen in Genesis 1 in a shadow. The body of the shadow, the One who is the image of the invisible God, came in the New Testament. Christ came as the image of the invisible God, the tangible expression of God. John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Christ is the expression of the unseen God, the image of the invisible God. The picture of God’s image is in Genesis 1, but the person who is the real image of God is in the New Testament.

The tree of life in Genesis 2 also is a picture of Christ as the real tree of life. John 1:4 says, “In Him was life.” In 11:25 and 14:6 the Lord said that He is the life. Then in 15:1 He said, “I am the true vine.” All other vines are shadows; Christ is the real vine. John reveals that Christ is life and the true vine. This indicates that Christ is the reality of the tree of life. It is for this reason that John 1:17 says, “Reality came through Jesus Christ.”

In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve fell and were poisoned by the serpent. Then God came in to judge the serpent, telling him, “I will put enmity / Between you and the woman / And between your seed and her seed; / He will bruise you on the head” (v. 15). The seed of the woman mentioned here is a shadow. The reality of the seed of the woman is the child brought forth by a virgin (Matt. 1:23). Galatians 4:4 says, “When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.” Christ is the seed of the woman, who bruised the head of Satan. Thus, the shadow, the picture, was presented in Genesis 3, and the reality, the person, came in Galatians 4.

The Old Testament is a book of shadows and pictures, and the New Testament is a book of fulfillment, reality, and truth. This truth is a person.

In Exodus 12 the children of Israel killed and ate a lamb, and its blood was applied to their doorposts. This caused God to pass over the children of Israel and strengthened them to make an exodus out of Egypt to a place to which God had called them. All this was a shadow. In the New Testament, when John the Baptist saw the Lord, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). The lamb in Exodus 12 was a shadow, a picture; Christ is the Lamb of God in reality.

THE RECOVERY OF THE TRUTH IN OUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

As the children of God, we need to know, realize, apprehend, experience, hold on to, and practice the truth. Many Christians have the wrong concept that they need to learn many doctrines. The New Testament stresses not doctrines but truth. The word *truth* is used again and again in the two Epistles to Timothy. First Timothy 3:15 says that the church is the pillar and base of the truth. The "full knowledge of the truth" is mentioned four times (2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7). Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth." Verse 8 of chapter 3 says, "These also oppose the truth." Verse 4 of chapter 4 says, "They will turn away their ear from the truth." The truth is mentioned repeatedly throughout the two Epistles to Timothy because these letters were written at a time when the church was in degradation. The church had degraded from the truth and reality to forms, empty doctrines, and vain teachings. Paul wrote these two Epistles to recover the church to truth and reality. The same kind of recovery is needed today. The Lord has a recovery in order to recover Christ. Because Christ is the truth, the reality, the recovery of Christ is the recovery of the truth.

It is possible to study doctrines concerning the Lord's table but neglect the reality of the Lord's table. I am concerned that today in the local churches we may come to the Lord's table only to have a remembrance according to the outward teaching; we may not apprehend the reality of the Lord's table. When we take the bread, we should realize that we are participating in the Body of Christ. We should not keep a doctrinal form yet not have any realization of the truth. We should not have many teachings but not care for the reality, which is Christ Himself.

The Truth concerning Leadership in the New Testament

In Matthew 23:8 the Lord said, "Do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers." In verse 10 He said, "Neither be called instructors, because One is your Instructor, the Christ." The word *instructors* in this verse may also be translated as "guides," or "directors." In the New Testament age we have only one unique Leader—the

Lord Jesus (Acts 5:31). It is possible to learn this doctrine yet not see the reality that in the New Testament the headship and lordship of Christ are fully established.

In the Old Testament age the headship and lordship of Christ were not yet fully established. At that time Christ was only the Son of God with divinity; He was not yet the Son of Man with humanity. Christ was not anointed as the Messiah until He became a man (Matt. 3:16). Christ was and is eternally the Son of God, but before the New Testament time He did not possess the human nature. He was God but not yet man; He had divinity but was without humanity. To be the Messiah, Christ needed to be a man with the human nature. Thus, although Christ was the Son of God and even God Himself in the Old Testament age, His headship and lordship were not established, because He was not yet a man.

God needed a man in order to fulfill His eternal purpose, and God needed a man also to defeat Satan, His enemy. Satan was an angel created by God, but he rebelled. However, God would not lower His status as the Creator to deal with one of His creatures. Therefore, He needed another creature to deal with Satan. For this reason God created man. However, the first man failed God and fell. Eventually, the second man came (1 Cor. 15:47); He was born of a virgin and was called Jesus. As a man having blood and flesh, He went to the cross to accomplish God's eternal purpose. By His redeeming death, He destroyed Satan. "Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). After His accomplishments on the cross Christ resurrected, and in resurrection He ascended to the heavens. In Christ's ascension God inaugurated Him into the headship and the lordship. At that time God established Jesus Christ the Nazarene to be the Lord of all. In the heavens a man was made the Lord of all. Ephesians 1:22 says, "He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church." In His ascension Christ was made the Head and the Lord.

We need to see that today there is only one Head and one Lord in the universe, that is, Christ. This is the reason that God did not ordain any organized system of human leadership in the New Testament. Any such leadership would be an insult to the headship of Christ. We need to learn this truth. When we are asked who the leader of our church is, we should answer

that Christ, and not anyone else, is the Leader. Everyone, including the young sisters, needs to learn the truth. If we hear anyone say that someone other than Christ is the head or the leader of the church, we should immediately stand up and say, "No, the truth in the New Testament is that we have only one Head. In the universe and in God's economy there is only one Head—Christ."

It is crucial to know and practice the truth of Christ being the unique Head and Leader. Within the last few years a certain brother traveled to many places and told the saints that he is the future leader of the Lord's recovery. Regrettably, many saints accepted this kind of speaking. Even in a meeting of elders from different localities, some promoted this brother, telling the other elders that he is God's anointed and that they all need to submit to him. Because some brothers who know the truth were there, they should have stood up and spoken a word of the truth, saying, "Brothers, in the Lord's recovery there is no organization. Since there is no organization, there cannot be a leader. We should never form a hierarchy with an official leader, for this insults the headship of Christ."

If we do not have the truth, we are in darkness. It is erroneous to say that a certain brother is God's unique anointed leader. The truth is that every member of Christ is anointed. If anyone says that we should submit to a certain brother because he is God's anointed, we should say, "We all are anointed." Ephesians 5:21 says, "Being subject to one another." Because we all are anointed, we all need to submit to one another. Only Christ is the unique Head.

In the Old Testament times God ordained that there be one king among His people. However, in the New Testament there were always several apostles and several elders in each local church. The plurality of the apostleship and of the eldership indicates that today God has ordained only one Head. In God's economy there is only one Head and one Lord. Christ alone is the King, the Lord, and the Head.

We often try to understand spiritual matters according to our human mentality. We may think that although we are not the head, we are a "subhead." According to our natural concept, our body has a head and many subheads. This is wrong. There is only one head in the body; no other

members are heads or subheads. The notion of subheads in the Body is a human invention inspired by the devil.

The head gives orders directly to every part of our body. The head gives orders directly to the fingers, just as it gives orders directly to the shoulders. The head does not send a message to one member and depend on that member to pass on the message to another member. There is no difference in how the head gives orders to different members. In the whole body there is only one unique head.

The matter of Christ being the unique Head and the unique Leader is not merely a doctrine but a truth. Our one Head and Leader is the Son of God, the man of Nazareth, Jesus Christ. If we see this truth, no hierarchy will ever be built up among us. A small local church was told recently that they should submit to a larger nearby church. This is organization, which leads to hierarchy and insults the headship of Christ. This is a crucial matter. To think that one church should submit to another church is altogether in darkness. If we hear this kind of speaking, we should immediately rise up and declare that this is an insult to our Head, Christ.

The Truth of the Lord's Table

The Lord said, "This cup is the new covenant established in My blood, which is being poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). The cup of the Lord's table is not only a doctrine; it implies the truth. In the Bible *cup* means "portion." For example, the cup of salvation is the portion of God's salvation (Psa. 116:13), and the cup of blessing is the portion of God's blessing (1 Cor. 10:16). Negatively, the cup of God's wrath is the portion of God's wrath (Rev. 14:10). Thus, a cup is quite significant, whereas a bottle conveys no truth.

Whenever we come to the Lord's table and see the loaf, we should see the Body of Christ and thank the Lord for making us members of His Body. All that Christ is and has accomplished is in His Body, in which we are participating. When we see the cup, we should thank the Lord for such a portion of blessing that has been given to us. God Himself is in this portion as our blessing. Thus, the cup is related to the truth of the Lord's table.

We are not for keeping forms. Rather, we are for practicing the truth and apprehending the reality. By partaking of the loaf, we participate in the Body

of Christ. By drinking the cup, we receive the divine portion given to us by our redeeming God. There is truth in these outward practices.

NEEDING TO KNOW AND PRACTICE THE TRUTH

The young brothers and sisters in the Lord's recovery need to learn the truth. The United States has become a strong nation because it has a strong constitution. Even the president must follow the Constitution. The church should be like this. We care for the truth. The truth is the "constitution" of the church. If we follow persons rather than the truth, the church cannot be strong.

The young brothers and sisters must spend time to study the Word of God in order to know the truth. First Timothy 4:3 mentions "those who believe and have full knowledge of the truth." We need not only to believe in the Lord Jesus but also to know the truth. Therefore, we all need to study the Bible to know the truth, not merely the doctrines. In 3:15 Paul says that the church is the pillar and base of the truth. The church includes every believer. God's truth today rests upon the church, including the young people. Everyone in the church should bear the truth. We are the pillar and base of God's truth.

Suppose a Christian speaker tells the saints in a large church that they should take the lead and that the other churches should be subject to them. This may seem to be a good idea. However, placing one church over others is something of organization and hierarchy, which insult the headship of Christ. If we do not have the adequate, thorough knowledge of the truth, it is difficult for us to have the necessary discernment in such matters.

First Corinthians 14:29 says, "As to prophets, two or three should speak, and the others discern." When anyone is speaking, all the brothers and sisters should exercise discernment. If we all are watching over a speaker in this way, we will be protected. In the Lord's recovery we care only for Christ, and Christ is the truth, the reality. In order to learn the truth and be brought to the full knowledge of the truth, we need to spend time in the Bible.

THE TRUTH LEADING TO GODLINESS

The truth leads to godliness. First Timothy 3:15b-16a says, "The church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth. And confessedly, great is the

mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh." Christ first ascended to the heavens and then was preached among the nations. However, in verse 16 *taken up in glory* is listed after *preached among the nations*. Therefore, *taken up in glory* refers also to the church's rapture. This indicates that the manifestation of God in the flesh mentioned in this verse refers not only to Christ but also to the church. It is logical to say that the manifestation of God in the flesh is both Christ and the church, for Christ is the Head and the church is His Body. If the Head, Christ, is the manifestation of God in the flesh, surely the church, His Body, also is the manifestation of God in the flesh.

The mystery of godliness is God manifested in the flesh. Godliness is simply to manifest God. Verse 15, which concerns the church being the pillar and base of the truth, being followed by verse 16, which concerns godliness, indicates that the truth leads to the manifestation of God. Whenever we practice the truth, the result will be the manifestation of God in the flesh.

We should not argue about doctrinal points. If we argue, we will become disoriented. We only need to know and practice the truth. Truth leads to godliness, which is the manifestation of God in the flesh. We should care for reality, which leads to godliness. We are the witnesses of the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:8), and our living should be a testimony of Jesus. Whatever we do and say and the way we act should cause others to see God manifested in us. This is the truth leading to godliness. We care for this truth, this reality, which is Christ as the embodiment of our Triune God. This is the proper way to practice the church life.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: Although Christ is the unique Head, we do have leading brothers and elders in the churches. What exactly is their relationship to the rest of the Body?

Answer: In the Bible every truth has different aspects. In order to understand a truth, we must understand all its aspects. We also need to consider the context in which the truth is mentioned in the Bible. When we consider the elders according to the natural concept, we think that the elders are higher than the other members. However, we should not understand any truth in the Bible according to our natural mentality.

In Matthew 20:21 the mother of James and John, who was a sister of the mother of Jesus, requested of the Lord, “Say that these two sons of mine will sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your kingdom.” In verse 23 the Lord said to James and John, “My cup you shall indeed drink, but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” Verse 24 continues, “And when the ten heard this, they were indignant concerning the two brothers.” This indicates that all twelve disciples were ambitious. Verses 25 through 27 say, “Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave.” A basic principle among the people of God is that whoever wants to be great must be a serving one, even a slave.

First Peter 5:3, a word to the elders, says, “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.” The elders are not lords who give orders; they are examples. If there is a need for someone to clean the restroom in the meeting hall, the elders should take the lead. The elders need to be the example in all areas of service, and the rest of the saints should follow them. This is unlike worldly society, in which the leading ones sit on “thrones” as lords, giving orders for others to do things.

First Corinthians 12:28 says, “God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” *Helps* must refer to the services of the deacons, and *administrations* must refer to the functions of the elders. According to our human concept, the elders are higher than the deacons, but here the apostle Paul lists the services of the deacons before the functions of the elders. Paul surely does this purposefully in order to indicate that there should be no concept among the Lord’s children of who is higher and who is lower. The positions in the Body do not indicate who is higher and who is lower; rather, the members are simply positioned according to their functions.

Because the worldly mentality and the natural human mind cannot understand the divine concept of matters such as the position and function of the elders and leading ones in the church, we should not bring the worldly mentality or the natural human mind into the church life. The elders are not

higher than others. Nevertheless, Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey the ones leading you and submit to them.” The ones leading us are the elders. On the one hand, the elders are slaves, but on the other hand, the saints in the church should obey their leading ones. We need to have this balance.

Another matter concerning the elders in the churches is that the Lord never allows there to be only one elder in a church. The New Testament reveals that the elders or overseers should always be plural in number. This plurality annuls any headship among the leaders. The elders in a church should not choose from among themselves one brother to be the top elder over the others. This is hierarchy, and it is darkness, for it is not according to the truth. Some may think that Peter was first among all the apostles and elders, but Peter was not the leader officially or permanently; his leadership was according to his spiritual capacity at the time. On the day of Pentecost he had the top spiritual capacity. However, in Acts 15 he lost the capacity, and James took the lead. In the four Gospels and the Acts, whenever the apostles’ names are listed, Peter’s name is first, but Galatians 2:9 lists James first and Peter second. Peter became second because he became spiritually weak. He lost some of his capacity. By this we can see that the leadership among the apostles and elders is not official, permanent, or organizational.

The case of Paul and Barnabas also proves that the leadership in the New Testament age depends upon the present spiritual capacity. When Paul and Barnabas were called in Acts 13:2, Barnabas was mentioned first. On their journey, however, Paul came to the forefront, because by that time he had a higher spiritual capacity (v. 9). This indicates that there is no official, permanent, or organizational leadership among God’s people today.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HEALTHY WORD

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:6; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1; 1 Cor. 1:18; Phil. 2:16

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIBLE

The Bible Being the Embodiment of God, Christ, the Spirit, and Life

There are four great things that are real and living yet altogether mysterious, invisible, abstract, and intangible: God, Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. To believers these things are real and living. Without these four great things, the Christian life is empty and meaningless. The way we touch and experience God, Christ, the Spirit, and life is by the word of God in the Bible. The word of God is the embodiment of God. Without the Bible, God is altogether untouchable, but through the Bible we can touch God. Any time we come to the Bible with an open heart, even before we open the book, we have the sense that we have come into the presence of God. This is not a psychological phenomenon, for it is impossible to reproduce the same feeling when coming to a secular magazine or newspaper. Sensing that we are in the presence of God when we come to the Bible can be likened to feeling cold when we go outside on a cold day—the sense indicates a fact. We sense that we are in the presence of God when we come to the Bible, because the Bible is the embodiment of God, Christ, the Spirit, and the eternal life of God.

The Bible Being God's Breath

We need to see what the Bible says about itself. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." The Bible is God's breath and not only God's breath but also God's breathing. Whenever we come to the Bible, we come into God's breathing. Many of God's children sense that they come into God's presence when they come to the Bible, but they do not realize that the Bible is God's breathing. The reason we sense God's presence when we come to the Bible is that the Bible is God's breathing. God's breathing is divine, holy, life-giving, and full of riches. Even if we have been a Christian for many years,

we may never have realized that the Bible is the breathing of our heavenly Father. When we come to the Bible, we should always consider that we are not merely coming to printed words on paper but that we are coming into the breathing of our Father. When we have the breathing of our Father, we have His presence.

Although in the past we may not have realized what the Bible is, we have experienced coming to the Bible and having a sense that is sweet, clear, and bright. Before we come to the Bible, we may be clouded, darkened, or puzzled. However, when we come to the Bible, even before we open it, we often are inwardly cleared up and enlightened. We may be disappointed or hurt, but when we come to the Bible, deep within we are comforted and soothed. Such experiences are not the result of having a natural concept that the Bible is a divine book, God's word. Rather, God as the Spirit of life always accompanies His word, because His word is His embodiment.

The Bible and the Spirit Being the Means for the Transmission of the Divine Element into Our Being

Because electricity is transmitted through a wire, we may say that the wire is the embodiment of electricity. The wire gives the electricity a location and makes it tangible. Today God is embodied in the Bible and is realized as the Spirit. The Bible and the Spirit are the "wires" of the heavenly, divine, and spiritual "electricity." We have the holy Word without, and we have the Holy Spirit within. These are the two wires that transmit the unseen, invisible, abstract, and mysterious God into our being. The Spirit is the heavenly wire, and the Bible is the earthly wire. Through these two wires God, Christ, and life are transmitted into us.

We need to realize that the Bible not only is inspired by God but also is God's breathing. Whenever we come to the Bible, we come into God's breathing, and this breathing is a transmission. God's divine element and all the riches of His divine attributes are continually transmitted into us as we read the Word. Whenever we come to the Bible, we receive the infusion of the divine element.

Needing to Come to the Lord

through the Word Every Morning

Every day we need to spend time in the Bible early in the morning before doing anything else. This may be likened to eating a healthy breakfast in order to be physically healthy. To take in the word of the Lord every morning is a great thing. Regardless of how busy I am, I always pray-read a few verses from the divine book before I do anything else.

After rising up, the first thing we should do is to come to the Lord through the word in the Bible. It does not matter whether we pray first or read first. Eventually, our praying and reading will become one thing. If we pray and read each morning, we will be spiritually healthy. When we receive nourishment from the divine word for our spirit, we will be a happy person. Joy is a great medicine that heals all kinds of diseases. We are made joyful by contacting the Lord through the Bible. Therefore, we will be healthy not only spiritually but also physically.

Exercising Our Spirit and Pray-reading When We Come to the Word to Be Spiritually Nourished

Some may be discouraged from reading the Bible because they do not understand everything or remember what they read. We should not be disappointed that we cannot remember what we have eaten of the word. Whether or not we remember, the word gets into us.

We may think that we receive only knowledge when we come to the Bible. Actually, when we read the Bible, we should not try to understand everything with our mind. Striving to understand everything will frustrate our receiving of the nourishment from the holy Word. Instead, we need to exercise our spirit. We should not care for how much we understand or remember but for how much we are nourished.

When we come to the Bible, we should not only read but also pray. Instead of composing a prayer, we can simply use the verses we read as the words of our prayer. For instance, if we are reading John 1:1, we can pray, “Lord, in the beginning was the Word. O Lord, was the Word. Amen. Oh, the Word, Amen.” This is pray-reading.

Pray-reading in this way is spiritual eating. Repeating the words of the Bible can be likened to chewing one's food to receive nourishment. We should practice this every morning. When our morning time is finished, we will go into our day with the nourishment we have received from God's breathing. This nourishment will remain in us the whole day, sustaining, enlightening, and watering us. Sometimes this nourishment will comfort us. According to my experience, this nourishment will sometimes speak to me throughout the day. My morning nourishment brings me into God's presence for the whole day. We have a desperate need to practice this constantly. We need to regard our contact with the Lord in the morning through the word as more important than our breakfast. Our spiritual breakfast is more important than our physical breakfast. Reading the Bible and having a morning time with the Lord are life necessities, just as eating, drinking, breathing, and sleeping are life necessities for our physical life. Early in the morning before doing anything else, we need to come to contact the dear Lord through the word. We should consider that this is a life necessity.

THE HEALTHY WORD

The Healthy Word Containing a Killing Element and a Nourishing Element

The burden in this chapter concerns the healthy word. In the two Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus the word *healthy* is used six times to describe God's divine word (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). These Epistles were written at a time when the church was in degradation, and at such a time some teachings and doctrines are not healthy. Because the church is in degradation today, many teachings in Christianity are not healthy.

The word *healthy* implies two elements. Negatively, there is an element that kills germs. Every day our body is fighting against germs. The physical life is a struggle between the human life and germs. Similarly, there are spiritual germs from which we must be constantly protected. Therefore, healthy teaching is full of antibiotics—the germ-killing element. Positively, there is the nourishing element. By these two elements we are made healthy. The healthy word is not a doctrinal shell but rather is the truth. The healthy word and the healthy teaching are the truth, containing the killing element and the nourishing element.

First Corinthians 1:18 mentions the word of the cross. The word of the cross is the killing word. Every chapter of 1 Corinthians contains the word of the cross, because the believers in Corinth had been deceived and brought into contact with spiritual germs. Each chapter of 1 Corinthians concerns a different problem in the church life. Every problem was a disease. Because the Corinthians were full of germs, they needed the spiritual antibiotics in the word of the cross, the killing word.

Philippians 2:16 mentions the word of life. Philippians is full of the word of life, the nourishing word. For example, in 1:20 and 21 Paul says, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me, to live is Christ." Another example is in 4:13, which says, "I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me." Thus, in the Bible there are two kinds of words: the word of the cross and the word of life. The word of the cross is the killing word, and the word of life is the nourishing word. On the one hand, the healthy word kills the germs in us; on the other hand, the healthy word nourishes us.

The Word of God Being Composed of Christ, His Death, and His Resurrection

The word of God is actually composed of three elements—Christ, His death, and His resurrection. The basic ingredients of the Bible are not stories or doctrines but Christ, His death, and His resurrection. When we read the Bible, if we pick up only stories or doctrines rather than Christ, His death, and His resurrection, our Bible reading is in vain. Regardless of what chapter or verse we read, we should always take in and enjoy the three basic ingredients—Christ, His all-inclusive death, and His resurrection.

The first few verses of the Gospel of John do not mention the death or resurrection of Christ, but if we eat the healthy word by pray-reading these verses, the result will be that the germs within us will be killed, and the weaknesses within us will be swallowed up. This is a killing produced by the killing element of Christ's death in the word. As we continue pray-reading, we will be supplied with life by the same word, which also contains the nourishing element of Christ's resurrection. This is the Christian life—a life of receiving killing and nourishing from our God through the Word.

The proper reading of the Bible always transmits a killing element into us. If we do not receive any killing when we read the Bible, our reading is in vain. Our physical eating similarly enables our body to kill the germs in us. If we do not eat properly every day, we will quickly become sick from many germs. As long as we eat well and regularly, we do not need to take antibiotics. Through our eating we will naturally have the killing element. In the same principle, every time we read the Word, we receive a killing element. Actually, it is not we ourselves but the negative things within us, such as our natural life and our flesh, that are killed.

BEING LUMINARIES HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

Without the Bible human society would be in total darkness. Although the Bible is available to everyone today, regrettably, not many Christians apply the Bible in a practical way to their daily living. If we, the children of God, apply the holy word of our heavenly Father practically to our daily living, we will witness the transformation of our life, and we will influence our family, friends, neighbors, and other relatives. This is to hold forth the word of life (Phil. 2:16). To be luminaries shining over the darkness by holding forth the word of life is the best way to preach the gospel (vv. 15-16). In this way we may bring one person to the Lord every year. Those around us will spontaneously no longer be in darkness but will be under our shining and thereby see the way that leads to salvation and to God. It is in this way that we can live a life of testimony.

Christianity has many organizations and activities, but not many Christians daily eat the word of God. In the Lord's recovery we have no organizations or activities; rather, we have only the living Christ. We eat His word, take Him in, live Him, grow Him, and produce Him. In this way we are luminaries shining over those around us. This depends on our coming to the holy Word every morning and throughout the day. In the morning we need to come to the Word to be nourished by pray-reading. Later in the day we can read three or four chapters. By reading three chapters in the Old Testament and one chapter in the New Testament each day, we can read the whole Bible once a year. If we continue for several years in this way, reading through the Bible once a year and pray-reading verse after verse, we will be spiritually healthy, receiving the nourishing and killing element in the Word.

THE CHURCH NEEDING TO BE THE PILLAR AND BASE OF THE TRUTH

In the past fifteen years we have been ministering mainly concerning Christ, the human spirit, the experience of life, and the ground of the church. In the local churches in the United States these four things have been built up as four pillars. Most of the saints are very strong and clear concerning these matters. Regrettably, however, we have not adequately stressed the matter of the truth. Hence, in our building we are lacking the pillar of the truth. Because of this lack of the truth, in recent years several corrupting things have crept into the churches from God's enemy. In the absence of the light of the truth, certain things have crept in. For instance, a brother declared that he is the leader in the Lord's recovery. This exposes a terrible lack of the truth. In His New Testament economy God does not allow any kind of human leadership among His people, because He has given the headship and lordship uniquely to Christ His Son. To call someone other than Christ the leader leads to a hierarchy, which insults the headship of Christ. If in the past years the pillar of the truth had been built up in the churches, all the saints would know that among the Lord's people today there is no organization and therefore no official leadership. We all would refute anyone who dares to say that he is the leader. We would be not a people under darkness but a people under the light and full of the truth. We would know that in the Lord's recovery there is no organization and that no one sent by God would say that he is the leader.

The United States is a strong nation mainly because it has a strong constitution and because the people of this country uphold the Constitution. Even the president must follow the Constitution. Likewise, a strong local church is one in which all the saints uphold the truth. This should be the condition and the situation of every local church. Every brother and sister in the church should know the truth that in the church we practice neither autocracy nor democracy but the headship of Christ. We need to know and practice this truth.

I encourage all the saints to make a vow before God: "Lord, from today I will be a person of the Bible. I will study and pray-read the Bible. I will pick up the truths from all the doctrines." Only in this way can we grow in life, the church be built up, the kingdom of God be established on the earth, and we be

matured so that the bride will be prepared and the Lord Jesus Christ can come back.

As we saw in the previous chapter, truth is not doctrine. In the Bible there are many doctrines, and there is also the truth. Doctrine is merely teaching in letters, but the truth is Christ. For instance, there is the doctrine of holiness in the Bible. We may find a number of doctrinal definitions and explanations of holiness. However, the reality, the truth, of holiness is Christ. John 1:17 says, "The law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." Christ is the truth; He is the reality of every positive thing. Holiness may be only a doctrine to us, or it may be a truth to us. Perhaps we hold the doctrine of holiness, knowing that holiness is God's holy nature and that to be made holy is to be sanctified by having God's nature wrought into us. It is possible for us to know this doctrine yet have no holiness. If this is the case, we have the doctrine, but we do not have the truth, the reality. The way to obtain the reality is not by merely reading, knowing, or listening to a message but by opening our being and contacting the reality of holiness, which is Christ. When we open our being and exercise our spirit to contact the living Lord, His holy nature will be infused into our being. Then we will have the truth, the reality, of holiness.

Thousands of missionaries went to China in the nineteenth century to preach the gospel, but very few preached the truth of salvation. My mother was a third-generation Christian. As a girl, she was sent to study at a Southern Baptist mission school. She was baptized there, and she was fully for Christianity. She taught her children Bible stories. Every Sunday she prepared herself and charged all her children to go to the Southern Baptist morning service. However, she was not saved. She received the doctrine of salvation, but she never touched the truth of salvation. My whole family was in Christianity and knew much doctrine, but not one was saved until one day my second sister contacted the Lord and was saved. Then she prayed for me, and I was saved at nineteen years of age. My salvation caused me to love the Bible, and my youngest brother was influenced by me to read the English Bible, which caused him to be saved. My mother witnessed a great change in us, and she was impressed in a positive way, but she was still not saved until seven years later when the Lord raised up a local church in my hometown. Through the meetings my mother received the truth of salvation and was saved. This illustrates the difference between the truth and doctrine.

We can find doctrines in the Bible, but we should not forget that within the doctrines is the truth. We should not be satisfied with the knowledge of a doctrine until we touch the truth in it. We can learn the doctrine by reading, but to touch the truth we must exercise our spirit to contact the living Lord, who is now the life-giving Spirit within us. As we have pointed out, the Spirit and the Bible are the two "wires" through which God, Christ, and life are transmitted into our being. When we exercise our spirit to touch the Spirit by pray-reading the Word, we receive the truth. It is in this way that the churches will be built up with life and according to the truth. As a result, even the youngest among us will have adequate experience of life and knowledge of the truth. No heresy will be able to creep into the church, because all the saints will be healthy, strong, and infused with the truth. This is the proper way to build up the churches in the Lord's recovery.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: When I pray, I close my eyes and focus inwardly until I feel that I contact the Lord and sense the Lord's presence. Is this the best way?

Answer: A number of saints practice this, but it is a difficult way. Instead of waiting until we have some feeling from within, we should begin by speaking. This is the easiest way. Whenever we are going to contact the Lord, we should not be quiet and wait for a feeling. The best way to contact the Lord, even before we kneel, sit, or open the Bible, is to speak something simple, such as, "O Lord. Praise You, Lord."

A Christian should be a speaking person, speaking not only to people and to God but also to angels, demons, and even the atmosphere. When we come into the meeting, if we do not speak but only sit there, the atmosphere will be full of death. However, if everyone speaks, our speaking will bring in life and repel all the distractions. The best and easiest way to contact the Lord is to speak. We should not wait; we should immediately and spontaneously speak. We can praise the Lord, thank the Lord, or worship Him. We can speak anything, as long as we speak from our spirit to the Lord. After speaking only two or three sentences in this way, our speaking will usher us into the presence of God.

Question: I have trouble coming to the Word in a regular way every day. What is the secret to be able to do this?

Answer: No matter how busy a person is, he always finds time to eat, because he realizes that eating is a necessity of life. Therefore, doing something regularly depends upon our realization. For all Christians, coming to the Word is a necessity of life, but many do not realize it. Because we now realize that this is a life necessity, we need to pray, “Lord, help me to read Your Word two or three times every day.” We should try to make this practice legal for ourselves by pray-reading a few verses in the morning, perhaps spending ten minutes to read a chapter after lunch, and then reading a few more chapters in the afternoon or evening. Such daily practices depend on our realization. Anyone who realizes that this is a life necessity will be able to practice it. Eventually, we will become accustomed to doing this. Then we will have an appetite for it and will feel that something is lacking if we do not do it. It will become our habit, and we will be healthy. We will see our Christian life transformed. Reading, studying, and eating the words of the Bible are life necessities. We need to trust in the Lord to be able to practice this.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S ECONOMY

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:3-5, 7; Eph. 3:2; Col. 2:8; John 15:1

The two Epistles to Timothy were written by the apostle Paul during a time of the church's degradation. Because Christianity today is under degradation, what is covered in these two Epistles fits our present situation. There are some crucial points in these two books, which are not covered thoroughly anywhere else in the Bible.

NOT TEACHING ANYTHING DIFFERENT FROM GOD'S ECONOMY

The crucial point in the Epistles to Timothy that we will cover in this chapter is God's economy. The way Paul presented this matter is very impressive and full of revelation. He presented God's economy in a practical way, not in a doctrinal way. To teach a doctrine is one thing, but to practice something real is another thing. Paul did not teach the doctrine of God's economy; rather, he practiced it.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things" (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul did not exhort Timothy to charge certain ones not to teach wrong teachings or heresies; on the contrary, he exhorted Timothy to charge them not to teach different things. In verse 4 Paul continues, "Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith." The myths Paul speaks of probably include stories of the children of Israel from ancient times. Genealogies were the records of the Old Testament. Some of the teachings among Christians today minister not the riches of Christ but questions. God's economy is a matter not in the mind but in faith. Anything that is in faith does not arouse questions.

THREE REQUIREMENTS OF GOD'S ECONOMY

In verse 5 Paul writes, “The end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith.” Here we can see three subjective things related to God’s economy—a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. Our heart needs to be pure, our conscience needs to be good, and our faith needs to be unfeigned. We need to have these three things within us for the practice of God’s economy. If our heart is impure, if our conscience has some offense, or if our faith is not true but hypocritical, we cannot practice God’s economy.

A Pure Heart

God’s economy requires us first to have a pure heart. We all need to consider if our heart is pure. This is a basic question. To care for God’s economy, we must have a pure heart, which is a heart that seeks nothing but God Himself. Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” When God is the unique goal of our seeking, and we fix our heart only on Him, we have a pure heart. A pure heart is a sincere heart seeking after God and having no other goal.

A Good Conscience

To practice God’s economy, we also need a good conscience. According to Paul, a good conscience is a conscience without offense (Acts 24:16). If we do not have any accusation or condemnation against our conscience, it is a good conscience. We can keep our conscience without offense by confessing in order to be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus. Anytime we have the sense that we are wrong in something, there is an offense on our conscience. A good conscience is one that is void of offense. Perhaps when a brother comes home for dinner, he does not feel that his wife’s cooking is good and becomes somewhat unhappy, although he does not lose his temper. He thinks that after he has worked hard all day, his wife should have cooked something that would make him happy, but it is just the opposite. Because he is somewhat unhappy, when his wife tries to talk to him, he does not answer but only has a sullen countenance. After such an instance, the brother will have an offense on his conscience, and this offense will bother him.

It does not require a great offense for our conscience to have a problem. As soon as we sense the smallest offense on our conscience, we should confess to the Lord in a simple way and ask for forgiveness. After a sincere confession

the Lord applies the blood to us and cleanses us. In this way the offense on our conscience is washed away.

Unfeigned Faith

Unfeigned in Greek means "not hypocritical." We should not perform or pretend but should have genuine faith. A pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith are required for our practice of God's economy.

GOD'S ECONOMY

An Economy Being a Stewardship and an Administration for Dispensing

In order to see what God's economy is, we need to consider each instance in which the word *economy* is used in the New Testament. *Economy* in the New Testament does not mean what we understand by the modern usage of *economy*. The word *economy* in the New Testament is not a translation but an anglicized Greek word that means "stewardship." In ancient times large, wealthy families had stewards to take care of the household affairs. *Stewardship* is the title of the service of a steward. The Greek word for *economy* also indicates an administration. In a large family the stewardship was an administration; the stewards administrated the affairs of the family. The Greek word also indicates the dispensing of certain things. All the supplies of a large family, such as food and clothing, were taken care of by the steward. Thus, there was the need of the dispensing of these supplies. The steward served the family by dispensing the necessities of life to the members of the family. Hence, the word *economy* means a stewardship as an administration to dispense the life necessities to the members of a household.

God's Economy Being the Dispensing of Christ to All God's Chosen People as Their Supply

God has a large family, a great household, and He has a number of stewards. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you" (Eph. 3:2). Paul's ministry, which was part of this stewardship, was to dispense Christ as the supply to all

those in God's house. God's economy is simply the dispensing of Christ to all God's chosen people as their life supply. In other words, God's economy is simply to work Christ into God's children. All the apostles, from Peter to Timothy, were stewards in this one stewardship, dispensing Christ to God's children.

The New Testament Books Not Teaching Different Things but Teaching Different Aspects of One Person—Christ

The entire New Testament was written to carry out God's economy to dispense Christ as the life supply to the children of God. There are twenty-seven books from various writers, but these books do not teach different things. Apparently, the four Gospels are different from one another, but actually, they all teach Christ, only from different angles. This may be likened to taking four photos of one person from four different sides. Each photo will show different aspects of the person, but together they will give a complete picture of the person. The twenty-seven books in the New Testament teach different aspects of one person, Christ.

The New Testament deals uniquely with Christ. However, this one person is not simple. According to the sequence in the four Gospels, He is a king, a servant, a man, and God. Concerning who He is, we can list many different titles, such as Redeemer, Savior, Lord, Master, Creator, Shepherd, Bridegroom, and High Priest. Concerning what He is, He is the life, the light, the way, the truth, the door, the pasture, the water, the bread of life, and the Lamb of God. According to Colossians 2:16-17 every positive thing in the universe is a shadow of Christ. The light we see with our eyes is not the real light; the real light is Christ. The real air and the real food are Christ. The reality of every positive thing in the universe is Christ. Verse 16 tells us that Christ is the new moon, a light appearing in the darkest, blackest, most hopeless time. Christ is this new beginning in the midst of darkness. Whenever we are in a dark time, we should not be disappointed but realize that Christ is our bright new beginning at that very moment. Christ is also our feast, a time of special enjoyment. Also, Christ is the real Sabbath. In the new man, which is the Body of Christ, the church, Christ is all and in all (3:10-11). Because Christ is all in the new man, we all must be Christ. In the church

there are no natural persons; we are all crucified (Gal. 2:20). In the church we are all constituted with Christ.

Not Teaching Myths, Genealogies, the Law, or Philosophy

Paul's exhortation in 1 Timothy 1:3-4 indicates that even in the first century there were different teachings; some were teaching things other than Christ. These different teachings included myths, which are different kinds of interesting stories. Young and old people alike all like to hear interesting stories. The stranger and more peculiar the story is, the more we like it. Besides myths, some also taught unending genealogies. Verse 7 indicates that there were teachers of the law. Colossians 2:8 reveals that there were also teachers of Greek philosophy, referring to Gnosticism.

While the apostle Paul was still on the earth, different teachings had already crept in. All the apostles from Peter to Timothy taught the same thing, God's economy, which is to dispense Christ into the believers. Christ for the church is the unique topic of the New Testament. Anything else is a different teaching. However, even as early as the first century, other teachings crept in besides the one teaching concerning Christ for the church.

To Teach Things other than God's Economy Producing Questionings

Different teachings produce questionings, but the teachings that minister Christ do not cause questionings. The teaching of the law was according to the Old Testament and was therefore scriptural, yet it was different from God's New Testament economy, which is to dispense Christ as the life supply to God's children that the church might be built up. Although teaching the law is according to the Scriptures, it is different from God's economy, and it therefore produces questionings rather than building up the church. When the law is taught, questions may be stirred up regarding matters such as the keeping of the Sabbath, circumcision, and diet. However, when we minister only Christ to God's people, there are no questions.

Recent Questionings in the Lord's Recovery Being Produced by Different Teachings

The Lord brought His recovery to the United States in 1962. For more than ten years, nothing but Christ for the church was ministered here, and there were no questionings. In the past few years the enemy has crept in with dissenting, distracting talk of different ways, producing questions. Certain churches have been in confusion as a result of different teachings and the questionings they produce. For example, some have taught that the saints do not need to go to the Lord's Day morning meetings. They say that whoever goes to the Lord's Day morning meetings is religious.

Life is mysterious and profound, but the experience of life is always simple. The most crucial matters of life are the simplest. For example, nothing is as simple as breathing. Christ is mysterious and profound, but to experience Christ is simple. We do not need to be complicated by considerations of whether or not we should do certain things or go to certain places. We need to forget about teachings that are different from God's economy and experience Christ in a simple way. We should care only for God's economy, that is, for Christ being ministered and dispensed into our being. We should not care for any other thought, concept, idea, or opinion. We should reject any teaching other than God's economy. In the Lord's recovery we do not care for anything other than Christ.

The Lord's recovery is not the recovery of certain concepts or of so-called good meetings. Also, the Lord's recovery is not the recovery of excitement. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of Christ. Our meetings should minister Christ.

God's Economy Being Christ as the Vine

We need to experience Christ in our daily life. We need to live by Him, live Him, and live Him out. Every day we need to pray, "Lord, You are one with me. You are my life and my person. I am one with You. Lord, You are God's economy. You are the vine, and we are the branches." The branches in the vine simply live. But they do not live themselves; they live the vine, grow the vine, and produce the vine. This is God's economy.

In John 15:1 the Lord said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman." God the Father is a farmer, and His economy is to grow a universal vine that includes Christ and all the believers. The Lord's recovery is for God's economy. Christians today are divided according to different

teachings, concepts, ways, activities, and organizations. In the Lord's recovery we reject these things. We have nothing but Christ. Our "dictionary" has only one word—*Christ*. To this word we would add a footnote—*and the church*. We care only for Christ and the church.

We need to come back to Christ and take the simple way of life. God's economy is Christ for the church. Christ is within us. As branches in the vine, we simply need to be one with Him and live Him. Christ is our life, our person, and our everything. He is our life necessity. We do not need to care for any concept. We need to care only for Christ and to live Him. Whatever He does, we do. Wherever He goes, we go. This is to live Christ. As the unique life necessity, Christ is the One we need to experience for the church life.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; 2:2b, 10; 4:7-8; 6:3, 5-6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5, 12; 2:16

GODLINESS BEING THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE FLESH

Although the matter of godliness is mentioned repeatedly in the two Epistles to Timothy, few Christians know the true meaning of the word *godliness*. The traditional understanding is that godliness is piety, pious behavior or conduct, or a reverent attitude toward God. However, this definition is inadequate, especially when considered in the context of 1 Timothy 3:16, which says, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Godliness may be defined as godlikeness, that is, to be like God, to be in the likeness of God. According to this definition, we need to have a living in the likeness of God, a behavior that bears the likeness of God. In other words, we need to behave in such a way that others can see the likeness of God in us. However, godliness is something deeper than having the likeness of God. Godliness is the manifestation of God in the flesh. This definition is based on verse 16. Godliness is the manifestation of God Himself, not merely something like God. It is not that our behavior and living should merely bear the likeness of God but that God Himself should be manifested in us.

GOD BEING MANIFESTED IN THE MAN JESUS

When the Lord Jesus was living on earth, He was a typical man with flesh and blood. He was raised in Nazareth, a small town in the despised region of Galilee. He was a man without form or beauty. Isaiah 53:2-3 says, "He has no attracting form nor majesty that we should look upon Him, / Nor beautiful appearance that we should desire Him. / He was despised and forsaken of men, / A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Although Jesus was such a man, God was manifested in Him. In Him—in His walk, in His living, and in His whole life—others could see the manifestation of God in the flesh. This is godliness. It is not that Christ's daily walk merely bore the likeness of God; rather, God Himself was manifested in Christ in His living. He lived in the

flesh, but something divine, excellent, and wonderful was manifested in His flesh. God Himself was manifested in Jesus. The manifestation of God was seen in a man's daily walk. This is godliness.

GOD BEING MANIFESTED ALSO IN THE CHURCH

In 1 Timothy 3:15-16 the manifestation of God in the flesh denotes not only Christ but also the church. Verse 16 begins with the conjunction *and,* which connects verse 15 to verse 16. Verse 15, which refers to the church, says, "If I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth." Beginning with the word *and,* verse 16 indicates that the church is not only the house of God and the pillar and base of the truth but also the great mystery of godliness, which is the manifestation of God in the flesh.

We know that the manifestation of God in the flesh refers to both Christ and the church, because Christ is the Head, and the church is His Body. Since Christ as the Head is the manifestation of God in the flesh, the church as His Body is surely the same.

Furthermore, verse 16 lists *preached among the nations* before *taken up in glory*. However, Christ was taken up in glory in His ascension before He was preached among the nations. Therefore, *taken up in glory* here must refer not only to Christ's ascension but also to the church's rapture. This indicates that the Christ spoken of in this verse is the corporate Christ—the Head and the Body. *Justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations,* and *believed on in the world* refer not to the church but exclusively to Christ. Nevertheless, the last item in verse 16 refers also to the church, which will one day be taken up in glory.

We may think that the ascension of Christ is one thing and that the rapture of the church is another, later thing. We may not realize that the ascension of Christ is connected to the rapture of the church. The ascension of Christ is the Head being taken up in glory, and the rapture of the church is the Body being taken up in glory. There is a corporate new man with Christ as the Head and the church as the Body. Today the Head is in the heavens, but the Body is on the earth. Christ the Head has entered into glory, but the church, His Body, has not yet entered into glory. One day the Body will be taken up in glory just as the Head has been taken up in glory.

The manifestation of God in the flesh is not only with Christ but also with the church. If we are meeting in the spirit, there will be the manifestation of God in the flesh. First Corinthians 14:24-25 indicates that if we have a normal, proper Christian meeting, when an unbeliever enters, he will say, "Indeed God is among you." Our meetings are a mystery to others. Here we have no worldly amusement or entertainment, but we have the mystery of godliness, the manifestation of God in the flesh. To outsiders this is a mystery. The church is not only the house of the living God and the pillar and base of the truth but also the mystery of godliness, the manifestation of God in the flesh. It is something in the flesh, yet it is the manifestation of God. Thus, it is a mystery.

MANIFESTING GOD IN OUR DAILY LIVING

The manifestation of God in the flesh should not be limited to church meetings but should also be found in all the areas of our daily life, such as our family life, marriage life, school life, and professional life. First Timothy 2:2b says, "That we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity." *In all godliness* means that there should be the manifestation of God in every aspect of our life.

Taking care of godliness in our daily living is a salvation. In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, "So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." We may wonder why we need to work out our salvation when we have already been saved. The reason is that we all need to be saved daily from a life that does not manifest God. To lead a life in all godliness is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

We need to consider whether we live a life in all godliness. The church is the house of the living God. The living God is within us. He desires to be manifested from within us in our family life, marriage life, church life, meeting life, daily life, school life, and professional life. If we will contact Him and fellowship with Him, He will be lived out through us. Such a living requires our obedience, as mentioned in Philippians 2:12. The living God within will live out a godly life, but He needs our cooperation. Our cooperation is our obedience.

Verse 13 says, “For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working.” The living God is operating in us both to will and to work. We do not need to do anything; we only need to obey God’s inner operating. God lives in us, and He will work Himself out in our living. If we obey His working, we will spontaneously drop all ungodly things. We will experience something of life from within. This life is God Himself living in us. Eventually, we will live a daily life in all godliness.

We should manifest God, not the current of this age. Among us there should be the manifestation of God in the flesh in all the areas of our life. We need to contact the living God, fellowship with Him, and obey Him. He will not correct us from without but will transform us from within. He will transform every part of our being, and the issue will be the manifestation of God in our flesh.

First Timothy 2:10 says, “What befits women professing godly reverence, by good works.” It is good for the sisters to profess godliness. Then 4:7-8 says, “Exercise yourself unto godliness. For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.” We need to exercise ourselves unto the manifestation of God in our flesh in all things. Paul compares exercise unto godliness to bodily exercise. Physical exercise benefits our health, but it is profitable only for a little. It does not compare to the profit of exercise unto godliness. Exercise unto godliness is profitable for all things.

After George Müller was saved, he became a godly man. The first thing he did every morning was to read the Bible and pray, mingling his prayer with the reading of the Word. Müller’s practice to combine his prayer with his reading of the Word of God no doubt contributed to his long life. The word of God washes away our worries and anxieties and brings us joy. Practicing to receive the joy of God every day through reading and praying over the Word will help us to be healthy both spiritually and physically.

We need to exercise ourselves unto godliness. God created man with a will, and He still honors the will of man in his fallen condition. Repentance, believing, and being baptized all depend on the use of our will. We need to set our will to exercise ourselves unto godliness. We can pray, “Lord, I am weak, but You are within me. Lord, help me, strengthen me, stand with me, and empower me to exercise myself unto godliness in all things.” In cutting our

hair, we can exercise ourselves unto godliness. In buying a pair of shoes, we can pray, “Lord, is this pair of shoes suitable for the manifestation of God?” We need to pray, “Lord, does hanging this picture in my living room manifest God?” If we pray in this way, the Lord will speak to us and lead us in living a godly life. This is to exercise ourselves unto godliness. We should pray and seek the Lord to live a life in all godliness and to exercise ourselves unto godliness in everything.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HEALTHY WORD AND THE IMPERATIVE WORD

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:10b; 4:6, 12; 6:3, 11; 2 Tim. 1:7, 13; 2:1, 22; 4:3, 22; Titus 1:9; 2:1

THE BIBLE BEING GOD-BREATHED

Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." This verse is unique in defining the Bible as God's breathing. We would not normally say that what we speak or write is our breath. However, Paul introduces the thought that the Word of God is God's breath. The word in the Bible is not simply an utterance; the Bible is the breath and even the breathing of God. When we come to the Bible, we come into God's breathing. When we enter into God's breathing, we enter into His presence.

BREATHING IN GOD'S WORD THROUGH PRAY-READING

Since the Bible is God's breathing, the best way to take in the word of the Bible is by breathing. The Bible is God's breathing out, and we need to breathe it in. Breathing as a physical activity never ceases. Even when we are asleep or sick, we are still breathing. Whether or not we are conscious of it, we unceasingly breathe to stay alive. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Unceasingly pray." This indicates that our praying is our spiritual breathing. The way to take in God's breath is to breathe by praying.

We breathe in God's breathing by praying the word of God into us. This is pray-reading. We did not use the term *pray-reading* until about ten years ago, but a number of spiritual persons in past centuries wrote about reading the Word of God prayerfully, which is pray-reading. George Müller said that in his morning time in the Word, he would read a verse and then turn the words into prayer. Afterward, he would go on to the following verse and continue to pray. He did not separate his reading of the Bible from his prayer; rather, he mingled these two things together.

When contacting the Lord through the Word, we should not separate the Word from prayer. When we read the Word, we may have an inward feeling to pray. Whenever we receive some inspiration from the Word, we will instantly desire to pray. We need to practice to pray every time we come to the Word. We do not need to interpret the Word in order to compose a prayer; we can simply use the words of the Bible as the words of our prayer. To pray the words of the Bible is to breathe in God's breath. This is a mingling breathing—God is breathing, and we are breathing. God breathes out, and we breathe in. This mingled breathing makes us spiritually healthy.

In his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, Paul used the terms *healthy teaching* and *healthy words* six times (1 Tim. 1:10b; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). In order to be physically healthy, we need to take care of our breathing. We also need to take care of our spiritual breathing by breathing in the word of God in the Bible. When we come to the Bible, we need to realize that we are coming into God's breathing. Because the Bible is living breath, rather than merely studying it, we mainly need to pray over it. When we pray over the Word from deep within, we breathe in the divine breathing. We need to exercise to come into God's breathing every morning in this way. Deep breathing brings a supply of fresh air into our body and also discharges negative elements, thus cleansing our body. If we would practice to breathe in God's breathing every morning, our whole being will be cleansed. This is a healthy practice.

When we breathe in God's word, we do not need to study, learn, or memorize. Too much memorizing can frustrate our breathing because we are exercising our mind rather than our spirit. When we take a breath of fresh air, we do not memorize the air—we simply breathe. Likewise, we need to enjoy breathing in God's word to be spiritually healthy.

THINGS THAT ARE VERSUS THE HEALTHY WORD

In the Epistles to Timothy and Titus there are certain positive terms used to describe the healthy word, such as *the words of the faith* (1 Tim. 4:6), *healthy words...of our Lord Jesus Christ* (6:3), *the word of the truth* (2 Tim. 2:15), and *all Scripture* (3:16). However, there are also several negative terms describing things that are versus the healthy word. We need to see these things.

First Timothy 1:6 says, “Some, having misaimed, have turned aside to vain talking.” Vain talk is empty talk. Those who speak in this way have turned aside from God’s economy (v. 4), which is to dispense Christ into others. We need to consider how many of our conversations are vain talk. Other speaking that is versus the healthy teaching includes the law (v. 7), myths and unending genealogies (v. 4), profane and old-womanish myths (4:7), and gossip (5:13). We can see a contrast in 6:3-5, which says, “If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness, he is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions, perpetual wranglings of men corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain.” Second Timothy 2:16-17 says, “Avoid profane, vain babblings, for they will advance to more ungodliness, and their word will spread like gangrene.” Verse 23 says, “Foolish questionings and those arising from an untrained mind refuse, knowing that they beget contentions.”

Such unhealthy kinds of speaking existed in the degraded church at the end of the first century. Under such a poor situation the apostle Paul charged Timothy to refuse, avoid, and even flee these things (1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:16; 1 Tim. 6:11) and to care instead for the healthy words and the healthy teaching (1:10b; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3). Today we need to refuse, avoid, and flee from negative speaking and receive only the healthy word. The healthy word is always the word of the truth, the words of the faith, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of the Scriptures. We should not care for any speaking concerning concepts, opinions, or ways. We should care only for the healthy word.

THE HEALTHY WORD BEING COMPOSED OF CHRIST, HIS DEATH, AND HIS RESURRECTION

We also need to see the elements of the healthy word. A physical meal may be composed of three basic elements, such as meat, vegetables, and bread. In like manner, the healthy word is composed of three elements—Christ, His death, and His resurrection. The words of the faith, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the word of the truth, and the words of the Scriptures always contain these three elements. Meat, vegetables, and bread may be prepared in

many different ways, but the basic elements are the same. Likewise, the Bible apparently is composed of various stories, histories, parables, exhortations, teachings, doctrines, and forms. However, the basic contents are always the same—Christ, His death, and His resurrection.

Anytime we pray-read a portion of the Bible, we will receive Christ, the killing power of His death, and His resurrection power. If we pray-read John 1:1, 4, and 14, we will receive the riches of Christ as the Word, who was in the beginning with God, who is God, in whom is life, who became flesh to be our Savior and Redeemer, and who is full of grace and reality. Furthermore, when we pray-read concerning the light of life in verse 4, we will receive the killing of Christ's death, for the light may expose us concerning a recent failure. Enlightening is the beginning of killing. The Lord within will not allow us to continue pray-reading until we confess our failure and ask for His forgiveness.

Every time I come to the Bible, my natural man is killed. The goal of the Bible is not to correct or adjust us but to kill our natural man. If we are only corrected, this implies that we are basically good but make some mistakes. However, the truth is that our natural man is good not for improvement but only to be killed. The Bible does not improve our natural man. Whether we are naturally good or bad, when we come to the Bible, our natural man will be killed. God does not want bad men or good men; rather, He wants reborn, spiritual men.

In the first few years after I was saved, the Bible gradually dealt with my bad natural man. I was very much adjusted, corrected, and improved. My second sister, who was a teacher in another city, was the first one in my family to be saved, and then I was saved through her prayer. Afterward, she shared a testimony with me about a preacher who had visited her school. She described him as a real man of God who walked slowly and always had a Bible in his hand. After walking a few steps, he would pause, look into heaven, and then walk on. He never said anything quickly. He was always careful and gentle. I was deeply inspired by this testimony. Because I was a quick person, I made up my mind and told the Lord that I would do everything slowly. I had some success. However, later I saw from the Bible that not only the bad aspects of our natural man should be killed but the good aspects also. In the first stage of my Christian life I received correction, but since then I have received the killing of Christ's death through the word.

The healthy word in the Bible kills our natural man. This killing is sweet and precious. The death of Christ is different from the death of Adam. The death of Adam condemned us, but the death of Christ releases us. Christ's death is the threshold of resurrection; it ushers us into resurrection. After receiving the killing of Christ's death when pray-reading the Word, we will also receive His resurrection. In our breathing of the healthy word, we take in the riches of Christ, the killing of His death, and His resurrecting power.

The healthy word with its contents is our safeguard, protecting us from taking in spiritual germs. An eloquent sermon that only excites or entertains the listeners is not a healthy word. Such a word may be likened to an unhealthy meal that makes a person happy but does not nourish him. The spiritually nourishing element is Christ. No matter how much eloquence, excitement, or humor a message may contain, it is not healthy if it does not convey Christ.

Mothers know that serving their children too many sweets will ruin their health and even negatively affect their behavior. Likewise, unhealthy speaking in the church life that does not contain the nourishing element of Christ may be exciting but will cause the saints to become unhealthy.

There is no killing of the cross in unhealthy words. There is no denial of the self and no dealing with the natural man. Without death there can be no resurrection. Without the breaking of the outer man there can be no release of the spirit (2 Cor. 4:16). If our natural man has not been broken, we will release not the spirit but the self. In an exciting message there is no killing. Rather, the flesh is promoted, and the natural man is stirred up. However, the healthy word contains a killing element. Any message without Christ, His death, and His resurrection is not healthy. Healthy words and healthy teaching always convey Christ, the killing of His death, and the power of His resurrection. The Christ in the healthy word includes the riches of Christ; His cross includes the denial of the self, the dealing with the flesh, and the killing of the old man; and His resurrection is the resurrection life.

My burden is to minister not only the food, the healthy word, but also the knowledge of what is healthy so that the saints may be able to discern whether a word is healthy or destructive. The principle is that the healthy word always ministers Christ, His death, and His resurrection—not opinions, concepts, questions, strife, or disputing. The oneness, harmony, and joy among the

saints and the churches in the Lord's recovery will be lost if the saints do not discern and reject opinions, concepts, and disputing that may come from the speaking of certain ones. Unhealthy speaking does not minister Christ. Healthy teaching always refers to the healthy words of the Bible and is always full of Christ. In every healthy message there is the killing of the old man, the flesh, and all natural things. Following the killing, there is the nourishing of the resurrection life. The content of the healthy word should become a God-ordained principle to us. We need to keep the house of God healthy by rejecting anything that is not healthy. We should receive only the healthy word—the words of the faith, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the word of the truth, and all Scripture.

THE IMPERATIVE WORD

A particular characteristic of the two Epistles to Timothy is that they contain many imperative words. One such word is 2 Timothy 2:1, which says, "You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." This word was written because the church was in degradation, and Satan was telling the children of God, "You cannot make it." In the past some among us have said that we should be liberated from any legalities or standards because we cannot change what we are. However, the Bible says, "Be transformed" (Rom. 12:2). We should not remain in a low condition. We need to be empowered in the grace of Christ. His grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

"Flee Youthful Lusts"

Second Timothy 2:22, another imperative word, says, "Flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." First Timothy 6:11 says, "You, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness." The Bible teaches the young people not to fulfill their lusts but to flee them. The young people need to flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness and godliness. Our standard is godliness. The two Epistles to Timothy establish a high standard of morality and character. Timothy was a young man. First Timothy 4:12 says, "Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Paul exhorted Timothy to be an example. Purity is a high standard. The young people should pursue to be pure in everything, including their thinking, their word, what

they look at, their attitude, their motive, their heart, their emotion, and their will.

The words *flee, refuse,* and *avoid* are imperatives (1 Tim. 6:11; 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:23, 16). Because the Lord lives in us, we should be not cowardly but empowered. The standard should be high among us. The church should have the highest morality, character, and ethics in human society. If the church is a group of loose people, there is no testimony. The New Testament says that the churches are golden lampstands (Rev. 1:11-12). A lampstand is full of light, and gold signifies the divine nature. What a high standard!

We need to receive only the healthy word and have our concepts thoroughly washed from the germs of any unhealthy speaking. If we read the two Epistles to Timothy to find all the imperative words, the Holy Spirit will spontaneously lead us to have a high standard. We should not believe that we cannot make it. We can make it by the Lord's grace.

"God Has Not Given Us a Spirit of Cowardice, but of Power and of Love and of Sobermindedness"

Second Timothy 1:7 says, "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness." *Power* here refers to our will, *love* refers to our emotion, and *sobermindedness* refers to our mind. God has given us a spirit that empowers our will, strengthens our love, and sobers our mind. This is a brief yet marvelous picture of the kind of person we should be. We should not be wishy-washy like jellyfish; rather, we should have a strong spirit with a strong will, a loving heart, and a sober mind. If we are such persons, Satan can do nothing to us and will be scared away. We need to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus and declare, "God has not given me a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness."

"The Lord Be with Your Spirit"

Second Timothy 4:22, the conclusion of these two Epistles, says, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." The Lord with our spirit is grace. It is in this grace that we need to be empowered.

THE NATURE, GROUND, AND CONSTITUTION

OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

The nature and the content of the Lord's recovery is life, which is Christ. The ground, the standing, of the Lord's recovery is oneness. The constitution of the recovery is the truth. Thus, the recovery is built with Christ as life upon the genuine oneness and according to the truth. The nature of the Lord's recovery should not change from life to a movement. The ground of the recovery should not change from oneness to divisions. The constitution of the recovery should not change from truth to falsehood. The Lord is bringing us back to life, oneness, and truth. The Lord's recovery is not a work or a movement; rather, it is a testimony of life. Unlike religious Christianity, the Lord's recovery is not a matter of activities, movements, ways, organizations, or concepts. In the Lord's recovery we have only Christ as life. Rather than a work or a movement, we should have a spontaneous testimony of life. We simply need to live Christ, grow Christ, and produce Christ. This is our daily living and our testimony. The Lord's recovery is to express Christ and bring His testimony to maturity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT BEING THE TRANSMISSION OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:12, 15a, 19; 2:9, 16-17; 3:4, 10-11; 1:27; John 6:63; 2 Tim. 3:16-17

In this chapter we will consider who and what Christ is. Christ is not only a person of many aspects, but He is also many things and matters. It is difficult to fully describe who Christ is, and it is even more difficult to describe what Christ is.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE AND ECONOMY BEING TO DISPENSE CHRIST INTO GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

God made a plan, a purpose, in eternity past. God's eternal purpose is to work Christ into God's chosen people. God has chosen us with the purpose that Christ would be dispensed and wrought into our being to become our constitution. This is God's eternal purpose, and it has become His economy. The New Testament uses the word *economy* (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4), which indicates a stewardship to dispense Christ into God's children (Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25).

GALATIANS AND COLOSSIANS BEING WRITTEN TO DEAL WITH THINGS OTHER THAN CHRIST, WHICH CREPT INTO THE CHURCH

Regrettably, immediately after God's dispensation in His New Testament economy began, certain things other than Christ crept into the church. Even while the apostles were still on the earth, before the end of the first century, certain things other than Christ had been brought in by God's enemy, Satan. Galatians and Colossians were written to deal with two of these things—religion, specifically Judaism with the Old Testament law, and philosophy, specifically Gnosticism.

Galatians Dealing with Religion and Revealing the Experience of Christ

The Epistle to the Galatians was written with the purpose of clearing up the matter of Judaism and the law. Judaism, the Jewish religion, is versus Christ. Paul wrote in Galatians that when he was young, he advanced beyond many of his contemporaries in Judaism (1:14). He was a leading Jewish religionist. While Paul was on his way to arrest the Christians in Damascus, the Lord appeared to him from the heavens and knocked him to the ground (Acts 9:1-4). Paul saw the heavenly Christ and later testified, "It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:15-16). God the Father revealed Christ in Paul. From that day Paul dropped the Jewish religion, the law, and the traditions practiced by his forefathers. Instead, he began to live Christ. He said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (2:20). Paul also wrote, "I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you" (4:19). The Christ who is revealed in us, who lives in us, and who is formed in us is absolutely versus any kind of religion.

Colossians Dealing with Philosophy and Revealing Many Items of Christ

The Allotted Portion of the Saints in the Light

The book of Colossians deals with Greek philosophy, earthly pondering and human thought, and it reveals many items of who Christ is and what Christ is. The first item of Christ that is revealed in Colossians is the allotted portion of the saints in the light (1:12). Christ is not only our inheritance for the future but also our portion to enjoy today. We have been qualified for a share of Christ as the portion of the saints in the light.

The Image of the Invisible God and the One in Whom All the Fullness of the Godhead Dwells Bodily

We are the saints and the partakers of Christ as our portion. This portion is the image of the invisible God (v. 15a). God is invisible, but an image is visible. Christ our portion is the image, the expression, of the invisible God, and in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (2:9). In other words, in this

portion we enjoy not only the expression, the image, of the invisible God but also all that God is. The fullness of God dwells in Christ, who is our portion for our enjoyment. All that is in Christ is unimaginable. The portion we are enjoying day by day is the embodiment of the fullness of God. Whatever God is, is embodied in this portion. This is beyond our comprehension.

The Reality of Every Positive Thing in the Universe

This dear One who is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead is also the reality of every positive thing in the universe. Colossians 2:16-17 says, "Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath, which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ." There are two categories of things in the universe: positive and negative. There is the day and the night, life and death, light and darkness. All positive things in the universe are shadows of Christ. The light we see with our eyes is not the real light; it is a shadow of Christ. Christ is also our real day. Feasts are times of release, rest, and enjoyment. Such times are only a shadow; Christ is the real feast. Anytime we have Christ, we have the real feast. Food is a shadow of Christ. If we do not have Christ, even if we eat much food, we will still be hungry. Christ is our real new moon—a bright new beginning in a dark time. Christ also is the real Sabbath. If we do not have Christ, we do not have rest.

Colossians 2:16-17 shows that all positive things are a shadow of Christ, indicating that Christ is the reality of every positive thing. He is our food, our drink, our clothing, our rest, our joy, and our everything. When I am wearing my eyeglasses, I often say, "Lord, You are my real eyeglasses. If I do not have You, I am blind. Thank You, Lord, without You I can see nothing, but with You everything is clear to me." In our daily life we need to realize that Christ is the reality of every positive thing.

The Unique Person in the New Man

Colossians 3:10-11 says, "The new man...where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all." In the old man there are many different races, nationalities, cultures, and statuses. To consider that we or others in the church are of a certain race or nationality is to have the concept of the old

man. Ephesians 4:23 says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” We need the new mind of the new man rather than the old mind of the old man.

Ephesians 2:15 says, “Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.” This verse reveals that on the cross Christ created one new man of two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles. Thus, the new man is not individual but corporate. In the whole universe there is only one new man, not many new men. This one new man is the church, the Body of Christ.

In the one, unique, corporate new man there is no race, nationality, culture, religion, or anything natural. In the new man Christ is all persons. Therefore, as members of the new man, we are Christ. The apostle Paul says, “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). Paul lived Christ, because in the new man Christ is all. The word *all* in Colossians 3:11 refers not to all things but to all persons, for the first part of the verse does not name different kinds of things but different kinds of persons. Christ is the one person in the new man.

In the new man there are no persons other than Christ. The new man is one man, and it is impossible for one man to have many persons. Therefore, in the new man there is only one person. This person is Christ. Our old man has been buried (Col. 2:12). Our old man cannot be in the new man and should remain in the grave. Only one person can be in the church—Christ. This is difficult for the natural mind to comprehend, but it is the clear revelation of the Bible.

Christ is so much. Many items of Christ are revealed in the Bible, and most Christians lack a full vision of Christ. He is our portion, the image of the invisible God, the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, the reality of all positive things, and the unique person in the new man. We should never think that we fully know Christ. No matter how many years we have been a Christian, we need to know more of Christ.

Our Life and Our Hope of Glory

This Christ who is so much is also our life (3:4). Christ is our life today and our hope for the future. Colossians 1:27 says, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ as our glory is our hope for the future. This Christ is wonderful. He is many items, yet He is our life.

THE BIBLE AND THE SPIRIT

TRANSMITTING CHRIST INTO OUR BEING

The Bible reveals that Christ is our life, but we need to consider what life is. Our words and actions prove that we have a physical life. We are living persons. The function of all the parts of our body shows that we have life. Nevertheless, life is abstract and difficult to define. The spiritual life, the divine, eternal life of God, is altogether mysterious, abstract, intangible, and invisible yet real and living. Life may be compared to electricity. Electricity is real and powerful, yet we cannot see it. Electricity is transmitted into buildings through wires. Without these wires, electricity could not be realized and applied. The current of electricity flows by the transmission of the wires. Spiritually, there are two "wires" that transmit Christ as the heavenly electricity to us. These wires are the Bible and the Spirit. In order to have electricity in a house, we must first install the wires, which make the electricity real and practical. In order for Christ to be transmitted into our being, we need the wires of the Word and the Spirit. The Word without and the Spirit within transmit Christ into us.

Regrettably, many Christians do not read the Bible for weeks or even months at a time. If we do not touch the Word and the Spirit, we cannot touch Christ, and we will be spiritually weak and poor. Christ is God's rich provision. However, no matter how rich Christ is, if we do not "switch on" the heavenly transmission by touching the Word and the Spirit, we will remain apart from Christ. We need to worship God that He has made us the partakers of Christ as our rich portion and that He has given us two means of transmission to receive this rich portion.

Our Great Heritage

Being the Bible and the Spirit

Our great heritage is the Bible without and the Spirit within. This inheritance is much more valuable than any material possession. We have the Word and the Spirit, and we need to use them every day.

Sensing God's Presence

When We Come to the Bible

Whenever we come to the Bible with a sincere heart and an open spirit, we immediately touch Christ as the Spirit. Often when we come to the Bible, we have a deep sense that we have entered into the presence of God. When we read a few verses, we not only understand something outwardly, but we also touch something inwardly.

The Bible Being God's Breath

We come into the presence of God when we come to the Bible, because the Bible is God's breath. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." The Bible is not only the word of God but also God's breath and even God's breathing. When we come to the Word of God, after only a few minutes we will be inwardly refreshed, comforted, nourished, watered, strengthened, and enlightened by the living God. I have often come to the Word with a heavy heart, but after reading a few verses, I am refreshed within. This happens because God's breathing is in the Bible. Just as we can be refreshed physically by rising early and breathing deeply in the fresh morning air, so we can be refreshed spiritually by coming to the Word. As the life-giving Spirit, God always accompanies His word (John 6:63). Wherever His word goes, the life-giving Spirit goes. Countless sinners have been converted simply by reading the Bible, and countless Christians have been transformed by reading this living book. We are transformed not by teaching or admonishing but by reading the Bible to contact the breathing of the living God.

Some believers may think that they do not need to read the Bible, because afterward they do not remember what they have read. They may suppose that it is useless to continually read and forget. However, we do not remember all the air that we breathe in, yet we would never say that we do not need to breathe. Our purpose in coming to the Bible is not primarily to memorize but to be refreshed and enlivened by God's breathing.

In order to be healthy spiritually, we need to come to the Bible every morning to enter into God's breathing. This breathing clears us up inwardly and supplies us for the rest of the day. This practice influences our mental and physical health as well, for it takes away our unnecessary worries and anxieties and brings us joy. When we become joyful in the spirit through breathing in God's word, we will be the most balanced people. If we have a

healthy time early in the morning in the Word of God, all the negative things will be carried away, and Christ as the life-giving Spirit will be our joy.

The way for one's abnormal condition to be healed is by contacting the living Lord through the Bible. If we spend time in the Word every morning, we will become the most healthy and normal person. We will be sober in our thinking, balanced in our emotion, and proper in our will. Moreover, our heart will be pure, our conscience will be void of offense, and our spirit will be open. Our body will be healthy, and our mind will be clear.

We are blessed to have the Word without and the Spirit within. Because we have had these two "wires" installed, our only need is to keep them "switched on" to enjoy the heavenly transmission of the rich, all-inclusive Christ into our being. Eventually, this wonderful Christ will fully constitute us. Then, like the apostle Paul, we will be able to say, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:20-21). This is the proper Christian life and the proper church life in the Lord's recovery. The Lord today is not recovering doctrines, practices, or forms; He is recovering Christ as our life and our everything for the proper Christian life and church life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ELEMENTS OF THE WORD BEING CHRIST, THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: John 1:1, 4; 6:63; 1 Cor. 1:18; Phil. 2:16; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19

GOD, CHRIST, THE SPIRIT, AND LIFE BEING EMBODIED IN THE WORD

John 1:1 mentions two great items—God, and Christ as the Word. Verse 4 says, "In Him was life." John 6:63 says, "It is the Spirit who gives life." The Spirit and life are two more great items. Of these four great items, three are the Triune God—God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Spirit—and the fourth is the Triune God being life to us. Moreover, God is Christ (1:1), God is the Spirit (7:39), Christ is the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), Christ is life (Col. 3:4), and the Spirit is life (John 6:63; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:2). Thus, God, Christ, the Spirit, and life are all one. These four items are invisible, abstract, and mysterious; however, they are all embodied in the word of God in the Bible, which is visible and tangible. In order to find God, Christ, the Spirit, and life, we must go to the Word.

THE WORD TRANSMITTING GOD, CHRIST, THE SPIRIT, AND LIFE

To explain how the word is the embodiment of God, Christ, the Spirit, and life, we may use the illustration of electricity. Electricity, which is powerful and mysterious, is brought into buildings through wires. Wherever the wires go, there is electricity. Just as the wires embody and transmit electricity, the word conveys God, Christ, the Spirit, and life. If we read a few verses with an open heart and a spirit of prayer, we will sense something within. What we will sense is God, Christ, the Spirit, and life.

Christians need to daily contact the Lord, be touched by the Spirit, and receive more life. We can do this by touching the Word, just as we can receive and apply electricity simply by switching on a light or an appliance. Once wires are installed in a building, we do not need to call the power plant every time we need electricity. We only need to use the switch to receive the electricity. How wonderful that today God in Christ as the Spirit is embodied in the Bible. The divine word in the Bible is the "wire" that embodies and conveys God, Christ, the Spirit, and life. The Bible as God's breath (2 Tim. 3:16) conveys God, Christ, the Spirit, and life into our being, just as a wire conveys electricity into a building. We need to daily take in the word in the Bible to have it "installed" and "switched on" so that God, Christ, the Spirit, and life may be transmitted into our being. Many of us can testify of experiencing the wonderful fact that God, Christ, the Spirit, and life are embodied in and conveyed by the Word.

THE WORD BEING FOOD

The Bible is the divine revelation, but it is also more, for it not only allows us to see God but also conveys God into our being. Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Your words were found and I ate them." God's word is edible; it is our food (Matt. 4:4). The Bible is not only for us to know and understand but also for us to eat. We do not need to fully understand our food before eating it. Whether or not we understand God's word in the Bible, we need to eat it, for it is rich food that embodies God Himself. The Lord said, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven," and "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:51, 57). In order to live by food, we need to eat it, not understand it. We live by our food when our whole being is revived and energized after we eat. We are nourished with spiritual riches and supplied with life by eating the word in the Bible.

THE BIBLE BEING COMPOSED OF THREE ELEMENTS— CHRIST, THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The Bible, which is good for food, is composed of three basic elements—Christ, the death of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ. The entire Bible is constituted with these three elements. Whether a portion of the

Bible appears to be a history, a psalm, a parable, a type, or an exhortation, the main elements are always Christ, His death, and His resurrection. Whether we read a chapter from Genesis, Psalms, Matthew, or Ephesians, we will receive Christ, the cross, and resurrection.

If we do not eat healthy food, germs will multiply in our body, and we may become sick. First Corinthians 1:18 mentions the word of the cross. The word of the cross is the killing element in the Bible that destroys the spiritual germs in us. The word of the cross kills our flesh, our natural man, our temper, our disposition, our self, and our selfish intentions. The whole book of 1 Corinthians is the word of the cross, because Paul wrote it to deal with the many problems in the church in Corinth. For example, 1:12-13 was written to deal with dissenting, divisive thoughts.

Healthy food also contains a nourishing element. The nourishing element is the supply of vitamins. The Bible is both a killing book and a nourishing book. Philippians 2:16 mentions the word of life. The word of the cross is the killing element, and the word of life is the nourishing element. Philippians is a book of resurrection, full of the nourishing word of life (1:20-21a; 3:10-11; 4:13).

When we read the Bible, we should receive not mere knowledge, teachings, or doctrines but the basic elements of Christ, His death, and His resurrection. For example, we may pray-read Colossians 2:6-8. Christ, His death, and His resurrection are all in these verses. Verse 6 says, “As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him.” To be under the light that we should walk in Christ is to receive the killing element. We may be convicted that we have been walking in the self much more than we have been walking in Christ. If we pray-read this verse in the morning, we may be reminded throughout the day to walk in Him. The phrase *walk in Him* kills our flesh. Perhaps our desire for a certain kind of entertainment will be killed. We may be inwardly convicted for talking too much. This is not an outward admonishing but the receiving of a killing element from God’s word. The proper reading of the Bible is not simply to gain some understanding but to receive a killing word.

Verse 7 is a nourishing word full of resurrection: “Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Verse 8, another killing word, says, “Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his philosophy and empty

deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ." The more we pray-read this verse, the more of the killing element we will receive. Philosophy, empty deceit, the tradition of men, and the elements of the world will all be killed by this word. Verse 8 ends by bringing us back to Christ. Thus, when we read Colossians 2:6-8, we receive Christ, His death, and His resurrection.

Our reading of the Bible should be not merely to learn doctrines and teachings but to receive the basic elements of Christ, His death, and His resurrection. When we come to a meal, we do not come mainly to read menus and recipes but to eat the food. When we come to the Bible, we should not use only our mind to acquire knowledge; rather, we should exercise our whole being to take in Christ, His death, and His resurrection. In this way we will receive the killing and the nourishing elements in the word.

Receiving the killing and nourishing elements in the word produces a healthy spiritual metabolism. Physical metabolism includes a breaking down, called catabolism, and a building up, called anabolism. Likewise, our spiritual metabolism functions to break down, or kill, the old things and to supply us with new life. The killing element in the word tears down, and the nourishing element builds up. We will have a healthy spiritual metabolism if we daily come to the Bible to receive the healthy word.

LETTING THE WORD DWELL IN US AND BEING FILLED IN SPIRIT

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." The word *dwell* means "make home." In this verse the words *teaching*, *admonishing*, and *singing* modify the verb dwell, indicating that the way to allow the word of Christ to dwell in us is by teaching, admonishing, and singing. The more we teach, admonish, and sing, the more the word of Christ will make home in us.

Ephesians 5:18-19 says, "Be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord." This verse shows that our speaking and our singing should be not from our mind but from our heart and our spirit. Letting the word of

Christ make home in us is a matter not of remembering with our mind but of exercising our spirit.

Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-19 show that our reading of the Bible should become our singing. The highest way to enjoy reading the Bible is to sing the words with a spontaneous melody. This is a sweet experience. Instead of merely memorizing the words of the Bible, we should sing them.

Eating the word in the morning by pray-reading and sing-reading verses will result in a healthy spiritual metabolism for the whole day, killing the negative things in our being and nourishing our inner man to grow and be empowered. The proper way to live the Christian life is to contact the word in the Bible, which embodies God, Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. We can read, pray, and sing the word to receive the elements of Christ, His killing death, and His nourishing resurrection. As a result, we will walk with the Lord and in the Lord, always experiencing the killing and the nourishing, the operating of death and life (2 Cor. 4:12). This is the Christian life.

CHAPTER NINE

THE CHURCH BEING THE PILLAR AND BASE OF THE TRUTH

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

TRUTH BEING NOT DOCTRINE BUT A PERSON WHO IS REALITY

The word *truth* is used repeatedly in the two Epistles to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; 3:8; 4:3-4). Many Christians think that truth is simply doctrine. However, in verses such as John 1:17; 8:32; 14:6; and 17:17, it is clear that the word *doctrine* could not be used in place of *truth,* which is sometimes rendered "reality." We need to see the difference between truth and doctrine.

Truth is reality. John 1:17 gives a comparison between the law and reality. This verse says, "The law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." The law was given, but reality came. A thing is given, but a person comes. The word *law* indicates a large portion of the Old Testament, which is called the Law and the Prophets (Acts 13:15; Matt. 5:17). The Law is the first section of the Old Testament, from Genesis through the Song of Songs; the Prophets is the second section of the Old Testament, from Isaiah through Malachi. The law was given as a shadow, figure, or type, just as a photograph of a person may be sent before the person comes. The law is the picture, and the reality is the person. Christ is the reality.

Let us consider a few examples of the types in the Old Testament and the reality in the New Testament. Genesis 1:26 says that man was made in the image of God. The reality of the image of God is Christ (Col. 1:15). Christ came as the real image of God. Genesis 2:9 mentions the tree of life. Christ came as the reality of the tree of life (John 14:6; 15:1). Genesis 3:15 prophesied that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. The reality of the seed of the woman came when Christ was born of the virgin Mary. Christ is the real seed of the woman who bruised the head of Satan (Heb. 2:14).

Exodus 12:3-10 describes the passover lamb that was slain for the salvation of the children of Israel. When John the Baptist saw the Lord, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The lamb in Exodus 12 is a shadow, a picture, of the real Lamb, Christ. Such pictures are found throughout the Old Testament. In Exodus 25 through 30 God gave Moses the pattern for the Israelites to build the tabernacle. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." Christ in the flesh was the real tabernacle. Christ is the reality of all the things mentioned in the law.

Leviticus describes all kinds of offerings—the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. All the offerings are shadows of Christ. When Christ came, the reality of the offerings came. He is the real burnt offering, the real meal offering, the real peace offering, the real sin offering, and the real trespass offering for us. The offerings in the Old Testament are only shadows; Christ is the reality.

Christ is the real light and the real life (John 8:12; 14:6). He is also the real power, holiness, righteousness, kindness, love, humility, long-suffering, endurance, submission, and every divine attribute and human virtue.

Truth is not doctrine but reality, and the reality of every positive thing, even human beings, is Christ. Without Christ we are empty, having no reality. When we receive Christ, we are no longer empty, for we have the reality, which is Christ, as our real person. Paul says, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). To him, to live was not Paul, which would have been empty, but Christ, who is the reality.

Doctrine Being the Description of the Truth

Doctrine is the description of the truth, and it conveys the truth. The truth is the reality of what is described in the doctrine. The doctrine of God's image is in Genesis 1:26; the reality of God's image is Christ. Apart from Christ, God's image in Genesis 1:26 is merely a doctrine.

Justification by faith is the main doctrine of the Lutheran Church. I knew a pastor of a Lutheran congregation in China who strongly preached justification by faith but who had not been justified himself. Although he preached justification by faith, he was secretly smuggling opium. Then a

Norwegian missionary went to China to preach not the doctrine of the gospel but the reality—regeneration. Whenever she finished speaking a gospel message, she would stand by the entrance as the audience went out and ask each one, “Have you been regenerated?” One day she visited the town of that Lutheran pastor, and after preaching a message on regeneration, she asked the pastor in front of several members of his congregation whether he had been regenerated. When he replied that he had, she said that she could tell by looking at his face that actually he had not been regenerated. He was greatly offended by this and began to hate her. That night he planned how he might kill her. While he was planning, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Look, how evil you are! You are planning to kill a lady evangelist. Have you been regenerated?” He was enlightened and immediately repented. The next day he came to the meeting to make a public repentance and to testify of what he had experienced. By hearing his testimony, many others were led to be regenerated.

The doctrine of regeneration and the reality of regeneration are two different things. We need to be saved not according to doctrine but according to the truth, the reality. We should not have the doctrine of something yet miss the reality.

THE CHURCH BEING THE PILLAR AND BASE OF THE TRUTH

First Timothy 3:15 says that the church is the pillar and base of the truth. In ancient architecture a building was supported by a pillar, which rested on a base. The church is the pillar and base that bears the truth. The pillar and base of the truth are not the elders but the church, which includes every brother and sister. Every member of the church is part of the pillar that bears the truth. Whenever a new one or a young one asks a question related to the truth, we should all be able to answer. Someone may ask what holiness is. We not only should know that holiness is Christ, but we also should be able to find the verse that proves this (1 Cor. 1:30) and expound it.

However, many saints know a certain amount of truth, but their knowledge is not thorough or adequate. In order for the churches to be strong, every brother and sister must bear the truth by learning the truth, experiencing the truth, and being able to speak the truth.

Christ Being the Unique Leader

Another test of whether we adequately know the truth may come if someone questions us concerning who the leader of the church is. In Matthew 23:10 the Lord said, “Neither be called instructors, because One is your Instructor, the Christ.” The Greek word translated “instructor” may also be rendered “guide,” “teacher,” or “director.” This word clearly indicates that Christ is the unique Leader. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey the ones leading you.” The elders are the leading ones, but Christ is the unique Leader. First Peter 5:3, a word written to the elders, says, “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.” The elders should not be rulers of the church but should be examples. We are all under the headship of Christ, and we need to see the truth of His headship.

The truth of the leadership in the church is that Christ is the unique Leader. The elders should exercise to be examples while giving the full headship to Christ. This is contrary to the worldly concept of leadership. If one comes saying that God has appointed him to be the leader of the local churches, none of the saints should accept this speaking, for it insults the unique headship of Christ. All the saints need to know and practice the truth to prevent error from coming into the church. Everyone should know that Christ is our unique Leader. To consider any man other than Christ as the leader of a local church or the Lord’s recovery damages the truth. There is no leader other than Christ. The Lord said, “Whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 20:26). The concept of a man being the leader of the churches leads to hierarchy, which is a great insult to the headship of Christ.

In the New Testament age Christ’s leadership has been fully established, and His headship has been fully completed. Ephesians 1:22 says that God subjected all things under Christ’s feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church. Those who take the lead in the churches must be very careful not to consider themselves to be the leaders. The unique Leader is Christ. We must practice this truth.

There Being No Hierarchy among the Churches

We also need to be careful not to build up a hierarchy among the local churches. No church is higher than any other church. It is crucial that we

know and practice this truth. If the church in our locality submits to another church, making the other church higher, this is hierarchy. All the churches are on the same level. If we do not practice the truth, the churches will suffer from confusion, dissension, and disharmony.

While the Lord delays His return, we need to know the truth for the practice of the church life. The Lord's recovery can withstand any kind of attack, because the foundation of life has been solidly laid, but we also need to adequately know and practice the truth. When the pillar of the truth is added to the foundation of life, the building of the church in the Lord's recovery will be solid. As long as the church upholds the truth, nothing negative will be able to come into the church. Thus, all the saints need to know the truth so that the church would be built up as the pillar and base of the truth.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD BEING ONE IN OUR EXPERIENCE

In order to know and practice the truth, we all need to come back to the Word. While we are reading, studying, or praying over the Word, we need to remember that the truth is in the Word. Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth." The Bible is the word of God, which conveys the truth. We saw in the previous chapter that the elements composing the Bible are Christ, His death, and His resurrection. These three elements are the truth, the reality, of the Bible, and this reality is now the Spirit. The Spirit is the reality of Christ, the reality of Christ's death, and the reality of Christ's resurrection. Therefore, the Spirit is called the Spirit of reality (John 14:17). This means that whenever we come to the word of God in the Bible, we need to exercise our spirit to receive the Spirit. Eventually, the Word without and the Spirit within will become one in our experience. Christ, His death, and His resurrection are in the word, and they are also in the Spirit. When we take the word into us, it becomes the Spirit. When the Spirit is spoken out from us, it becomes the word. When we read the Bible, we should exercise not only our mind to deal with the printed matter but also our spirit to contact the Spirit. Then the written word will become the living word, and we will receive not doctrine but reality. If we exercise only our mind to read the Bible, we will receive only biblical knowledge and no spiritual reality.

However, if we exercise our spirit to contact the Spirit while reading the Bible, the doctrine will become the truth to us.

BEING BALANCED BY HAVING BOTH THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Some Christians know the Bible well but neglect the Spirit. Christians of another category tend toward the other extreme, caring only for the Spirit and neglecting the Word. Neither category of Christian is balanced. We should not be on either of these extremes. We need the Word without and the Spirit within. We need to know the doctrine, and we need to possess the truth within the doctrine. This will enrich the church life and safeguard the Lord's recovery from death or anything improper. The Word gives us the doctrine, and the Spirit gives us the reality. When we have the doctrine and the reality, we are balanced, enriched, and safeguarded.