THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE AND A PROPER CONSECRATION

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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CONTENTS

1. Exercising the Spirit, the Heart, and the Mind
2. The Meaning of the Universe
3. The Meaning of Human Life Being the Meaning of the Universe
4. Being Filled with the Holy Spirit
5. A Proper Consecration
6. Consecration Being to Take the Lord as Our Person
7. Taking Christ as Our Person and Standing on the Ground of the Local Church
8. Knowing the Church as the New Man and Taking Christ as Our Person (1)
9. Knowing the Church as the New Man and Taking Christ as Our Person (2)
10. Releasing the Lord's Life and Aggressively Preaching the Gospel

PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in training meetings held in Taipei for the young people in Taiwan from January 5 through 9, 1971.

CHAPTER ONE

EXERCISING THE SPIRIT, THE HEART, AND THE MIND

USING THE SPIRIT TO PRAY-READ

In this chapter we will fellowship concerning pray-reading. When we pray-read, we must first exercise, use, our spirit, because the substance of the Bible as the word of God is Spirit. The Chinese classics are excellent, but no matter how we read them, we cannot feel the Spirit, because the Spirit is not in them. The Spirit is in every sentence and every word of the Bible. However, if we do not read the Bible with our spirit, we will not be able to touch the Spirit. But once we use our spirit, we can touch the Spirit in the Bible.

We also need to read the Bible with our mouth because our human spirit is released through spoken words. The words that we speak are the outlet of the spirit. If we do not speak, there will be no way for the spirit to come forth. In order to light a match, we must strike it. Once we strike it, the phosphorus on the match will catch fire. One can say that the fire in the phosphorus is waiting for us to strike it. We must strike the match in the right place in order for fire to be kindled. The fire in the phosphorus is an example of the spirit within us. This fire comes forth when we open our mouth to utter something, to speak. When we say something, our spirit will come forth. Our spirit coming forth will "ignite" the Spirit in the Bible. In this way the two spirits respond to each other; our spirit draws out the Spirit in the Bible, and the Spirit in the Bible strengthens our spirit and causes our spirit to burn. This is the way to eat the word and be satisfied, to receive light, and to be built up.

I hope that this illustration will help us to exercise diligently when we pray-read. Whether privately or in the meetings we must exercise our spirit. We must not be mechanical or depend on methods that we have observed. Rather, we must be living in spirit. Our observations should leave us only with an impression of our need to use our spirit. The Lord is the Spirit, the words in the Bible are Spirit, and we have a spirit within us. Therefore, when we read the Bible, our spirit must be living.

We are still too mechanical because of the influence of Christianity. The way that we meet is still mechanical, not living. When we come to the meeting, we can begin to sing prayerfully or pray-read even before the scheduled time of the meeting. We still are not exercised in our spirit.

EXERCISING TO HAVE A LIVING SPIRIT

Some saints are attending this training because they like to listen to messages or to the expounding of Scriptures. However, this training is not focused on such matters. The burden of this training is neither to give messages nor to promote spiritual cultivation. Our burden is to conduct a Christian training. It is not a light thing to hand oneself over to the training. We should break our old concept concerning listening to messages. This training is for us to exercise to have a living spirit and to live in our spirit. There should no longer be any forms in our meetings; we must drop all forms. Of course, this does not mean that we can do things in a disorderly way. The Bible says, "The wind blows where it wills" (John 3:8), but the wind does not always blow wildly.

We should not pray-read in an old way. For example, we should not pray-read Genesis 1:26-28 by repeating the words mechanically. Rather, we should read one word at a time in order to taste the words. There are no formal rules. Whether we are loud or quiet, fast or slow, our spirit must come forth as soon as we begin reading.

Someone once told me that every substance has atomic energy, but a correct method is needed in order to access this energy. The "energy" of the Bible is the Spirit. We must draw out the Spirit in our reading. For this reason, we need to practice reading the Bible. We should not always be scholarly, mechanical, or dead. We should not expect to always listen to messages. Instead, we should diligently exercise to read the Bible until we touch the Spirit in our reading.

EXERCISING THREE ORGANS—THE SPIRIT, THE HEART, AND THE MIND

This Christian training is not boot camp for new soldiers, nor is it orientation for new students. Physical exercise trains a person's body and helps a person to gain physical skills. We may think that a Christian training

is to train the spirit. That is right. However, if a Christian has only a spirit, he is more like an angel than a person, because an angel has only a spirit. Christians have a soul in addition to their spirit. Does this mean that we should also exercise our soul? The Bible does not speak of exercising our soul but of denying it because of its contamination due to the fall. The soul needs to be put on the cross, to be put to death.

While the purpose of this training is to train our spirit, our heart and our mind also need to be trained. Our heart needs to be trained, because if our heart is not right, our person will not be proper. Therefore, the heart needs to match our spirit. Our mind is also very important. Our mind is a part of our soul. Although the Bible says that we should deny and forsake the soul (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:23-24; John 12:25), it does not say that we should forsake the function of the mind. Instead, the Bible says that we should be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2). Hence, in order to be trained to be proper Christians, our spirit, our heart, and our mind need to trained.

THE HEART BEING PURE

Have we paid attention to our heart? Does our heart love the Lord? Love is entirely a matter of the heart. What is the direction of our heart? It is possible to shout Hallelujah while our heart is occupied with something else. This means that our heart, as well as our love, is not focused in the right direction. The Chinese phrase translated "absent-hearted" adequately describes this situation. Maybe you came from Tainan to attend this training, but your heart is still in Tainan. This means that you should deal with your heart. This same principle applies to the Lord. If our heart is on something other than the Lord, there is a problem with our heart, and we should deal with it. We should also ask whether our heart is upright or crooked. A crooked heart is also a heart with a problem, and it is in need of the Lord's dealing.

All the saints in Taiwan are exercising to release the spirit. However, after our spirit is released, we must not forget about our heart. We should deal with the problems related to our heart. We should take care of not only releasing the spirit but also of having a proper heart. We should train our spirit as well as our heart. In order for us to be proper Christians, we need a spirit that is strong, living, fresh, rich, and bright; we also need a heart that is upright, single, and pure. Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." To be pure in heart is to want only the Lord and nothing else. It is also to have no

impure motives but to be as clear as crystal. This is the proper condition of the heart.

THE MIND BEING RENEWED AND TRANSFORMED

God created our mind. The mind is a part of the heart. Our mind is the organ with which we think, understand, and remember. Some brothers and sisters have a sound spirit and a good heart, but the condition of their mind is not keen. In their view Romans 8 is the same as Matthew 8. In their view the two chapters are about the same. Consider Romans 11:36, which says, "Out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." Some believers are confused by the three occurrences of *Him* in this verse. They cannot differentiate between *from Him*, *through Him*, and *to Him*. We are all from Him, because all things are created by Him. Hence, "from Him" is the beginning, "through Him" is the process, and "to Him" is the result. "From Him" was in the past, "through Him" is in the present, and "to Him" refers to the future. In order to comprehend these distinctions, our mind must be sober to understand, comprehend, and remember.

When we read the Bible, we must use our spirit, our heart, and our mind. Some believers do not exercise their mind when they read the Bible. As a result, they forget what they read. We must exercise our heart to treasure the Bible and to love what we read, and we must also exercise our mind. For example, after reading Romans 11:36, we can say, "Lord, I love You! How wonderful You are. All things are out from You, through You, and to You." If our spirit is strong, our mind is sober, and our heart is exercised, this verse will become ours.

Perhaps some may respond by saying that I have not emphasized our need to pray-read for the sake of mere understanding. This is true. However, this does not mean that we should not use our mind. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word." Do you understand this verse? I do not fully understand it, but this sentence is very clear to me. Even when I sleep at night, I can say, "In the beginning was the Word." Although I do not fully understand it, I am clear. We have a problem if we are still confused after pray-reading John 1:1 ten times. It is wrong to say that we should not use our mind. Pray-reading the Word without using our mind can be compared to not eating breakfast. Therefore, our mind must be sober, and we must use our

mind. When we pray-read with an exercised mind, we are not seeking understanding but rather nourishment; nevertheless, something enables us to understand. Such an understanding comes from the spirit and becomes a supply to us.

Therefore, we need to train these three organs: the spirit, the heart, and the mind. Ephesians 1:7-10 says, "His grace, which He caused to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence, making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him." We must exercise our mind in order to read these verses. Verses 8 through 10 speak of the issue of the grace that God has caused to abound to us, and according to the context of verses 6 and 7, the riches of His grace, including the forgiveness of offenses, produces glory. God has caused this grace to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence.

Wisdom is deep within, and prudence is the application of wisdom. Wisdom is related to planning and purposing, and prudence is related to the execution of the plan. Instead of saying, "Which He caused to abound to us," the Chinese Union Version says, "Which He rewarded us bountifully." The word *reward* implies that we have some merits. However, God's grace is a free gift, not a reward. According to the Greek this is more than a gift. It means that in His wisdom and prudence God caused grace to abound to us. His causing grace to abound to us is according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself. His purpose involves His plan. God has a good pleasure, which He decided, planned, arranged, and determined in Himself in eternity, that we would know the mystery of His will. He purposed and planned this good pleasure in Himself unto the economy of the fullness of the times for the heading up of all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

If we can remember and speak these points in a living way, we will have a spiritual mind. Hence, it is not enough to have a strong spirit; our mind must match our spirit. Then a sense of love will spontaneously rise in our heart, and Ephesians 1:8-10 will become a prayer to the Lord: "Lord, cause this grace to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence. This grace is also according to Your good pleasure, which You purposed in eternity so that we may know the mystery of Your will. You purposed this in Yourself unto the

economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, including us, in Christ. O Lord, we thank and praise You." When we speak to the Lord in this way, we will sense that the Lord is sweet and precious. By using our spirit and our mind to pray-read these three verses, we will be satisfied and full of joy.

Our need to use a sober mind can also be illustrated in relation to other verses. For example, Revelation 4:11 says, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created." It is possible to pray-read this verse with a strong spirit and yet be confused in our mind. When we read the phrase *You have created all things,* some might say that the meeting hall was created by God and the benches were also created by God. Such an understanding shows that we must exercise to have a sober mind.

Genesis 1:26-27 says, "God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." These two verses are long, but it is easy to remember the main points. First, God created man in His image and according to His likeness. Second, God wanted man to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle on the earth, and every creeping thing upon the earth. In other words, God wanted man to have dominion over the sea, the heaven, and the earth. We must use our mind to remember these two points.

Lastly, Romans 8:29-30 says, "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified." These verses speak of foreknowing, predestinating, calling, being justified, and being glorified. We need to remember these points and pray-read them. When we pray-read these verses with a strong spirit, a sober mind, and a pure heart, we will receive the riches in the Word.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

GOD'S SALVATION BRINGING MAN BACK TO THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

In this chapter we will consider a fundamental matter: the meaning of the universe. We often hear of people who do not know the meaning of the universe or the value of human life. What is the meaning of the universe? This universe was created by God and has a meaning that is related to the gospel. The gospel preached in Christianity is not high enough. This gospel includes merely being forgiven of sins, going to heaven, and enjoying eternal blessings. However, according to the Bible, the gospel of God is not this low. The gospel unveils the meaning of the universe. The gospel is not simply that the Lord Jesus was crucified to shed His blood and die for us. The entire Bible, from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22, is a book of the gospel. The entire Bible is a gospel message.

The gospel of God saves us out of a human life that is without meaning into the meaning of the universe. Salvation involves being saved from a human life that otherwise would be meaningless. We have been saved from a human life void of meaning into the meaning of the universe. God created a man who had great meaning and purpose. Regrettably, man fell, and the meaning of his life was lost. This means that man lost his original purpose. With His salvation, God rescues us and brings us back to our original purpose. When man fell, he lost the meaning of his existence, but now that we are saved by God, we have been brought back to our purpose, which is the meaning of the universe.

THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

We can find the meaning of the universe in the following verses. Ephesians 1:4-5 says, "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of

His will." Genesis 1:26-28 says, "God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Next, Romans 8:29-30 says, "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified."

The Creation of the Universe Originating in God's Good Pleasure

The above verses speak of God's good pleasure. This good pleasure was not an afterthought; it was present before the foundation of the world. Before the creation of heaven and earth and even before time began, God had a good pleasure. According to this good pleasure, this delight, God designed a plan. God planned the universe with the heavens, the earth, and a large variety and number of organisms. Not only so, God also planned to create man. God's purpose in creating man was for man to express God and represent Him, that is, for man to be His expression and His representation. Hence, God created man in His image and according to His likeness. The heavens and the earth and all the things in the universe were created according to God's will.

God Desiring to Gain Man as His Expression and Representation

Scientists and physicists study God's creation, but their studies are like a small grain in a field that is as expansive as the universe. Even though we are in the space age, human beings have traveled only from the earth to the moon, and we still have a rather limited knowledge of the universe. Astronomers say that the distance from the earth to the center of our galaxy is at least sixty-four million times farther than the distance between the earth and the moon. The vastness of the universe cannot be fully comprehended by the

human mind. God is too great. The things that He created are too vast and too numerous to count. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly tells us that the meaning of the universe is related to God's desire to gain a group of people to be His expression and representation.

THE EARTH BEING SUITABLE FOR MAN'S EXISTENCE

We should never think that the presence of human beings on the earth is a coincidence. Before any man landed on the moon, scientists conducted many studies and had many theories about life on the moon. On the one hand, they were developing the technology needed to land on the moon, and on the other hand, they were speculating whether any organisms were living on the moon. At that time, I was not sure that technology would enable men to go into space or land on the moon, but I was certain that no organisms would be found on the moon. Now technology has advanced to the point that humans have landed on the moon, and this same technology has proven that there are no organisms on the moon. The moon is not a suitable place for man to live. It is not a coincidence that we live on the earth. If the earth were slightly nearer to the sun, we would be burned. If the earth were slightly farther from the sun, we would be frozen. The distance between the earth and the sun is just right. It is not too far and not too near; hence, the temperature on earth is suitable for man's existence. These facts are not a coincidence. They speak to the mystery and the meaning of God's creation of the universe.

MAN HAVING A NOBLE POSITION IN ORDER TO REPRESENT GOD

God has an intention for this universe. He desires to gain a group of people to be His expression. God created the heavens, the earth, all things, and human beings because He desires to work Himself into a group of people so that they would not only express Him but also represent Him. We must express God in order to represent God. A dog cannot represent you. No matter how much you love your dog, it cannot represent you. A dog can bark, but a dog can never represent you. Hence, it is not a matter of whether you are willing to let a dog represent you. The fact is that a dog is unable to represent you. Some people love their dog very much; they even let their dog

sleep on their bed. Nevertheless, no matter how much they love their dog or even train their dog, their dog cannot represent them.

The position of man in the universe is very noble. It is so noble that man can be God's expression and representation. Man is qualified and capable of representing God, because this is God's delight; God created us for this purpose. However, there may be a big question mark within us concerning how we can represent God. Let us consider the example of a dog. First, dogs are not qualified to represent us, because they are not of our species. It is an insult to say that a person is a dog. Second, dogs are not able to represent us, because they have neither human consciousness nor a discerning ability to represent man. Are we qualified to represent God? Yes, we are qualified because we are like God. We were created in His image. No other organism or animal can represent God, because they were not created in God's image. Neither can any organism represent man, because they do not have the human life.

MAN BEING CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

We should never regard human beings as just another animal. The animal life is the animal life; it is not the human life. The Bible says that in the universe there is God's life, human life, animal life, and plant life. Although many animals are beautiful, they cannot be compared to man. The record concerning God's creation is less than two chapters in Genesis. Creation may appear to be very simple; however, the mystery in it is difficult to clearly explain. No matter how many discoveries there are in science, they cannot explain the record in Genesis. There is no other record in the world that tells us that man was created by God and created in God's image. Only the Bible says this. Not only does the Bible say that man was created by God; it also says that man was created in God's image. In other words, God created us with Himself as the mold, the pattern. We were created to be the same as God (1:26).

GOD DESIRING TO WORK HIMSELF INTO MAN

The record in Genesis 1 concerning creation is very simple. On the first day God spoke a simple sentence: "Let there be light; and there was light" (v. 3). On the second day God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters" (v. 6). Thus, air was

created. On the third day God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear...And God said, Let the earth sprout grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit...and it was so” (vv. 9, 11). Thus, the plant life was generated. On the fourth day God created the heavenly bodies to rule over the day and the night (vv. 14-18). On the fifth day God created the creatures in the waters and the birds to fly above the earth (vv. 20-21). On the sixth day God created the animals on the earth (vv. 24-25). After all these things were created, God created man. However, the record concerning God’s creation of man is not as simple as that of His creation of other living things or the heavenly bodies. God did not create man by simply speaking. Before God created man, there was a council. “God said, Let Us make man in Our image” (v. 26). God used the pronouns *Us* and *Our* in reference to Himself.

We should consider God’s reference to Himself as “Us” and “Our” before He created man. We probably understand that God is triune. Even though we know the doctrine of the trinity, no one can clearly explain what it means for God to be three yet one. Genesis 1:26 says, “God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” In this verse *Us* refers to God, who is three yet one. He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” By considering these two verses together, we see that God said “Us” and “Our” when He created man because it involved His economy and arrangement. The mystery of the three-yet-one God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is not a doctrine; it is for Him to work Himself into us.

When God created man, He referred to Himself as “Us” and “Our” because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit were involved. The Father as the Creator and Inaugurator of all things is God being invisible, the Son is God being manifested, and the Spirit is God indwelling us. The Father is the source, the Son is the expression, and the Spirit is God entering into us. Hence, the Father planned, the Son accomplished what the Father planned, and the Spirit enters into us to apply to us all that the Father planned and the Son accomplished. Hence, after the Lord Jesus came into the world, He died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead to become the Spirit. After His resurrection, the Lord charged His disciples to go and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the Father, the Son, and the Spirit so that His believers

may be completely one with the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

MAN BEING CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF THE LORD JESUS

In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." However, 1 Timothy 1:17 says that God is invisible. Since God is invisible, how could He have an image? Is this contradictory? Speaking of the Son, Colossians 1:15 says, "Who is the image of the invisible God." God is invisible, but the Son of His love is the image of the invisible God. God cannot be seen, but one day Jesus Christ, who was the image of God, came. Hence, when God said, "Let Us make man in Our image," that image referred to the Lord Jesus. God created man in the image of the Lord Jesus. We all were created in the image of the Lord Jesus.

Let us consider a suit as an example. My suit has two sleeves; hence, we can be sure that it was made according to my two arms. If another person were to wear this suit, it would not fit him, because it was not sewn according to his measurements. However, the suit fits me because it was sewn according to my measurements. If the suit is left in the closet, it will not have any meaning. If the suit had feelings, it would feel empty and bored. When I wear the suit, it has meaning; it fulfills its purpose.

NEEDING TO RECEIVE THE LORD JESUS AS LIFE

We were created in the image of the Lord Jesus. This means we were created in a way that matches Him so that He can enter into us. This is the meaning of the universe. The meaning of the universe is for God to be expressed. Wherever God is expressed, the universe has meaning. God gains His expression in a subjective way, not in an objective way. Since God desires to enter into man and be expressed through man, God created man in His image. This is very special. Every light bulb emits light for the sole purpose of expressing electricity. However, if electricity is not transmitted into the light bulb, the light bulb loses its meaning of existence. The meaning of our human life is for God to enter into us and be expressed through us. The meaning of the universe is for a group of people to receive God into them to be their content. Hence, to be saved means to be rescued by God out of a human life that is void of meaning into a life that is full of meaning. Now that we are

saved, we have the meaning of our human life. Our life is meaningful because the Lord Jesus is in us.

We should not think that man needs salvation merely because he is sinful. Even if man did not have sin, he would still need to believe in the Lord Jesus. Man needs to believe in Jesus not mainly because he has sins but because without Him man has no meaning in life. This is just like a suit that needs to be worn in order to be meaningful. Man needs to believe in Jesus not merely because man is sinful. Even if man were not sinful, he would still need Jesus, because man was created in God's image to express God, and thus, he needs to receive God. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, but they did not receive God's life into them. Even if they had not sinned, they still needed to receive the life of God.

This also applies to us. It is not until we believe in the Lord Jesus and He comes into us that our human life becomes meaningful. The Bible uses the expression *believe into* (John 1:12; 3:16), meaning that we believe into the Lord Jesus. When we believe into the Lord Jesus, we also receive Him into us. Thus, we not only have His image but also His life. Not only so, He operates within us to transform and renew us so that we are conformed to the image of the Son of God. We all are in this process of conformation. The Lord Jesus in us is the meaning of our human life.

In my youth I heard educated and learned men say that they do not need Jesus. They said that only sinners, the poor and pitiful people, need Jesus, but people who are highly educated and have a high social status do not need Jesus. They said this because they did not know what it means to believe in Jesus. From now on we need to preach a high gospel. Everyone needs this gospel. We must go and tell people that they were created in God's image in order to express God. Man was created in the image of the Lord Jesus. Man is an empty vessel and needs to receive the Lord Jesus into him to be his content. Only then can man find real meaning and satisfaction in his human life in this universe.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE BEING THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

The meaning of human life is the meaning of the universe. Although there are other planets in our solar system besides the earth, no human beings or organisms have been found on other planets. Scientists are still looking for life on other planets. According to the Bible, the place where God put life is earth. The earth is the center of God's attention because man, who was created by God, is on the earth. Hence, the center, the focus, of the universe is man. If there were no human beings on earth, the earth would have absolutely no meaning. The lions and the tigers are powerful, but they are unable to accomplish anything meaningful. Everything that is meaningful on the earth is accomplished by man. Man is the meaning of the universe. The meaning of human life is the meaning of the universe. On a smaller scale let us use Taiwan as an example. Taiwan would have no meaning if no one were living on it. Taipei would have no meaning if no one were living in Taipei. A school would have no meaning if there were no students in it, and of course, a family would have no meaning if there was not even one person in the family.

THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE— GOD ENTERING INTO MAN TO BE EXPRESSED THROUGH MAN

The meaning of the universe is the meaning of human life. The meaning of the universe is centered on man. This means that if human life is void of meaning, the universe is also void of meaning. For this reason we must know the meaning of human life, which is God entering into man so that He may be expressed through man. The meaning of human life is for man to express God and to represent God. If we do not express or represent God, our human life is void of meaning.

Some young people feel that as long as they study, their future is secure. However, what will they do after they finish their studies? Some young people may say that they will make money. Money is not a good thing; it is an evil thing. The young people need to consider what they will do with the money

they make. Will they spend it on eating, drinking, and being merry, as the rich man did in Luke 12:19? If this is their intention, they are studying in order to become slaves to eating, drinking, and being merry. They are getting a college education in order to make money so that they can eat, drink, and be merry. This means that they will become slaves to eating, drinking, and being merry.

The Higher the Education, the Stronger the Sense of Emptiness

Within every person there is a sense of vanity and emptiness. While they are in school, they feel empty, and when they begin working, they still feel empty. I believe that every young person has had this feeling. When you were in elementary school, you studied diligently, and your parents supported you. You might have felt that entering junior high school was an achievement. Then you continued to study in order to enter high school. When you were in high school, you probably began to feel a sense of vanity. You continued to study diligently in order to finish high school and enter a university. When you entered the university, the sense of vanity within you might have deepened. Before entering the university, you thought that passing the entrance examination was something wonderful; hence, you worked hard. After you achieved this goal, you felt only vanity. From this time onward, young people experience the vanity of human life again and again. After graduating, some young people continue with graduate school and earn a master's degree or even become a doctor of philosophy. I have met many people with a Ph.D. who told me that their degree gave them a sense of vanity, of emptiness. If they did not have their degree, they would not feel as empty. When they obtained their degree, their sense of emptiness increased. The more education a person receives, the emptier he feels. Eventually, when he graduates from the university and begins to work, the sense of emptiness within him becomes stronger.

Marriage and Careers Being Unable to Satisfy Man

Some young people look forward to getting married. They think that once they are married, they will be satisfied. They do not know that every married person says that marriage is vanity of vanities. Many people wonder why they are married. What can they do when they are married? They can do nothing

but taste emptiness. It is the same with those who are successful in their careers and become wealthy. The higher their position, the emptier they feel, and the more money they make, the emptier they feel.

Christ Entering into Man to Make Human Life Meaningful

Education, marriage, and careers cannot satisfy man because the meaning of human life cannot be found in these things. The meaning of human life is Christ entering into man. When Christ enters into you, your human life will have meaning. Not only so, the universe will have meaning. If there were no saved person in Taiwan, even if there were millions of people on the island, the island would have no meaning. If no one in the city of Taipei were a Christian, the city of Taipei would have no meaning. However, praise the Lord that there are Christians in Taiwan and in the city of Taipei. As Christians, we are the meaning of human life in Taipei and in Taiwan.

SINGING JOYFULLY BECAUSE WE HAVE THE LORD

Have you ever seen pedestrians whose faces were shining and who were joyfully singing? What kind of people do you see walking on the streets? Some of the pedestrians I have seen were sorrowful, some were heavy-burdened, and some were toiling and laboring. I have not seen any who were so overcome with joy that they were singing. (Of course, we should not consider those who are drunk or who suffer from mental illness.) If there are any joyful pedestrians, they surely must be Christians. The saints who meet regularly in Taipei are joyful because they have the Lord in them, and they sing spontaneously wherever they are. This changes the atmosphere of the city. If the brothers and sisters would sing hymns on the streets, at bus stops, in buses, and even in restaurants, their singing would cause a very definite change in the atmosphere in the city of Taipei.

This should be our living. Not only so, all the saints in the church in Taipei should go out and sing on the streets every two weeks or once a month. The gospel marches should continue, but our appearance should change. The gospel vests need to be changed. They need to have a new look. On Saturday

or on the Lord's Day the saints can go out in teams and sing on the streets. This will bring meaning to the city of Taipei.

CHRISTIANS BEING THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

We must realize that the meaning of the universe is the same as the meaning of human life. If the earth were not in the universe, the universe would be empty. If there were no human beings on the earth, the earth would be empty, and if there were no Christians, human life would be a complete tragedy.

If there were no Christians in your family, it would be a tragedy. What was the situation before Jesus came to your family? How we thank the Lord that our families have Jesus. Not only are our parents saved, but we also are saved. This has brought meaning into our families.

Many of us come from families that used to worship idols. Have you ever seen a family that worships idols being happy after their worship? I have seen many families that worship idols, but I have never seen them in a joyful mood. Some families even have a designated room with a little shrine where they go to burn incense. However, even after burning incense, they are not joyful. They are not singing. It is hard to sing when one is filled with death. Idols represent demons, and demons belong to Satan, who is the source of death. Hence, the worship of idols annuls the meaning of their human life.

The Chinese refer to those who regularly burn incense and worship idols as "kind men and faithful women." When you enter a Buddhist temple, you do not feel as warm as you do when you are in the meeting hall. This is an indication that the meaning of human life is Christ, and Christ is the meaning of human life. Wherever Christ is, human life has meaning. Wherever there is no Christ, human life has no meaning. A family that does not have Christ is in misery and darkness. A society that does not have Christ is in darkness, and a country that does not have Christ is pitiful.

We are certain that Taiwan is peaceful and has a prosperous situation because the local churches are here. This is the reason that Taiwan is blessed. This is not a small thing. Man is the meaning of the earth. The meaning of

being a human is being a Christian, and the meaning of being a Christian is Christ. Christ is the meaning of our human life.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BEING THE CENTER AND THE MEANING OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

Revelation says that when the new heaven and the new earth appear, the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven (21:1-2). Do not think that the New Jerusalem is a physical city. Revelation uses signs to speak of spiritual things because spiritual things are mysterious. This can be compared to the fact that we cannot take a photograph or draw a picture of electricity, because electricity is mysterious and invisible. The New Jerusalem will be in the new heaven and the new earth, but the New Jerusalem is not a physical city. Revelation uses the sign of a city to describe a spiritual situation. The center and the meaning of the new heaven and the new earth are the New Jerusalem.

THE CHURCH BEING A FORETASTE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

The New Jerusalem is the aggregate of all those who have received the Lord throughout the generations. In other words, we are the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the center and the meaning of the new heaven and the new earth in the new universe. Although the New Jerusalem is not yet here today, we have a foretaste of the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:5). The church today is the New Jerusalem. The church is a foretaste of the New Jerusalem. The brothers and sisters in Kaohsiung are the expression of the New Jerusalem in Kaohsiung, and the brothers and sisters in Tainan are the expression of the New Jerusalem in Tainan. When we comprehend this point, we will declare, “Hallelujah! We are the New Jerusalem.”

BEING FILLED WITH CHRIST IN ORDER TO BE THE MEANING OF OUR COMMUNITIES

As Christians, we should be joyful and sing even when we are walking. Some saints may say that this is too much, but it is not too much. In every community there is a need for a group of Christians to be filled with the Lord and to sing about the Lord. If we do not sing, we are not proper Christians. As

Christians, we are the meaning of our family, our society, and our country. If I am not a Christian, my family is miserable. Without the church and the believers, our society is dark. Without Christ and the church, our country is pitiful.

We thank the Lord that in human society there are Christians and the church. However, we must ask whether we are proper Christians. If we are not proper Christians and if the church is not proper, our society will not have meaning. May the Lord have mercy on us.

In the church we need to be filled with Christ to the extent that we are beside ourselves. Otherwise, we will not be today's New Jerusalem. We should never have a "Sunday service" or even sing hymns as if we are in a "Sunday service." We should be full of inspiration when we sing hymns, and we should be joyful when we sing. Those who attend "Sunday services" are influenced by Christianity. The early Christians were not like this. They were joyful people (Acts 2:46).

THE TESTIMONY IN SAN FRANCISCO

The brothers and sisters in San Francisco, especially the young saints, are like the early Christians; they have a special flavor. They wear gospel vests not only during a gospel march but also every day. The students in college and high school are not restricted in what they wear. Hence, the young saints wear their gospel vests even in their classrooms. During lunchtime, the saints form a line and enter the cafeteria singing. When all the other students are focused on them, they declare, "Jesus is Lord!" Then they speak to the students concerning the Lord Jesus as the real food. In this way they preach the gospel and also eat lunch. This is a group of people who are the meaning of human life. Without them, their school has no meaning and neither do the classrooms and the cafeteria.

Not only do the young saints have a special flavor but also the working saints have a special flavor. The working saints are not as free as the students, because they are under the restriction of their companies. However, they wear gospel vests on their way to work, but at the door of their respective companies they take off the vests before entering their offices. As soon as they go outside for lunch, they put on the gospel vests. The saints wear gospel vests when they go to a restaurant also. Sometimes the restaurants do not welcome

them, but some people were saved in this way. The saints are the meaning of those restaurants. There is the need for some Christians to declare "Jesus is Lord!" in the restaurants.

BEING BESIDE OURSELVES FOR THE GOSPEL

Preaching the Gospel to Our Family

Suppose a young brother is saved, but his parents are still not saved. The old religious way is to tell him to pray for his parents' salvation and believe in the Lord's promise in Acts 16:31. This brother would then pray to the Lord with tears, asking the Lord to have mercy on his family. Sometimes the Lord listens to this kind of prayer. However, there is a better way. The brother may know which evening his parents are at home, and he can ask some young brothers to visit him that night. These young brothers can sing a song to his parents and give a testimony. In this way his parents will be saved, and he will no longer need to cry before the Lord. The Lord does not want us to cry. On the contrary, He wants us to sing triumphant songs, declaring that Jesus is Victor, that all things in heaven and on earth belong to Jesus, and that every country belongs to Him. Not only so, our family and our parents belong to Jesus.

We need to change the way that we preach the gospel. Even the sisters can preach the gospel in this way. A sister can invite other young sisters to her home to testify to her parents. We need the Lord to strengthen us. We are not acting or performing. We are beside ourselves for Jesus.

Paul Being beside Himself in Preaching the Gospel

During May and June of 1935 I returned to Chefoo, and that summer Brother Watchman Nee stayed in my home. During that time we held a week-long conference in Chefoo. One day Brother Nee released a message from 2 Corinthians 5:13: "Whether we were beside ourselves, it was to God." To be beside oneself means to be seemingly foolish. He also used Acts 26 where, after Paul defended himself before King Agrippa, Festus the governor said to him, "You are insane, Paul. Much learning is driving you insane" (v. 24). Paul said that it was not much learning but that it was God in him who emboldened him to speak freely so that he was beside himself. For this reason

Brother Nee said, “Brothers and sisters, I want to tell you that if your believing in Jesus is not to the extent of being foolish, your believing is still not up to the standard.”

Believing in the Lord to Be beside Ourselves

This message touched me, so when I went home, I knelt down and asked the Lord to forgive me because for ten years, from 1925 to 1935, I had believed in Him but not to the extent of being beside myself. Later I learned that if we are up to the standard, we will always be beside ourselves. We are “fools” for Jesus. Once we are beside ourselves, we will also be foolish.

We must believe to the extent that we become foolish. When we get on a bus, we should testify to people. Some will regard us as fools, but we must remember that Christ is the meaning of our human life and that we are the meaning of society. Without human beings, the universe has no meaning; without Christians, our communities have no meaning; and without Christ, Christians have no meaning. Hence, Christ is the meaning of the universe. The meaning of the universe lies in those Christians who have Christ operating in them.

BEING FILLED WITH CHRIST

Christ Being Revealed in Us

In Galatians 1:15-16 Paul said, “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me.” Prior to his salvation Paul was zealous for religion, but he did not have Christ in him. Then one day he met God on the way to Damascus, and Christ came into him. Hence, in Galatians he testified that it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. We have Christ in us; therefore, we should rejoice and leap for joy. However, we should not merely have Christ within us but also let Christ fill us inwardly. Once we are filled with Christ, we will be beside ourselves whenever we speak of Him.

Christ Living in Us and Being Formed in Us

After Christ was revealed in him, Paul did not want to live himself. 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.” Paul did not want to sin, but neither did he want the world, position, or money. He did not want religion or even his self,

because he was crucified with Christ, and it was no longer he who lived, but it was Christ who lived in him. Paul seemed to be saying, "Christ is not only my life; He is also my person. I am crucified and buried, and now it is He who lives in me." In 4:19 Paul said that he travailed again in birth for the Galatians until Christ would be formed in them. In other words, Christ should not only be revealed in us but also be formed in us.

Walking according to the Spirit

How can Christ enter into us and be formed in us? In Galatians 5 Paul stresses the Holy Spirit. We may say that Paul turns to the Spirit. Verse 16 says, "Walk by the Spirit." Then verse 25 says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." In these verses *the Spirit* refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in chapter 5 is Christ in the previous chapters. First Corinthians 15:45 says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the last Adam. He died and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit. Hence, in 2 Corinthians 3:17 Paul says, "The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

Do you have freedom? The way we conduct ourselves says that we still do not have freedom. We still feel shy and self-conscious when we sing hymns in public. We are not thick-skinned and bold; instead, we are still afraid of many things. This shows that we are not free. We need to be freed. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Those who are truly free should be able to declare anywhere that Jesus is Lord. According to 2 Corinthians 3:18, when we are truly free, our face will be unveiled toward the Lord. An unveiled face means a face without any veils. Once our face is unveiled toward the Lord, we will behold His glory. As we behold His glory, we will also reflect His glory. Such beholding and reflecting will transform us into His image. If we are willing to let go of our face, be emboldened, and declare that Jesus is Lord, we will no longer have a long face. Not only so, our face will also be shining. We will be transformed into the image of the Lord from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Being Conformed to the Image of God's Son

When we are being transformed, the words in Genesis 1:26 and Romans 8:29 will be fulfilled. Genesis 1:26 says, "Let Us make man in Our image." Romans 8:29 says, "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be

conformed to the image of His Son." As long as we behold the Lord with an unveiled face, we will be transformed into His image. Christ is the Spirit. As we fellowship with Him and behold Him, we will be transformed into His image. We also will live out the meaning of human life in a real way and become the meaning of our society. In this way our society will be blessed by the Lord.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE NEED TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

We have seen that the Lord is our meaning and that we are the meaning of the universe. Without us, the universe has no purpose. Without Christ, we also have no purpose. Christ is our meaning, and we, as Christians, are the meaning of the universe. In addition to these points, we have also seen that the Lord Jesus now is the Spirit. He was incarnated to be the last Adam, and He died and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:17 says, "The Lord is the Spirit." The One who is in us is the Spirit. For this reason, our primary concern is for us to be filled with the Spirit.

Concerning being filled with the Holy Spirit, we do not need too much doctrine. We are the Lord's expression and representatives. The Lord Jesus is the Spirit within us. Hence, in order to express and represent Him, we must be filled with Him. If we are not filled with the Spirit, we cannot properly express the Lord, nor can we properly represent Him. Without being filled with the Spirit, the Lord will not be the meaning of our human life in reality.

THOROUGHLY CONSECRATING OURSELVES TO THE LORD

In order to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we first must turn to the Lord so that our face is toward Him. If we are not facing Him, He will not be able to fill us. If the opening of a vessel is turned down instead of up, it can never be filled. In order for the vessel to be filled, the vessel must be turned so that the opening is facing up. We are the Lord's vessels, but are we facing the Lord? Although He is in us and desires even more to fill us, we need to be facing Him. In order to face Him, we must consecrate ourselves to Him.

We should all go to the Lord and take a specific step of consecration. We need to have a transaction with the Lord, consecrating ourselves to Him. It does not matter whether we have previously consecrated ourselves. Even if we have consecrated before, we still need to go to the Lord today and again thoroughly give ourselves to Him. The more times that we give ourselves to

Him the better, and the more thoroughly the better. We have said that we should be beside ourselves to the Lord, but it is not enough to be merely beside ourselves. If there is no consecration, our actions will only be outward, making us the same as those who act in a drama, who are merely pretending. Pretending is to act in a drama. However, when Paul was beside himself, it was not a performance. Paul's being beside himself was genuine; it came from within. What he was within was expressed outwardly.

The saints have been very responsive to the messages that have been spoken. They are calling on the Lord, singing, and even playing drums. On the one hand, this makes me joyful, but on the other hand, I am concerned. I do not know whether the saints are acting or are genuinely beside themselves, whether they are performing or are genuinely crazy. To be genuinely beside ourselves is to be filled with the Spirit. We are beside ourselves because we are filled with the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost all the disciples seemed to be filled with new wine (Acts 2:13). We can say that they were "drunk," filled with the Spirit, to the point of being crazy (Eph. 5:18). Are we as "drunk" as they were? I am afraid that not many of us are "drunk" in this way. It is possible that some of us have not yet touched the Lord as the new wine (Matt. 9:17). We need to be filled inwardly with the Lord so that we are truly beside ourselves. This means that we must go to the Lord and have a thorough consecration.

Consecration is a serious matter. We must go to the Lord and pray to Him. We have seen that the Lord is the meaning of our human life, and the meaning of our human life is also the meaning of the universe. If there were no Christians in the universe, the universe would have no meaning. If a country has no Christians, it has no meaning. If a social group has no Christians, it is a pitiful group. If no one in a family is a Christian, the family is dark and miserable. We are the meaning of the universe, as well as the meaning of society.

However, we cannot work this out by ourselves. It is the Lord who works this out in us. We have meaning in our human life and are the meaning of the universe, the meaning of society, and the meaning of our country because the Lord Jesus is in us. Hence, we must say, "Lord, I praise You. You have opened my eyes to see that You are the meaning of my existence and that I am the meaning of the universe. Lord, I need to be filled with You inwardly. I give myself, my life, my future, what I am, what I can do, and what I have to You. I

do not want to do anything for You. I want to be an empty vessel fully filled and occupied by You." We need to make this kind of consecration.

We are not asking the saints to give themselves to go and preach the gospel in remote regions. In Christianity believers consecrate themselves to preach the gospel in remote regions. We are not promoting this. Rather, we desire to give ourselves completely to the Lord in order to be His vessels. Whether or not we will go to the mountains or overseas for the gospel is an entirely different matter. We are not speaking about the people in remote regions. We should first take care of whether we are filled with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is in us, waiting to gain ground in us so that He may fill our whole being. Have we given Him the ground? Perhaps we have not given Him any ground, or we have not given Him enough ground. We have received the Lord, but we have not allowed Him to occupy us completely.

When we truly see the meaning of human life, we will go to the Lord in consecration, placing ourselves completely in His hand. We should not be doctrinal with the Lord, telling Him to place us on the altar. We should be simple and tell Him that we want to give ourselves to Him. We were created in His image, and we are His vessels. He is already in us. Now He is waiting for us to give ourselves completely to Him. We must take care of this matter with the Lord, saying, "Lord, I give myself completely to You. My life, my future, what I am, and what I can do are altogether Yours. Lord, fill me with Yourself!"

CONFESSING OUR SINS ONE BY ONE ACCORDING TO THE LORD'S LEADING

When we consecrate ourselves in this way, we are open to the Lord and our whole being is turned to Him. Then the true and living Lord will immediately begin a sweeping and emptying work in us. We do not know the situation of our inner being. Most young people are filled with many things. We should ask ourselves whether we are clean and whether we are empty. On one hand, we are empty without the Lord. On the other hand, we are not empty, but rather we are full of all kinds of things other than the Lord. However, when we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, He will begin to touch us within. He will check with us concerning the things that fill us, item by item. Whatever the Lord touches, we should confess and deal with.

We first consecrate ourselves to the Lord. Then we deal with our sins according to the Lord's leading. When we enter into the Lord's presence and consecrate ourselves to Him, He will do a cleansing work within us to deal with the filthy things that occupy us, such as jealousy or despising others. Even while we are wearing gospel vests, we may be jealous of others or may despise others. These things are sins.

Some of our sins are more serious than others. We may have problems with our parents. The Lord knows our inward situation much better than we do. However, when we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, He will operate in us, touching our sins and causing us to be conscious of them. Whenever we have a feeling concerning a sin, the Lord is touching us. The Lord is the living Spirit. When we consecrate ourselves to Him, He will touch our sins. When He touches our sins, we should not hide, for it is only then that we realize the value of His blood. As the Lord touches us, we will feel condemned within, and our conscience will not be at peace. Immediately, we should hide under His blood and ask Him to cleanse us with His precious blood. When we confess one sin, we will become conscious of another sin. Then we should ask the Lord to forgive this sin and cleanse us from it. Then we will become conscious of a third sin. We should follow this inner sense to confess and deal with our sins one by one, applying the cleansing of the Lord's precious blood to each sin. In order to be beside ourselves, we must have a thorough dealing of our sins.

BEING EMPTIED AND ALLOWING THE LORD TO OCCUPY US

After we confess our sins, the Lord will empty us. A cup that is full of water cannot contain anything else. In order for the cup to contain juice, the water must be poured out. After we deal with our sins, the Lord will show us that He does not occupy much space within us. Hence, we will need to consecrate ourselves again. This is a continual consecration. Whatever the Lord touches, we should give to Him.

Sometimes we are emptied, but we are still not willing to give Him the ground. This is not doctrine. As we give ourselves to the Lord and fellowship with Him, He will demand more ground within us, and He will occupy us more. He desires to occupy our mind, emotion, and will. We cannot be our

own lord. He wants to be the Lord and to occupy every part of our being. If we are willing to consecrate ourselves to the Lord, we will have such experiences.

HAVING PERSONAL TRANSACTIONS WITH THE LORD

In order to consecrate ourselves to the Lord, confess our sins, be emptied, and let the Lord occupy us, we must have transactions with Him. It is good for us to pray together in groups, but sometimes it is necessary for us to go to the Lord individually. Consecration is an individual matter; others cannot consecrate for us. We must go to the Lord ourselves. We must personally take care of consecrating ourselves to the Lord, receiving His shining and dealing, and letting Him occupy our being.

There are advantages to praying or pray-reading with others, and there is some enjoyment. However, in order to consecrate ourselves to the Lord for Him to gain us, we must have personal transactions with the Lord and hand ourselves over to Him. Some may have done this before, but they must do it again. It does not matter how many times we have consecrated ourselves in the past, we need to do it again. In order to be filled with the Lord, who today is the Spirit, we must consecrate ourselves again to Him. This is a very crucial matter. We must consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

BELIEVING THAT WE ARE FILLED

After we consecrate ourselves to the Lord and He touches our sins, we should confess our sins and ask Him to cleanse us with His blood. We should follow His leading to be emptied of improper things so that He can gain ground in us. Then we should believe that the Lord will fill us and not rely on our feelings, expecting something to be poured on us. If we depend on our feelings, we can be deceived by the Lord's enemy. After we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, confess our sins, are emptied, and give the Lord the ground in us, we should not wait to be filled. Thinking that we need to wait is a mistake. We must walk by faith. Since we have consecrated ourselves to the Lord, confessed our sins, and let the Lord gain ground in us, the Lord will fill us. We should just thank and praise Him. We should believe that we are filled and not depend on our feelings.

SPEAKING, SINGING, AND PRAISING

WITH ALL THE SAINTS

If we believe, we will be filled with joy and rejoice such that we can gather with other saints and praise the Lord. To consecrate ourselves to the Lord is to have many transactions with Him. The issue of these transactions is that we can praise Him together with the saints. Ephesians 5:18 speaks of being "filled in spirit," and verse 19 says, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord." In verse 19 there are not only psalms and hymns but also spiritual songs, and there is not only speaking but also singing. Speaking is mentioned before singing. Speaking stresses mutuality, whereas singing is toward God and for God. The more we speak and sing, the more we are filled with the Lord. Moreover, singing is to drink of the Spirit, that is, to drink of the Lord (1 Cor. 12:13). We have been baptized into one Spirit, and now we have been given to drink of Him. To drink of Him is to be filled with Him. We drink Him by consecrating ourselves, confessing our sins, being emptied, allowing Him to gain ground in us, believing that He has filled us, and praising Him. The more we praise, the more we are filled. At this time we will be beside ourselves in a genuine way.

THOROUGHLY TAKING CARE OF CONSECRATION

The way for us to be beside ourselves begins with consecration. We should go before the Lord personally and take care of our consecration. We should each go to the Lord and consecrate ourselves thoroughly. We should deal with our sins. We should yield to the Lord. We may be able to deceive others, but we can never deceive the Lord. It is only after we have thoroughly consecrated ourselves that we can be genuinely beside ourselves. Otherwise, our actions will be a mere performance. We must spend the time to thoroughly consecrate ourselves to the Lord. We must give ourselves to the Lord.

This is not a matter of being stirred up. If we truly desire to enjoy the Lord as the meaning of our human life, we must take care of our consecration. We cannot avoid consecration. We should never be in a hurry before the Lord and say, "Lord, I give myself to You. Hallelujah! Amen." We need to spend at least half an hour with Him and thoroughly take care of our consecration, letting Him shine in us, operate in us, and search us. As He touches different items, we should deal with them and give them to Him, allowing Him to occupy us inch by inch. Eventually, we will be unloaded of our burdens, and

spontaneously we will say, “Hallelujah! The Lord has gained ground in me. There is no hindrance in me toward the Lord. There is no longer the hindrance of sins or of other things. The Lord has the ground in me.” At this time it will be easy for us to believe that the Lord is filling us, and we will praise Him. Our singing will be different because we will have a craziness that is the issue of our consecration.

We should all have such transactions with the Lord. Our consecration is the beginning of our being searched by the Lord. May all the saints not wait but take care of this critical experience in our spiritual life.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PROPER CONSECRATION

CONSECRATION BEING TO GIVE OURSELVES AS VESSELS TO THE LORD

In this chapter we will fellowship concerning consecration. Every one of us should have a genuine consecration; we should spend time to earnestly pray and offer ourselves to the Lord. What is a proper consecration? A person may say that since he has consecrated himself to the Lord, he no longer wants certain things. This is not the kind of consecration that we are speaking of, because not wanting certain things may just be something according to a person's desire. He may say that he no longer wants to study, but the Lord may say, "I want you to continue to study." Consecration is not a simple matter. Sometimes our consecration is not thorough, because we still want to have the final say in everything. Formerly, studying was our decision, and now giving up our studies is still our decision. Formerly, obtaining a bachelor's degree was our decision, and now giving up a bachelor's degree is still our decision. Even our desire to gain the Lord is our decision. This is not a proper consecration.

Consecration means that we offer ourselves as vessels to the Lord to let Him fill us, occupy us, and be expressed through us. As a result, we are not the ones making decisions. If the Lord says that our attitude to our parents is not good, we should respond by asking Him to forgive us and cleanse us with His blood. The Lord may say that we offended a younger brother, and we should respond by asking Him to forgive us for offending this brother. This is the result of genuine consecration. Hence, it is not that we decide whether or not to study. Rather, we ask the Lord whether or not He wants to study. If the Lord does not want to study, we do not study further. If the Lord wants to study, we should study. Consecration does not mean that we should give up studying and eating, leave the world, and retreat to the mountains. That is a religious concept of consecration. Even consecrating to be an evangelist is according to a religious concept of consecration. It is not the result of touching and gaining the Lord in a genuine way.

When we touch and gain the Lord, we realize that we are vessels created by the Lord, and we are willing to give ourselves to Him and receive Him as our Lord. We let Him speak and do everything. As a result, we do what He wants us to do. If the Lord says that we should get rid of something, we get rid of it, and if the Lord says that we should keep something, we keep it. Whatever the Lord does not want, we should not want, and whatever the Lord desires, we also should desire. This is consecration. When the young people give testimonies concerning their consecration, there is often a religious flavor. They say that they want to do this or that for the Lord. Actually, the Lord does not want you to do anything for Him. He only wants you to be an empty vessel. Never think that the Lord does not want you to get a degree. The Lord may want you to get a Ph.D. We do not have a proper understanding of consecration, because we are influenced by tradition. Even when we tell the Lord that we will do whatever He wants, there is still a religious flavor. The Lord does not want us to do anything. He wants to be our person. It is not a matter of what the Lord wants us to do; rather, it is a matter of our following the Lord.

CONSECRATION BEING TO LET THE LORD BE OUR PERSON

The Bible says that we are a vessel (Rom. 9:20-21, 23) and that we have a treasure in our earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7). An earthen vessel is meaningless without a treasure. We are merely vessels in need of content. A car without a driver as its content is meaningless. Just as a car is a vessel in need of a person who can drive, we are vessels in need of Christ as our person.

We are often influenced by natural concepts, religious thoughts, Christian tradition, and even our history in the recovery. These four layers are like a pair of tinted glasses that hinder us from seeing things clearly. If my glasses are tinted dark brown, everything I see will be dark brown. Similarly, if I have a layer of “dark brown glasses” on my mind, whatever I hear becomes “dark brown.” This is the way that our natural, religious, and traditional concepts influence our understanding of consecration.

To consecrate ourselves to the Lord is to receive the Lord into us to be our person. A car does not have a person; it is just a machine. A car can merely receive commands; it cannot receive me as its person. Likewise, we often consecrate ourselves to the Lord merely to receive His commands but not to

receive Him as our person. Hence, the Lord is still not our person. At the most He is able to give us commands. We go when the Lord tells us to go, or we get a job when He tells us to do so. This is the consecration of a religious person. It is an old consecration.

The Bible shows that this is not the kind of consecration that the Lord wants. The consecration that the Lord desires is for us to give ourselves to Him as vessels and let Him be our person. If there is anything that frustrates Him from being our person, we should say, "Lord, remove the hindrances! Remove whatever occupies me. If there is anything unclean in me, remove it." When we allow the Lord to cleanse and empty us, He will be enlarged in our being. The Lord desires to be our person.

Once the Lord comes in to be our person, we are no longer the person. This means that if the Lord wants to study, we follow Him to study. It is not we who decide; the Lord decides. It is not that I no longer have any opinions but that I am no longer the person who makes the decisions. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." The self, that is, me as the person, is crucified. Hence, I am no longer the person; the Lord is now my person. I am a vessel to let the Lord come in and be my person. When I take the Lord as my person, I make room for Him. I do not want anything to occupy me. I will let the Lord take away anything that is a hindrance to Him so that I can take Him as my person.

After consecrating ourselves, how do we live? Suppose we are about to study, and we say, "Lord, I am about to study. I have consecrated myself to You, so please help me to study." This is a religious prayer. Suppose there is no meeting in the evening, but there is a movie at the theater. Will you pray and ask the Lord Jesus to keep you from going to watch the movie? Such a prayer does not indicate that you are a consecrated person.

REJECTING TRADITIONS AND RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS

Christianity has brought us many traditions. The teachings and practices in Christianity are just traditions. Even the exposition of the Bible is based on traditions. These traditions frustrate believers from understanding God's desire according to the original intention and revelation of the Bible. Most

believers have a preconceived idea concerning the filling of the Holy Spirit. Some think that this involves a miraculous experience or a special physical feeling. Hence, if such things are absent, they question the authenticity of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Others think that the filling of the Holy Spirit involves being filled with power, holiness, and love. These concepts are only half right; they are not absolutely wrong or absolutely right. We must completely give up our previous understanding, comprehension, and impression concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, our understanding will be veiled.

THE LORD'S FILLING REQUIRING OUR COOPERATION

God created us in His own image so that we would be His expression (Gen. 1:26). We are God's vessels to contain Him so that He may be expressed through us (Rom. 9:23). God chose us and predestinated us before the foundation of the world so that we would be conformed to the image of His Son (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:29). At a certain point in time the Lord called us. Then we believed, began to call on His name, and prayed, "Lord, I am a sinner. Thank You for dying for me on the cross. O Lord! I am weak, and I need You to rescue me." Whether we called on Him or prayed, the Lord Jesus entered into us. When the Lord came into us, He filled us in our human spirit.

After being saved, the filling of the Holy Spirit involves the Lord's filling every part of our being. Since we are vessels of God, the Lord desires to fill us completely. On the day that we first called on His name, the day we were saved, His desire was to enter into us in order to fill us completely. However, we were not ready for such a complete filling, because there were many other things that filled us. The Lord Jesus, however, is very accommodating. He will fill whatever space we are willing to give to Him. He will occupy whatever part of our being that we give to Him. If we do not want to open to Him, there is not much that He can do, because He depends on us. His desire is to occupy us, but we are reluctant to cooperate with Him. It therefore takes a long time for Him to fill every part of our being. He desires to enter into us and occupy our whole being; hence, we were created to be His vessels. However, this requires our cooperation. This cooperation is our consecration.

REMOVING THREE LAYERS THAT OCCUPY US

Without our cooperation, the Lord has no way to occupy us, because there are too many things within us. Some of the things within us are filthy, evil, or corrupt thoughts and covetous intentions. We all have such thoughts and intentions; no one is absolutely without them. Some people have more evil thoughts and intentions, and others have less. This is the first category of things that occupy us. The second category of things that occupy us is not evil, but the things in this category usurp us. These things include our future, education, jobs, and relationships with others. Although these things cannot be considered evil, they usurp us and occupy us. We should be occupied by the Lord, but these other things continue to occupy us.

There is a third category of things that occupy us. This category consists of what we are: our person, personality, self, old man, and ego. If we can still say that we want this or do not want that, our consecration is not thorough. We are still filled with the "I"; we are still the person. These three layers usurp us: sinful things, the world, and the self.

Once we believe in the Lord, we are saved, and the Lord enters into us. However, the Lord has not yet filled our inner being because of these three layers of things within us. The first layer consists of sins, the second layer consists of things other than the Lord, and the third layer is the self. In other words, these things fill us up; we are filled with sins, the world, and the self. Consecration is our willingness to give ourselves to the Lord and tell Him that we are willing to cooperate with Him to deal with our sins, to remove the things of the world, and to deal with our self, that is, that we want Him to be our person. This will enable the Lord to fill us.

HAVING DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES AFTER CONSECRATION

The experience of every believer after consecration differs. Some believers experience indescribable joy that causes them to be beside themselves. There is no need for others to encourage them to praise; they spontaneously praise the Lord. Other believers do not sense any change in themselves. The different experiences are not important. What is important is whether or not we are consecrated. As long as we are, this is sufficient. After consecrating themselves to the Lord, some believers immediately experience an outpouring of the Holy Spirit; they are so full of joy that they can dance and praise the Lord with Hallelujahs. However, after a few months they may become cold

and backslidden. Other believers do not have any such experiences after their consecration. But still the divine life begins to grow in a steady way within them.

PURSUING THE NORMAL GROWTH IN LIFE

Growth in life is not coincidental; it requires time. Suppose you plant carnation seeds in your garden. After two weeks the seeds will begin to sprout. If you look at the sprouts every day, you may not notice any growth. It would be unusual for a carnation seed that was planted today to blossom tomorrow. Life grows at a normal pace.

The growth of a child is similar. A child has a small stature when he is six or seven years old. However, after ten years he will grow to be a tall young man. This is not strange or miraculous, because he has been growing every day for ten years. He did not grow taller in one day. May we be willing to be the kind of Christian who grows normally every day according to life instead of growing miraculously overnight into husky men.

In my early years I appreciated it when believers became “crazy” after they consecrated themselves. Later, as I grew in life, I became cautious of such experiences, because they do not last long. They can be likened to going through a thunderstorm every day; they are difficult to endure. We need drizzle, not thunderstorms. Whenever necessary, the Lord will send us a timely “drizzle.” If it drizzles every day, the earth will flourish with green plants. I do not like to see “typhoon” or “thunderstorm” experiences of being revived. Thunderstorms do not last long, and they bring much damage and loss to the church. They are a problem for the elders. I hope that after our consecration, we will not become thunderstorms blowing in our localities. This would cause the churches to suffer a great loss.

I am not saying that we should not be beside ourselves. We would prefer that the saints be beside themselves rather than be dead. However, our being beside ourselves should not be like a thunderstorm. It should be from within. Our activities should be weighty, genuine, and serious; this should be the issue of a spiritual reality. Our experience of the Lord can be likened to the rain. Sometimes His watering us is like showers of rain, like drizzling rain. Our precious experiences of the Lord will not be our experience of Him as thunderstorms but our experience of Him as showers of rain. This means that

even though we may not feel different from day to day, the life within us is growing every day. This is precious.

BEING FILLED WITH THE LORD BY OBEYING HIS SPEAKING

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to let the Lord occupy our whole being. It is also to fully open to the Lord. As a result, we are not the person; He is our person. The Lord is living in us; hence, He can touch something unclean in us. When He does, we should ask for His blood to cleanse us. We should say Amen to whatever He touches, even if it is not unclean. This is the way the Lord fills us. Sometimes, however, we are not obedient, and as a result, we do not experience the Lord's filling. At other times we do not want to hear the Lord's speaking. When He says that something is unclean, we are slow to obey, and we pretend that we have not heard Him.

This can be compared to a child who pretends that he does not hear what his mother is saying, because he does not want to obey her. We may even have a "spiritual" reason for not obeying the Lord. For example, rather than obeying Him to clear up a matter, we tell the Lord that we need to preach the gospel or pray.

When the Lord touches something, we should not question Him. We often question Him when we do not want to cooperate with Him. When He says that something is unclean, it is unclean. Nevertheless, we still ask Him why it is unclean. In reality, our asking is only our purposeful delaying.

The Lord touches what He wants to deal with. When He says that something is unclean and we say Amen, He can deal with the matter and fill us. When we say Amen, the Lord will fill us. Do not be influenced by those who say that speaking in tongues is the way to be filled with the Holy Spirit. A few years ago, a wind of tongue-speaking blew into Taiwan. Campaigns were held all over the island to promote tongue-speaking. The saints who were in those campaigns are not here today.

The saints who were young people twenty years ago have grown up. This is normal. We should have the same attitude toward the church and toward ourselves. We should not expect to be miraculously filled. However, please do not misunderstand me. I am not opposed to being miraculously filled. Some

saints experience being miraculously filled, but this is inferior to the regular and normal filling of life, which is to consecrate ourselves to the Lord and hand ourselves over to Him. After this type of consecration, we will follow the Lord as our person in a normal way. When the Lord says that something is unclean, we will say Amen and ask Him to cleanse us with His blood. When the Lord tells us to get rid of something, we will say Amen. We will say Amen to whatever the Lord says. When we take the step to obey Him, He will take the step to fill us. When we take another step to obey Him, He will take another step to fill us. As often as we take a step to obey Him, He will take a step to fill us. Eventually, we will experience the genuine filling of the Holy Spirit; that is, our inner being will be completely occupied by Him.

Ephesians 3:17 says, "That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith." The words *make His home* indicate that we are a house and that Christ is the Dweller in this house. A house is not a person. The person of a house is its dweller. Ephesians 2:22 says that we are "being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." We are God's house, God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16). If I buy a house and it has its own person, I would not dare move in. However, even though we are God's house, we also have our own person, our old man, who is very strong. This has caused the Lord Jesus much suffering. It is difficult for Him to make His home in us when another person is occupying the house.

A young sister said that she wanted to consecrate herself to live for the Lord and to offer everything for the Lord's recovery and for the ground of the church. This consecration is not wrong, but it still has a slight flavor of religion. To say that we will stand on the ground of the church in order to recover the truth for the Lord is to speak from the self. The Lord does not intend for us to go to remote regions or to live in the mountains; neither does He want us to stand on the ground for Him. He is the only One who can stand firmly on the ground of the church. We may stand on the ground today but not tomorrow. However, He stands on the ground every day. Hence, it is not a matter of whether or not we stand on the ground but of whether we let Him be our person. Once we consecrate ourselves to Him, we should let Him be our person. We should practice letting Him be our person in small things.

There is no need to say that we will do this or that for the Lord. We simply need to consecrate ourselves to Him and let Him be our person. Perhaps we have seen the local church and are ready to die and live for the local church.

However, the Lord would say that we do not have to be so strong and would ask whether He is the person or we are the person. A brother said that he wants neither a Ph.D. nor a bachelor's degree. However, the Lord may say that He wants the degree. Another brother said that he will serve the Lord full time. However, the Lord may say, "I do not want you to serve full time; I want you to be a teacher." What should this brother do? It is not a matter of what we want to do; it is a matter of giving ourselves to the Lord and letting Him be our person. If the Lord says that He wants to take the ground of the church, we should say Amen. If He says that instead of teaching He now wants a brother to serve full time, he should say Amen. The key is to let the Lord be our person. If one day the Lord says that He loves the aborigines in Mount Ah-li and wants to live among them and preach the gospel to them, we should say Amen. This is consecration.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be completely occupied by the Lord. This is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This kind of infilling is lasting and proper, because it is normal. If we have a genuine consecration and are thus filled with the Holy Spirit, the church where we are will be blessed. We will not be a problem in the churches; rather, they will receive the supply of life from us. This is the normal experience of life. By the Lord's mercy, may we have this kind of consecration. We may not be so clear in our consecration, but the Lord will gain us step by step. It is not a matter of what we should or should not do but of what the Lord wants.

Please remember that we are vessels, and we should let the Lord be the person in our vessel. We are the Lord's house, and we should let the Lord, the Dweller of the house, be the person. A dweller should not have to tell his house what he wants to do, because the dweller is the person of the house, and the property rights belong to the dweller. This is a picture of our consecration. The problem is that we are all living; we are our own person. Some of us have consecrated everything to the Lord except our person; hence, we still tell the Lord what we want. Eventually, everything in our experience revolves around the self.

The Lord does not need us to be the lord. He wants us to give up our position as the person. We just need to be a clean house for Him to dwell in as the person. Then there would be no problem and no hindrance when He touches something in us. We would never delay. Rather, we would agree with whatever He touches. We would let Him be our person. In this way He can

gradually fill us. Every day He can fill us until we and the Lord become one. Then we will be conformed to His image: we will express Him and we will represent Him. This is our goal.

CHAPTER SIX

CONSECRATION BEING TO TAKE THE LORD AS OUR PERSON

EXERCISING THE SPIRIT

I would like to touch a few things. First, our spirit needs to be fresh so that we will not be old. When we are in the meetings, we must exercise our spirit and open our being to the Lord. We should not follow any forms. Second, we should not pray-read the Bible in an old way or make it a ritual. We should exercise our spirit so that it will be strong and fresh; otherwise, the spirit of the meeting will sink. In our earlier meetings all the saints were beside themselves. Now, however, none of the saints are beside themselves. We must consider whether their being beside themselves was genuine. If it was genuine but could not stand the test of time, then we need more practice. We should not have the Spirit today and lose Him tomorrow. Hence, we must practice being proper and skillful in the exercise of our spirit.

Some saints are rough in their pray-reading, but the spirit is gentle, not rough. As long as we are rough, we will not be able to follow the spirit. The Bible compares the Holy Spirit to a dove (Matt. 3:16), not to a wild bull. For this reason, it is easier for a gentle person to cooperate with the Spirit. Some of the saints even pray-read 1 Corinthians 6:17 as if they were wild bulls. This proves that they still need more practice. Although our spirit needs to be strong, living, and fresh, it still needs to be fine and gentle. We should not be too quick.

THE PROPER CONCEPT OF CONSECRATION

Many of us have spent sufficient time with the Lord and have thoroughly consecrated ourselves to Him. Perhaps we feel that since the Lord loves us and since He died and lives for us, we also need to love Him and give ourselves to Him for His use. We may be willing to do whatever the Lord wants us to do. We are even willing to make great resolutions in our heart. Perhaps we resolve that one day we will preach the gospel overseas or declare the Lord's love to the aborigines. We may even be resolute and ask the Lord to

cleanse us, fill us, and equip us for His use, even though we are not qualified, useful, or gifted. Nevertheless, this kind of consecration is religious.

Suppose a brother is weak, lazy, impatient, and cannot overcome his temper, and therefore he consecrates himself to the Lord in order to receive grace. He feels that without consecration he has no way to receive grace in order to become a spiritual giant. This is the consecration of a pitiful Christian. This is not a religious consecration; it is a pious consecration. Some Christians are diligent, gentle, pious, patient, and good-tempered from birth; therefore, their family, neighbors, and classmates say that they are perfect. According to our natural, pious thoughts, Christians who are gentle and patient and who never lose their temper do not need to consecrate themselves. Some consecrations are even based on strange concepts, such as being a ball for the Lord to throw wherever He wants.

These examples should help us to understand what is a religious consecration, what is a pious consecration, and what is a consecration that is based on strange concepts. Now we should consider our own consecration. If we ask the Lord to be our person so that we will not lose our temper, then we are still the person; the Lord is not our person. This kind of consecration is a pious consecration. Religion means that a person has something to worship and believe in and that he develops a set of teachings based on his beliefs. This is religion.

CONSECRATION BEING TO TAKE THE LORD AS OUR PERSON

We want neither a religious consecration nor a pious consecration. Our consecration must take Christ as our person. Every consecration should be to take Christ as our person. Consecration is not for us to do something for the Lord but for us to hand ourselves over to the Lord. We give the Lord our bad parts as well as our good parts. This means that we let the Lord be our person, and we acknowledge that we are finished. Furthermore, we no longer ask the Lord to tell us what to do; rather, we let Him do things in us. We should not deal with our temper. In fact, we do not even know how to deal with it. We should let the Lord handle our temper because He is our person. We do not bear that responsibility.

Some saints may be concerned about the uncertainty of their future but say that the Lord, not they, should worry about their future. Such a thought is a religious concept. Concerning our future, we need to be simple. The Lord is among us, He is in us, and He is our person. We simply need to say, "Hallelujah! It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." There is no need to explain further. Any explanation is religion.

The Word says that we are vessels to contain the Lord (Rom. 9:23). We are also His house for Him to dwell in (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:22) and be our person. It is easy for a person to go in and out of a physical house that is lifeless and void of a will and a personality. However, as the Lord's house, we are living creatures with a personality, a will, preferences, and inclinations, all of which are our person. In other words, even though we are the Lord's house, we are persons. Consecration means to let Him dwell in us by taking Him as our person; hence, our original person has to "move out." The Bible says that our old man has been crucified with Christ, dealt with. Now we have a second person, Christ. Even though we are the Lord's dwelling place, we have life, a personality, a will, preferences, and inclinations; hence, we are still our person. Now that we have received the Lord as the person, our former person must "move out."

Giving ourselves to the Lord means that we neither do anything for Him nor ask Him to do anything for us. We give ourselves to Him so that He can live in us, that is, make His home in us, to be our person. Although the old man is buried, in our experience he continually returns. The old man is buried, but we always seem to resurrect him. Even though our old man may be crucified and buried in the morning, he often is resurrected in our experience before noon. The next day we have the same experience: he is dead in the morning but returns in the afternoon. The old person frequently returns to be our person. This is where our problem lies.

BEING DELIVERED FROM A MISTAKEN CONCEPT

By the Lord's mercy we were brought into the light of His Word to see that His salvation is practical, complete, thorough, and simple. The influence of tradition and our Christian background have given us a mistaken concept. Our concept is that we need salvation because we are sinners destined to perish in hell. We say that we need His salvation to be forgiven of our sins, to be delivered from hell, and to be spared from God's judgment. We also say

that we need another life because our life is corrupt and evil. When we believe in the Lord, He gives us another life, His eternal life. Not only does the Lord give eternal life, but He gives His Spirit to live in us as our power, sanctification, and everything. For this reason, we should love Him and give ourselves to Him. All of the above are right. Nevertheless, in our subconsciousness we still have a religious concept that we should do something for the Lord.

May the Lord have mercy on us so that we would be completely freed from tradition and religious concepts. The Lord's wonderful way of salvation is to work Himself into us. We are vessels created by Him. He puts Himself into us not only to be our life but even more to be our person. As soon as we receive Him, He enters into us to be our person and our everything. This means that as soon as we receive the Lord as our person, spontaneously our sins are forgiven; we are delivered from the lake of fire and spared from God's judgment. Furthermore, we have God's life and His Spirit. As long as we receive the Lord as our person, we have everything.

RECEIVING THE HELP

It seems as though the help that we have received in the past was fragmented. For example, we heard a message that focused on the ears, a message that focused on the nose, and a message that focused on the lips. We also heard a message that focused on the two hands. Such messages can give only fragmented help. However, once we receive the complete person, we will have the ears, the nose, the lips, and the hands. As long as we receive the Lord as our person, we have everything.

Even though the messages that we heard in the past seem to have been fragmented, our need today is to receive the Lord as our person. When the Lord comes in to be our person, the old man will have no place, and we will have everything. We should not be influenced by complicated and natural thoughts and concepts; neither should we be influenced by religious traditions. When we receive the Lord Jesus, not only do we receive His whole person, but we also receive Him once for all. Hence, immediately after we receive Him, we can and we should consecrate ourselves to Him. There is no need to wait. However, since many of us did not have a proper consecration when we received the Lord, we need to make up for it today.

We need to have a proper understanding. Christ desires to make His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). He entered into us the day that we were saved, but He still has not made home in us. In the past we did not speak concerning Christ making His home in our heart, because we thought that people would not understand. Now we need to change our concept. Even when we preach the gospel, we must tell others that they are in a pitiful condition because Christ does not dwell in them and has not made His home in them.

We must also change the way that we give messages. We were unable to stir others up, and we also lost our vigor. We should no longer preach such a low gospel. When we preach the gospel, we can say, "Dear friend, you are a vessel created by God for Himself. Although you are lovely, you are empty. I know that you are empty because you do not have the Lord Jesus in you. The Lord Jesus is the real Lord, the real God. He desires to enter into you and dwell in you. You need the Lord Jesus. Please pray with us."

BEING FILLED AND HAVING A THOROUGH CONSECRATION

We must look to the Lord in order to be filled by Him. Then we can go out and preach the gospel. When we are strengthened into the inner man, Christ will make His home in our hearts so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God (vv. 16-19). Then we will be able to tell people that they need Jesus and that the Lord desires not only to be their Savior but also to enter into them and indwell them. It is glorious for people to hear this kind of gospel and be saved. We should also speak concerning consecration. Actually, to preach the gospel is to speak concerning consecration. Every person needs Jesus, and the Lord Jesus wants to dwell in every person. Therefore, they should yield their inner being to the Lord so that He can enter into them and be their person. We must not say that people cannot understand this. If we would only speak in this way, people would understand.

Do not say that consecration does not allow a believer to study abroad but requires him to serve full time, stand on the ground of the church, or preach the gospel. This is our concept. A brother said that consecration helps believers to be spiritual, to overcome, and to be holy. He said that consecration is for us to be spiritual. Such a religious concept is harmful because it implies that they need to consecrate themselves so that they might be spiritual. It is rather simple for the unbelievers, who have never heard the

things in Christianity, to comprehend the gospel and consecration. Hence, we can tell them, “You are empty inside; you need Jesus. He desires to enter into you and dwell in you. Open yourself, hand yourself over to Him, and let Him occupy you.” This is very simple, but this is consecration. Many saints have been saved for a long time but have not had such a proper and thorough consecration.

Ephesians 3:16-19 says, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith,...that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.” When we are strengthened into the inner man, Christ will make His home in our hearts, and we will be filled unto all the fullness of God. Therefore, once Christ makes His home in our hearts, we will be filled. This is the genuine filling of the Holy Spirit. This is not a partial filling. When we let Christ make His home in our hearts, the result is that we will be filled with the Holy Spirit unto all the fullness of God.

Let me add a word of explanation. We must differentiate between *man* and *person*. I am a man, a human being, but within me there is a person. Our inner man refers to our regenerated spirit. The Lord Jesus is in our spirit, our inner man, to be our person. Our inner man is our regenerated spirit, and its person is the Lord Himself. The Lord is the person in our inner man. We need to know the difference between these two phrases: *our regenerated spirit is our inner man* and *the Lord is the person in our inner man.*

May we all consecrate ourselves absolutely to the Lord. I am saying this not only to the young saints. The older saints should also practice this. We need an absolute consecration. By the Lord’s mercy, we need a thorough salvation so that the Lord can enter into us, occupy us completely, and be our person. This is a very simple matter. We need such a genuine consecration. We should pray, “Lord, I will receive Your salvation. This salvation is Yourself. Come into me and be my person.” This is a simple prayer. The Lord is the Spirit, and He is God. When we take Him as our person, He will occupy us and fill us. This is the way to be filled with the Holy Spirit. A genuine and thorough consecration is to receive Christ as our person, letting Him make home in us. As a result, we will be filled with Him unto all the fullness of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON AND STANDING ON THE GROUND OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

CONTINUAL CONSECRATION AND EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON

In the previous chapters we said that consecration is to take Christ as our person. I hope that you will enter into this speaking and treasure this matter. We need to continually experience consecration until it is something ordinary, regular, and normal in our Christian life. When we consecrate ourselves, take Christ as our person, we are practicing Paul's word in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." This kind of consecration is not an occasional experience. We are becoming the Lord's dwelling place by letting Him make His home in our heart and be our person. We will need our whole life and even eternity to fully enter into this experience.

GOD CREATING A CORPORATE MAN

God created man to be His expression. Genesis 1:26-28 shows that God did not create many men; He created only one man—Adam. This is a crucial matter. Verse 26 says, "God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." The Hebrew word translated as "man" in this verse is singular. I would like to ask whether God created only one man. It is not so easy to answer this question, because in verse 26 *man* is singular. Verse 27 says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." The Bible says that God created only one man (2:7), and then God took a rib from this man, Adam, and built a woman (vv. 21-22). After creating man, God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (1:28). Although God created one man, this man was to fill the earth. Hence, verse 26 implies that God created a corporate man.

God does not intend for people to be alone. He intends for people to be in groups. Although the human race is fallen, communities and societies confirm that there is an inclination and a desire in human nature to have a corporate living. Suppose someone offers you ten million U.S. dollars and the most comfortably furnished and decorated house located on a mountain and an expensive, stylish car on the condition that you must enjoy these things by yourself. You must not live in a community, nor are you allowed to live with your parents, siblings, wife, or children. You must enjoy the riches, the mansion, and the car by yourself. You probably would not be willing to accept such a gift, because you would be very lonely.

Man was created with a desire to live in a community and with the need to communicate with other people. God does not want an individual man. He wants a corporate man. However, as a result of the fall, human society is full of tension. On the one hand, we cannot live without others, that is, without social connections. We must form groups or societies. On the other hand, these social groups are filled with sin, selfishness, treacheries, striving, and backstabbing. People despise one another, look down on one another, and slander one another. These situations come from Satan and are a result of man's fall. They are not according to the original state of man's creation. God does not want individuals or a society full of strife and dispute. He wants a corporate man. The principle of being corporate is the principle of the church.

GOD'S SALVATION MAKING US MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

God has no intention for us to express or represent Christ individually. The desire in God's heart is to gain an entity that would express and represent Him in the universe. This expression and representation is corporate; it is the Body. This Body, this corporate entity, is the church. The more we take Christ as our person, the less we are individualistic. Our former person, though created by God, became fallen. As the old man, our person was individualistic, secluded, and odd. We are all peculiar, but the Lord has saved us. He does not want us to live an individualistic life. He wants us to live the Body life. Hence, after saving us, He put us in the church.

Before we were saved, we were a complete unit unto ourselves. However, after we are saved, we are no longer complete unto ourselves. After we are saved, we become a member of the Body; as such, we cannot be individualistic.

As a person with a physical body, it is possible to be individualistic. If I do not get along with someone, I can go to the north and he can go south. However, as a member, I cannot be individualistic. A hand cannot say to the body, "I do not like you; therefore, I am leaving. I will not serve you anymore." A hand cannot exist apart from the body. Similarly, the eyes cannot say that they dislike the body and will therefore leave the body and exist by themselves. After a person is saved, he becomes a member of the Body. As a member of the Body, he has to stay in the Body. If we are members of the Body but are not in the Body, we are cut off. Once a member is cut off, he is finished, and he loses his life and function and, at the same time, becomes quite uncomely (1 Cor. 12:23).

TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON AND STANDING ON THE GROUND OF THE CHURCH

As soon as we are saved, we become members of the Body of Christ. In this Body we have life and we function; hence, we become lovely. Whenever we are not in the Body, however, our life is over, our function vanishes, and we are no longer lovely. This shows that we need to be in the Body. Our old person is individualistic and therefore is a problem. If we would let God fulfill His eternal heart's desire to gain us as His expression, we need a change of person; that is, we must take Christ as our person. Otherwise, there is no way for the reality of the church to be manifested among us.

The churches in Taiwan have a clearer understanding concerning the ground and the way of the church. Even some young saints testify that they are firm concerning the ground and the way of the church. This is surely the Lord's grace. We should stand on the ground, live in the spirit, spread the gospel, and be built up together. The saints in Taiwan are carrying out these points. The saints in Taiwan are very clear concerning the ground and stand firm on the ground. This is a great joy to us.

An American brother came to Taiwan and contacted us, looking for a place to meet. After being in a few meetings, he stood up one Lord's Day and told the saints how he came to be with us. He did not know the ground or the way of the church but was "church hopping" among the denominations. He said that the Lord's sheep are everywhere and that the Lord is feeding His sheep wherever they are; therefore, every place is about the same. This speaking caused the saints to react, and many stood up to testify concerning the ground

of the church. This proves that our brothers and sisters are clear concerning the ground of the church. This is a very good situation.

The ground of the church is indeed crucial. Without the ground, we have nothing. We cannot accept the view that it is good enough for a person to be spiritual, even if he is not on the proper ground. This is vain talk. I have met many believers who did not care for the ground; eventually, their spirituality became vanity. We want not only the ground but also spiritual reality. Spiritual reality is Christ being among us and within us as our person. He must be the person not only in a few saints but in all the saints. Christ, who is our person, is the reality of the church.

In 1957 a group of brothers and sisters from Europe visited us with a desire to fellowship with us. They saw our spiritual condition and how blessed we were. They felt that our young saints were very good. One of the brothers, who was very deep in the Lord, said that he had been serving the Lord for many years, but he had never seen the kind of audience we provided him. This brother was very pleased with the work the Lord has raised up among us. A few weeks later he disapproved of the ground of the church, which we stress, in private conversations and publicly. He said that the Lord had truly blessed us and that our work was good, but the teaching concerning the ground of the church needs to be brought down. Other Western missionaries were also critical of our work. They said that the teaching concerning the ground could be likened to a dead fly in the perfumer's ointment (cf. Eccl. 10:1).

One day as we sat down together for tea, they complimented the tea in Taiwan, saying that it was very good. I took the opportunity and said, "You enjoy our tea. However, it is regrettable that you are willing to break our teacups. If you break our teacups, we will have nothing to contain the tea. Without the teacups, there is no way to enjoy the tea." They understood what I meant and made no further comments. If the teacups are broken, there will be no vessels to contain the tea. These believers said that they wanted only Christ, not the church. Although what they said sounded good, it could not be practiced. If we do not want teacups, how can we drink tea? If we do not want the church, what can contain Christ? If we do not want the ground of the church, what can contain our spirituality? This is very clear.

There is one more thing that we must be very clear about. The ground of the church is necessary, but the content and the reality of the church are even

more important. The content and the reality of the church are Christ. Christ should not merely be a slogan or a doctrine to us. He must be our experience. This is what it means for Christ to be our person. When all the saints take Christ as their person, the church will have the genuine content and reality.

The Lord has done a great work in raising up many young brothers and sisters in Taiwan. The future of the churches depends on these young saints. The future of the churches depends on whether these saints have a clear view concerning the church. The young saints must not only know the ground of the church but must also see the content of the church, which is to take Christ as their person. Ephesians 1 speaks of the church being the Body of Christ (vv. 22-23), and in chapter 2 this Body is the new man in the spirit (vv. 10, 15-16, 18). Chapter 4 says that we must put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man (vv. 22-24). To put on the new man is to put on the church life. We put on the church life by taking Christ as our person for the church. I hope that you will pray-read and study these verses: Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:10, 15-16, 18; and 4:22-24. This is the way to have a clear view concerning the content and the reality of the church.

CHAPTER EIGHT

KNOWING THE CHURCH AS THE NEW MAN AND TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON (1)

THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY AND THE NEW MAN

In this chapter we will fellowship concerning the church as both the Body and the new man. We need to put on the new man (Eph. 4:24). This is the church life.

God's intention in creating man was to gain a group of people on earth who have His image and likeness in order to express Him and represent Him. God does not want to gain individuals to express Him; rather, He desires to gain a corporate man for His expression. Ephesians says that the church is the Body of Christ (1:22-23). Hence, the church does not refer to many individual believers. The church is the Body, and the Lord is the Head of this Body, which is His fullness. The Lord needs a Body as His fullness for His expression. The church is not only the Body but also the new man (2:15-16).

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE NEW MAN

There is a significant difference between the Body and the new man. The emphasis in the Body is on life; the Body is an organ, not an organization. My physical body is an organ—it is not my person. My whole being includes not only my body but also the person within my body. Within my body there is not only life but also my person. Something that possesses life does not necessarily have a person. For example, a tree has life, but it does not have a person, because it does not have consciousness or a mind, emotion, and will. However, a man not only has a body with life; he also has a person. The church as the Body is a corporate entity with Christ as its life, and the church is also the new man with Christ as its person.

Ephesians 3:17 speaks of Christ making His home in our hearts. We are God's temple, His dwelling place (2:21-22). God desires to dwell in us not only

to be our life but also our person. Just as we each have a person, so the church as a great corporate man also has a person. A Christian who knows that the church is the Body of Christ is advanced. In the past many believers thought of the church as a place for worship. This is superficial and low. In the early days of the recovery the Lord showed us that the church does not refer to a physical building; rather, the church is composed of all His believers. Later the Lord showed us that the church is not composed of individual believers; the church is a corporate man. The church is composed of a group of believers who are coordinated and built up to become a living Body.

Later, the Lord gave us further revelation to see that the church is not only the Body but also the new man. Ephesians 1:22-23 says that the church is the Body of Christ. Then 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." The Lord created Jewish and Gentile believers in Himself into one new man. The new man cannot be an individual, because this verse says that the new man was created with two categories of believers: Jewish and Gentile. Hence, the new man is a corporate man. According to verse 16, these two categories were reconciled in "one Body to God." The new man in verse 15 is the Body in verse 16. In chapter 1 the Body is the church, and in chapter 2 the Body is the new man. In the above verses the church, the Body, and the new man refer to the same entity. The church is the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is the one new man. We are not only one Body but also one new man. For the one Body, life is needed, but for the one new man, a person is needed in addition to life.

THE CHURCH BEING THE NEW MAN INDICATING THAT CHRIST IS OUR PERSON

Our Old Man Having Been Crucified with Christ

The church is the new man. This means that Christ is not only our life but also our person. Christ is making His home in our hearts with the desire to be not only our life but also our person. Our old man has been crucified with Christ. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him," and 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." Our old man has been

crucified with Christ, and now it is no longer our old man who lives, but it is Christ who lives in us. He desires to be our life and also our person. Christ as our person is deeper than Christ as our life.

Receiving Christ Not as Power but as Our Person

May the Lord have mercy on us and lead us into this new experience. When we dealt with our temper in the past, we would ask the Lord for power to overcome our temper. However, now that we have received Christ as our person, we do not need to be concerned about the way to overcome our temper. It does not matter whether or not our old man lost his temper or whether he was meek or irritable. These things are over. Christ is now our person. Hence, whether or not we lose our temper should not be our focus. Our focus should be to let Christ be our person. We need to live by Christ.

Our focus is not whether we lose our temper but whether we take Christ as our person. Our focus is not whether we love or hate others. Our focus is to take Christ as our person. In the past we would ask the Lord to give us the ability to love others. Such a prayer does not seem wrong; however, it is religious. As Christians, we know that we should love others, but since we are unable to do this, we depend on the Lord as our power, our ability, to love others. This is to ask the Lord to help us live by our old man as our person. In other words, we are still living by our old man, who is still here and is incapable of doing good but quite capable of doing evil things. Such prayers ask the Lord to empower us to do good and to reject evil. However, whether we did good or evil, we were still the person. Formerly we were the person who did evil, but now we are the person who does good. The only difference is that we now need the Lord Jesus to help us. This means that we receive Him as power, but we do not receive Him as our life and our person.

Consecration Being to Yield to the Lord

We need an absolute consecration of handing ourselves over to the Lord and yielding our person to Him so that He can be our person. We should say, “Lord, I do not care about hating or loving others. I resign. I do not want to focus on loving or hating others. I retire. Not only so, I am already buried. I want You to be my person.” If we are willing to do this, our Christian life will be simple. It is not that we hate or love others, it is not that we are meek or

irritable, and it is not that we are humble or proud. We have been crucified with Christ on the cross. We are finished. We have taken Christ as our person, and we have let Christ live in us. Christ will not only live in us but will also make His home in us. The issue of taking Christ as our person is the practical church life.

THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH BEING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON

The reality of the church is Christ as our person. The result of your person being Christ and my person being Christ is oneness. We are one because we have the same person in us. However, if we are still in our old man, our natural man, we are not taking the same One as our person. I am an elderly man from northern China, and this is a young man from Taiwan. The people in northern China have their own particular characteristics, and the Taiwanese have theirs. Elderly people tend to be old-fashioned, but younger people also have peculiarities. Such differences make it difficult for us to be one Body and to be one man.

The young brother from Taiwan is saved, and I am too, and we have received Christ as our person; therefore, we should be one. However, we are not one, because we live by two different persons. He has his person, and I have my person. If there were one hundred believers, there would be one hundred persons; if there were a thousand believers, there would be a thousand persons. In the same way, it is also difficult for a married couple to be together and have only one person. It is not easy to find a married couple who can get along perfectly. We each have our own person; you have yours, and I have mine. However, we thank the Lord that in the church there is one way that enables us to get along. It is not a method or merely a life; it is a person.

Ephesians 3:17 says that "Christ may make His home in your hearts," not "heart." This verse does not speak of only one heart but of many hearts. Verse 18 says that you "may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are." To apprehend with all the saints the breadth and length and height and depth indicates that this is not an individual matter; it is a corporate matter. We have a person in us who makes us one. It does not matter whether we are old or young or from the

mainland or Taiwan; neither does it matter if we are odd or eccentric. We are all one when we take Christ as our person.

Suppose a young brother from Taiwan and I resolve to love one another because the Bible teaches us to be one by loving one another and bearing one another. As a result, we will begin to pray and ask the Lord to help us love each other. However, since we lack the ability to love one another in ourselves, after a period of time we will accumulate bitter feelings toward one another. Eventually, we will realize that this way does not work.

We should not take any portion of the Word out of context. Ephesians speaks not only concerning lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and bearing one another. More importantly, in chapter 3 Paul says, "That Christ may make His home in your hearts...that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (vv. 17, 19). In chapter 5 he says, "Be filled in spirit" (v. 18). Based on these verses, we see that resolving to be one because of the teaching in the Bible will not work. We are unable to achieve this by our resolution. We must let Christ make His home in our hearts by taking Him as our person. If we receive the Lord's grace, we will see that in order for Christ to make His home in our hearts, we should take Christ as our person. The church is not only the one Body but also the one new man (2:15). In this new man neither you nor I are the person; Christ is the person in the new man. Hence, I should consecrate in order to let the Lord be my person, and the young brother should also consecrate in order to let the Lord be his person. Our consecration is not for us to become preachers or evangelists or fervent co-workers. Our consecration is to take Christ as our person. We are empty vessels who consecrate to the Lord so that He may dwell in us and make His home in us to be not only our life but also our person. Hence, we must receive Christ as our person. This is not a performance; it is not our way of dealing with a difficult situation; it is not a matter of seeing a vision or of receiving a revelation. This has to be our daily experience.

Many younger saints testified concerning taking Christ as their person. They said that before going to bed, they ask the Lord whether or not He is going to bed. Although this kind of testimony is not wrong, it is not deep enough. We need to testify concerning not trying to love the saints because we take Christ as our person. When we take Christ as our person, we are dead and buried. When the Lord is our person, we can spontaneously love an unlovable brother because the Lord, who is our person, loves him. Not only

do we love those whom the Lord loves, but we love with the Lord's love. When this becomes our practice, we will live by the Lord Jesus, just as He lived by the Father.

In John 5:30 the Lord said, "I can do nothing from Myself." This does not mean that the Lord was not able to do anything but that He did not live by Himself. He said, "The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works" (14:10). The Lord was the One speaking, but it was the Father who was working. The Lord took the Father not only as His life but also as His person. The Father was in Him, and the Father spoke through Him. Hence, the Lord's speaking was the Father's working. This is the life that we should live. We should tell the Lord to love the brothers through us. We are not our own person; the Lord is our person. We do not live by ourselves; we live by Him. Then when we love a brother, it will be the Lord doing His work. We need to hear testimonies of this kind. This does not mean that the Lord will not help us. However, to experience the Lord as our person should not be limited to His helping us.

May the Lord have mercy on us and open our eyes to see that His eternal purpose is for us to be joined with Him to become people of two natures. We are human beings possessing humanity, and the Lord is God possessing both divinity and a perfect humanity. He desires to come into us to be not only our life but also our person, thus making us His expression. By being joined to Him, we become people possessing not only our human nature but also His divine nature and His uplifted human nature. There is a fruit that looks like both a peach and an apple. It is the product of grafting peaches with apples. This fruit has two natures. Every Christian also has two natures. Even though this young brother is Taiwanese and I am from mainland China, we have been grafted into Christ, and Christ is in us. He is not only our life but even more our person. Since Christ is our person, our old man is finished.

Since Christ is our person, we do not need to resolve to do good. We simply take the Lord as our person by letting Him dwell in us and make home in us. This is the kind of life that we should live daily. Then even if I am an old mainlander and you are a young Taiwanese, we will be one because there is only one person in us. Furthermore, not only is there one person within us, but we will live out and express Christ in our living. Being in oneness, in harmony, and loving one another are expressions of Christ. Such a living that expresses Christ is the reality of the church.

The church is the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One, Christ, who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22-23). This Body is the new man, who takes Christ as the person. Christ lives in every member of this Body, and every member rejects, puts aside, his own person. In the new man every member takes Christ as his person. As a result, even though there are thousands of believers, there is only one person. This person is Christ. These believers who take Christ as their life are the one new man. They are the church in reality. The living of this new man is the church life.

TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON

Putting Off the Ordinances and Turning to the Spirit

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." The Lord abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances in His flesh. There are ordinances in the Old Testament laws that forbid Jews from contacting Gentiles. These ordinances cause Jews to stay away from Gentiles. However, on the cross Christ abolished all the ordinances. If we have ordinances, we can never take Christ as our person. In order to take Christ as our person, we must put off all ordinances. Verse 18 says, "Through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." In order to take Christ as our person, we must not only put off the ordinances but also be in one Spirit. For this reason, we should pay attention to the Spirit, not to ordinances.

We each have many self-made ordinances. Ordinances are our forms or ways of living and worship. For example, when I sleep at night, I must close the window; this is my ordinance. There may be a young brother who likes to sleep with the window open. Hence, my ordinance is to close the window at night, and his ordinance is to open the window. How can we be together in peace? The main ordinances in Judaism include dietary regulations, such as not eating pork. However, Gentiles eat pork. These dietary regulations are a middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles (v. 14). Ordinances separate and bring in enmity between people. Regardless of whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we need to drop our ordinances and turn to the Spirit. If the Spirit wants us to eat meat, we should do so whether it is beef, pork, or lamb. If the Holy Spirit does not want us to eat meat, we should not eat it. When

John the Baptist came, he neither ate nor drank. But when the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man, came, He both ate and drank (Matt. 11:18-19). Hence, do not pay attention to ordinances; pay attention to the Spirit. It does not matter whether or not we eat meat or whether we open or close the window; none of these matter. What is crucial is to follow the Spirit.

In the church life we should never hold on to our ordinances; we should be in the Holy Spirit. Some saints have an ordinance to sit quietly in their chair during the meeting. This becomes an ordinance of being quiet. Some younger saints like to pray loudly and shout. They are not satisfied unless they shout. This also becomes an ordinance. Thus, being quiet is an ordinance, and shouting is also an ordinance. In the end, those who are quiet cannot be one with those who shout. Since the Lord has abolished the ordinances, we are one in the Lord in reality. However, when we hold on to our ordinances, we cannot be one in practicality. The Bible clearly says that the Lord nailed all the ordinances to the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15-16). Hence, we should drop all the ordinances and turn to the Spirit. If the Spirit wants us to shout, we should shout, and if the Spirit wants us to be quiet, we should be quiet.

Psalm 90:14 says, "Satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness / That we may give a ringing shout and rejoice all our days." This verse says that we should give a ringing shout not only in the morning but from morning to evening all our days. I do not quote this verse to encourage you to shout. This verse shows that in our Christian life we touch the Lord inwardly. When we touch the Lord and are released, we will shout. A Christian who has never shouted has not touched the Lord in a released way. A brother said that the young saints were shouting too much. Even though I concur with this comment, I feel that those who are opposed to shouting should shout. If we insist on not shouting, we make it an ordinance, which will become a chain that binds us.

Please do not misunderstand me. Whether we should shout or be quiet is not a problem. The problem is that the demand for others to be quiet or to shout comes from the self. When we make such a demand, we are the person. We must give ourselves completely to the Lord and let Him be our person. Once the Lord becomes our person, we will have joy and peace within. Of course, the young saints should not be too loud. They should take care of the older saints who may have heart problems or high blood pressure. To insist

on shouting is an ordinance. Satan, the cunning one, hides behind every ordinance in order to create division and cause people to be in discord.

We must allow the cross to eliminate all our ordinances. Those who promote shouting should leave their shouting on the cross, and those who are in favor of being quiet should leave their being quiet on the cross. The Lord has abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances and slain the enmity. Let us turn to the Spirit and not be under any regulations. The quiet saints should not rebuke the saints who shout, nor should the saints who shout criticize the quiet saints. The cross has abolished all the ordinances, and we are in one Spirit. We should not decide to be quiet or to shout; rather, we should let Christ be our person in everything. Then we will be full of joy, the Lord Jesus will be very precious, and the brothers and sisters will be lovely.

We have said that if we, as Christians, are not beside ourselves, we are not qualified to be Christians, because the Bible says that we should be beside ourselves toward God (2 Cor. 5:13). We are blessed to enjoy God to the extent that we are beside ourselves. However, this is not a performance or an ordinance. It is the result of living in our mingled spirit and taking Christ as our person. Taking Christ as our person is not an ordinance. It is the way for us to live in our spirit.

Putting Off the Old Man and Putting On the New Man

Ephesians 4:22 and 24 speak of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Since the new man in 2:15 is the church, to put on the new man in 4:24 must be to put on the church life. The New American Standard Version renders the Greek words translated “new man” in verse 24 as “new self.” This rendering does not match the context of Ephesians. Since the new man is the church in chapter 2, it cannot change its meaning in chapter 4 and become the new self. Such a translation is against the principle of Bible exposition. To put on the new man is to put on the church life. This is not to put on a new self but to put on the church life.

Being Renewed in the Spirit of the Mind

The secret to putting on the new man lies in 4:23, which speaks of being “renewed in the spirit of your mind.” To be renewed in the spirit of the mind

is to let our spirit become the spirit of our mind. We need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. Our mind with its thoughts must be controlled, directed, saturated, and occupied by our spirit. As a result, our spirit will become the spirit of our mind, and we will be renewed in the spirit of our mind. This is the way to put on the church life.

Putting Off the Former Manner of Life and Putting On the Church Life

Verse 22 says, "Put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man." Our former manner of life includes everything related to us: what we are, what we have, our family life, and our social life. Our living and walk are related to our parents and children and to our siblings, classmates, colleagues, neighbors, and relatives. Every point and aspect of our living and walk are involved with human communities. Our living is a corporate living. The Bible says that we need to put off the old man, the former manner of life, that is, the old social life, and that we need to put on the new man, the church life.

Before we were saved, we lived a life of taking ourselves as the person. For example, a young boy in junior high school might enjoy going out with his classmates and friends and doing things with them. After he is saved, however, he should take Christ as his person and live the church life. To live the church life does not mean that he should go to the meeting on Lord's Day morning and listen to a pastor's sermon. Our church life should be full of Christ every day, whether in the morning or in the evening. Whenever there is the time or opportunity, the saints should come together to praise the Lord. We can pray-read together and be built up, or we can go out to preach the gospel and spread the Lord's kingdom by saving souls. We do not rely on hired pastors or preachers. We are living members of Christ's Body, we take Christ as our person, and we are being filled with Christ, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and being occupied by God. When we let the Lord strengthen us into the inner man, He makes His home in our hearts, and we are filled unto all the fullness of God. God "is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us. To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever" (3:20-21). This is the practical living of the church; this is also the church in reality.

The reality of the church life is a living in which the believers take Christ as their person, are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are occupied by God. First Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” When our spirit is mingled with the Holy Spirit, the two spirits become one. When this mingled spirit occupies our mind, it becomes the spirit of our mind. In the spirit of our mind we are being renewed in our concepts, our habits, and our views. This is the way to practically put on the new man, the church life.

CHAPTER NINE

KNOWING THE CHURCH AS THE NEW MAN AND TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON (2)

THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY AND THE NEW MAN

It is easy for people to say that the church is the Body of Christ. However, the Bible says that the church is not only the Body but also the new man. The new man is different from the Body. Let us use the physical body as an example. A body is simply a vessel to be used as an organ. A man, however, is not merely an organ; a man has a person. A body needs life, but a man needs a person in addition to life. Life is different from a person. A plant has life, but it does not have a person. A man has not only life but also a person. In the past we saw that the church is the Body with Christ as its life. However, we did not see that the church is the new man with Christ not only as its life but also as its person.

THE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE OF THE CHURCH AS THE NEW MAN

The Bible says that the church is the new man. Ephesians 2:15 says that Christ abolished "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." Paul says that the Lord created the two—the Jewish and the Gentile believers—into one new man. Therefore, the new man is not an individual. The new man is corporate. Verse 16 continues, "And might reconcile both in one Body to God." Verse 15 says that the Lord created the two into one new man, not an individual man but a corporate man, and verse 16 says that He reconciled both in one Body. This indicates that the Body is the new man. Moreover, in chapter 1 the Body is the church. Hence, the church is not only the Body but also the new man.

Some believers say that while the Bible says that the church is the Body of Christ, it does not say that the church is the new man. These believers say that before a person is saved, he was an old man, but after he is saved, he becomes

new. Hence, the new man refers to a saved individual, not to the church. Without a clear foundation in the truth, we will be influenced by such talk. We must guard against the schemes of Satan. We should ask such believers to read Ephesians 2:15 and ask them what *the two* refers to. If they cannot answer us, we should tell them that *the two* refers to Jewish and Gentile believers. Since the new man is composed of two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, the new man cannot refer to individuals. It is a corporate new man. Besides, verse 15 says that He created the two "into one new man," not merely "into a new man." *Into a new man* may be understood as each believer being a new man. However, verse 15 clearly says "one new man." Verse 16 then says, "And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it." Ephesians 1:22b-23a says, "Gave Him [Christ] to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body." These verses indicate that the Body is the church. According to the context, the Body also refers to the new man in chapter 2. If we see this point, we will have a firm foundation.

We need to grow in life and be clear concerning the truth, and we must also fight the battle for the truth. Fighting for the truth is not something that we began. From the time of the church fathers, believers have been fighting for the truth. The Reformation began with Martin Luther's contending for the truth. Today the whole world is in confusion, but the truth in the Bible is crystal clear. What do we mean by *truth*? Here is an example: It is true that two plus two is four. To say that two plus two is 3.99 is false; it is an error. Similarly, to say that two plus two is 4.01 is also an error. Truth stipulates that two plus two is four. The truth in the Bible is very accurate and very exact. Nothing can be more accurate than the thoughts of God. The Bible as God's revelation, His speaking, is very accurate. We must locate the truth in the Bible. Based on the Bible, we can say that the church is not only the Body but also the new man.

As Christians, we need to know how to present the truth to people; otherwise, we are useless to the Lord. We must be able to render genuine help to others. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness." Our spirit is a spirit not only of power but also of love and sobermindedness. The word *sobermindedness* indicates that our mind is clear and sober, not confused. Our spirit should be a spirit not only of power and of love but even more a spirit of sobermindedness. If we have love but are not sober, we will love in a foolish way. For example, suppose I make a cup of coffee for a

brother because I love him. However, I add two spoons of spicy chilies to the coffee. When he drinks the coffee, he will surely suffer; he may even get an upset stomach. Hence, it is not adequate to have only a spirit of love. We still need a spirit of power and of sobermindedness. Power is related to our will, love is related to our emotion, and sobermindedness is related to our mind. We need to be loving in our emotion, strong and powerful in our will, and sober in our mind. Hence, it is not enough to have only life. If our mind is confused, we will not be able to help others with the truth.

Every believer should lead others to salvation. If we truly love the Lord and grow in life, the people we pray for will get saved. We must be trained so that we can lead people to salvation. We should speak the truth in life to bring people to salvation. Truth, life, and speaking are a threefold cord. We have the truth and we have life, but we also need the ability to speak to others so that they are subdued. If we have love without a sober mind, we will confuse our gospel friends, and they will be unreceptive to our speaking. Hence, we need to learn to speak the truth.

THE CHURCH HAVING NOT ONLY LIFE BUT ALSO A PERSON

Now we must consider a crucial point. Why is there a person in man? A man is not a machine, because machines do not have a person. However, human beings have a person. The importance of being a human being is that human beings have a person. Without a person, I am merely a body. My body is not my person. I am a man because there is life within me. This life, however, is also related to a person. Hence, in order to be a human, our life must be expressed through a person.

Our person is our personality with our ego, inclinations, preferences, and thoughts. Our body is an outward organ that needs life. A tree has a visible trunk and also life within, but a tree is not a human being. As human beings, we not only have life but also a person. This means that in addition to having life in our body, we also have a personality, a person. This is what makes us different from plants. Plants have an outward form as well as life within, but they do not have a personality, a person. A human being has not only a body but also life and a personality. This personality is our person. We are human beings because of this crucial distinction: we have a person within us. Without a person, we are not human beings. Likewise, since the church is the new man,

it needs a person. If the church were merely a Body, it would need only life. However, since the church is also the new man, the church needs a person.

The church needs to have a person, and this person is Christ. Christ is the person in the church. In order for Him to be our person, He needs to make His home in our hearts. For this reason, we need to make room in our being and allow Christ to occupy us and be our person. Galatians 2:20 says, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me," and Philippians 1:21 says, "To me, to live is Christ." These verses indicate that Christ desires to be our person.

PUTTING OFF OUR FORMER MANNER OF LIFE, THE OLD MAN

Ephesians 4:22 says, "Put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man." The former manner of life refers to our old way of living and contacting others. If a person lives a secluded life, whether or not he loses his temper, loves or deceives people, or honors his parents has no meaning, because he has no community, no human interactions, no social relationships, and therefore no manner of life. Our former manner of life refers to the kind of life we lived and includes our contact with others, our social activities. Hence, to put off the old man means to put off our old manner of living, that is, the living we had in the past in contacting and dealing with others.

When we take Christ as our person, we can no longer live the way we lived in the past. Since we have put off our former manner of living, we can no longer seek worldly pleasures, such as social clubs. Our former manner of life, our old life, whether it was related to a social club, a society, or a certain community, has been put off. To put off the former manner of life is to put off the kind of living we had in the past.

BEING RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF THE MIND

Verse 24 says, "Put on the new man." To put on the new man is to put on the church life. Verse 23 says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The expression *the spirit of your mind* is difficult to understand. Even the translators of the Chinese Union Version did not render it correctly. They translated verse 23 as "that you be renewed in your will power"; they missed

the two words *spirit* and *mind*. Without spiritual knowledge it is not easy to understand the meaning of "the spirit of your mind." The Chinese Bible translators, probably due to their inadequate experience, could not understand the special terms used by Paul in his Epistle.

The Bible reveals that our regenerated spirit needs to be strengthened, and then it will spread outward to all the parts of our soul. The leading part of our soul is our mind. Hence, our spirit spreads first into our mind to saturate and occupy our mind. Then it spreads into our emotion and our will. As a result, Christ will occupy every part of our mind, emotion, and will. This is how Christ makes His home in our heart. Eventually, our mingled spirit will not be limited to our spirit but will spread into our mind. Hence, we have the expression *the spirit of your mind*. It is in such a spirit that we are being renewed.

If our spirit cannot spread into our soul, it will be restricted within us. When our spirit is restricted, it cannot become the spirit of our mind and cannot do the work of renewing. It is only when our spirit spreads and occupies our mind and becomes the spirit of our mind that it becomes the renewing spirit. It is in this renewing spirit that we are renewed. On the one hand, the renewing takes place when we put off the old man, the former manner of life. On the other hand, the renewing takes place when we put on the new man. The putting off of the old man in verse 22 comes before the putting on of the new man in verse 24. In between these two verses is verse 23, which says, "That you be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The fact that this verse is in between the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man indicates that the way for us to put off the old man and put on the new man is to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. In other words, to be renewed in the spirit of our mind is to put off our old man in our former manner of living and also to put on the new man. To be renewed in the spirit of our mind is to put off our former manner of living and to put on the church life.

To be renewed in the spirit of our mind is to live the church life, which is the life of the new man. Putting off the old man and putting on the new man are to be renewed. This renewing is accomplished in the spirit of our mind. Hence, we must allow our spirit to spread, to subdue, and to occupy our mind and even our emotion and our will until our spirit controls all the parts of our

soul. This is to be renewed. Then we will spontaneously live in the new man; that is, we will put on the new man and live the church life.

In every locality we should exercise to speak concerning the church as the Body and as the new man. We should also tell the saints how to live the life of the new man. We should begin to speak in this way. Wherever we are, we should speak concerning the church as the new man, concerning Christ being our person, and concerning putting on the new man and living the life of the new man.

In Ephesians 1 the desire of God's heart, His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, is to have an economy according to His will. Verses 22 and 23 speak of the church as the Body of Christ. Chapter 2 says that the church is the new man, and chapter 3 speaks of Christ making His home in our hearts. Chapter 4 speaks of putting on the new man and living the life of the new man, and chapter 5 speaks of being filled with the Holy Spirit in our spirit. Ephesians is a profound book, and we can pray-read it many times.

We must practice speaking the truths in Ephesians until we are clear concerning how to take Christ as our person and how to put on the new man. We must also have many experiences of these truths. Doctrines are useless. When we have life and experience and an understanding of the truth, our speaking will convey the truth to others and supply them. This will make us useful. Hence, we must exercise to speak, seek experiences, and gain an understanding of the truth. We should be able to speak these items of the truth in a clear way. May we all exercise in this way.

Many Christians do not understand these items of the truth. Few Christians know that the church is not only the Body but also the new man. Few Christians understand the difference between the new man and the Body or can explain that the Body is a mere organ with life but that the new man must have a person in addition to life. Even fewer can explain that to put off the old man is to put off our former manner of life, and to put on the new man is to put on the church life.

The most popular and authoritative version of the Bible in English is the King James Version. It was authorized by the King of England in the 1600s. In the 1800s Bible scholars acknowledged that some portions of the King James Version did not match the original text. Furthermore, new manuscripts

had been discovered that were more trustworthy than those used for the King James Version. The scholars knew that the original text of the Bible was copied by hand, and as a result, some manuscripts were inaccurate. Since the manuscripts that were used for the King James Version were inferior to those that were discovered later, the King James Version needed to be revised.

Several items must be considered before translating the Bible: the study of the original languages, the study of the ancient manuscripts, and the study of translation. Since numerous manuscripts of the Bible are available, archeologists determine which manuscripts are authentic and the most accurate. The study of translation is concerned with the best way to translate the text. In order to translate the Bible, one needs to know the original languages of the Bible, one needs to consult various manuscripts and understand the manuscripts of the Bible, and one needs to know how to translate the Bible, because there are many special terms in the Bible. In around 1870 Bible scholars from both England and the United States felt that there was a need to revise the King James Version, so they proceeded with a revision. However, after the revision, the British and the American scholars had some disputes over a few points. For example, the American scholars were in favor of using the title *Jehovah,* but the British scholars did not agree. They wanted to translate *Jehovah* as "the Lord." Therefore, the British scholars published the Revised Standard Version, and the American scholars published the American Standard Version. The text in both versions is almost identical.

Recently, the American scholars felt that the English in the American Standard Version was not current. They therefore revised it and made it more suitable for readers of modern English. This was not a new translation; it was only a revision. In this revision they changed *new man* in Ephesians 4:24 to *new nature.* This rendering is very misleading. This explanation concerning the translation and revision of the Bible shows that it is not simple to understand the Bible. The translators of the Chinese Union Version translated *the spirit of your mind* as "will power." This makes it very difficult for people to understand the meaning of the original text.

We must understand *the spirit of your mind.* When our regenerated spirit, indwelt by the Lord, is strengthened, it will spread into our mind and control, occupy, and saturate our mind. Thus, it will become the spirit of our mind. It is in this spirit that we put off the old man, our former manner of living, and

put on the new man, the church life. It is also in this spirit that we are renewed.

THREE CRUCIAL ITEMS

I hope that you will not only grow in life and know the truth but also learn to apply the truth and speak it to others. This requires that we exercise our spirit, our heart, and our mind. It is not enough to have a strong spirit or a heart to love the Lord. We must have a sober mind so that we are able to speak clearly. Then we will be able to help others. This is the purpose of this training. The goal of this training is for us to be useful. In order to be useful persons, we must pay attention to these three items: growing in life, knowing the truth, and speaking the truth to others. We must learn how to speak the truth.

SCHOOLS BEING FOR THE LORD'S USE

The saints who are studying or teaching in schools are in an environment that is useful to the Lord. No other environment is better. It does not matter whether you are a teacher, a professor, a teaching assistant, or a student. The school is the best environment for the Lord. From one perspective a school may seem small in scope, but even a small school can have several thousand students. The oldest students typically are no more than twenty-five or twenty-six years old, and they are not yet set and settled. They may still be deciding which job to take. Once a person begins to work, he becomes set and settled. Whether he goes into business or another field, he will quickly become set and settled. At such a time it will be more difficult to speak to him about the Lord. The best time to speak to him concerning the Lord is while he is still a student, because students are not set or settled. Students who have not chosen a profession are easy to reach with the gospel. Hence, if we desire to be used by the Lord, we should grasp the opportunity to preach the gospel in the schools.

Furthermore, the future of the church lies in the young ones. It is not easy for a couple who are in their sixties and who are set and settled to receive the truth concerning the Lord Jesus. Even after speaking to them for six months, they still may not be clear. Suppose they are clear and are saved; it will not be easy for them to go out and preach the gospel. This does not mean that we should not preach the gospel to older people. The Lord is not a respecter of

persons. He will save older people and younger people. Nevertheless, our burden should be the young ones.

From the testimonies it seems that a good number of Taiwanese young people have been gained by the Lord. This is very encouraging. Hence, we should first do a thorough work in the schools to gain the young ones. Then our next generation will be Christians. It is very easy for young people to receive the gospel. Sometimes we need to speak for only half an hour, and a young person will become clear and receive the gospel. Once he receives salvation, there will be a desire and an impetus in him to tell his friends or his parents. The young people should know that their parents listen to them. After they are saved, the young people must tell their families. Initially, their parents may not be pleased, but if the young people will continue to speak, their parents will believe. Some parents say that the knowledge their children receive in high school or college is of a new era and should be right. Therefore, they will follow their children because they love their children, and they identify with what their children do. Hence, as soon as the students are saved, their parents can be saved without much effort.

The Taiwanese have a very strong practice of idol worship. If we preach the gospel to them without first saving their children, they will most likely chase us away. Young people today are very clear in their mind, making it easy to preach the gospel to them. After they believe, they will preach the gospel to their parents. This will be the easiest route for the gospel. A young Taiwanese brother testified that when he first believed in the Lord, he dared not go home during the New Year holidays, because his parents wanted to beat him. Instead, he went to the meeting hall. Recently his younger brother was saved, and his parents are ready to be saved.

The young people should not only pray for their parents; they should go home to “compel” their parents, telling them how good it is to believe in Jesus. In this new age, parents will follow their children. As a parent, I know that children are capable of compelling their parents. The more the children compel, the better they become at it. However, it is not so effective for parents to compel their children. I hope that this word will encourage the young people.

SPREADING THE GOSPEL

THROUGHOUT TAIWAN

Our heart is for the Lord Jesus and His church. Therefore, we truly hope that the Taiwanese people will get saved. The way to reach this goal lies in the schools. The government in Taiwan stresses education. The basic education has been increased to nine years. We must preach the gospel to the young ones during their nine years of education so that they hear the gospel. This is our responsibility. Everyone is required to finish junior high school; therefore, we must aggressively preach the gospel to the students in junior high school. After their salvation, the junior high school students will become gospel seeds when they enter high school. They will be gospel seeds in college also. The co-workers need to open their eyes and see that to labor in the schools will reap double the results with half the effort.

However, even if all the co-workers labored in the schools, only a few students would get saved. But if the saints who are students can preach the gospel in this way, many other students will be saved. The saints in school will be like thousands of foot soldiers. This is our burden. We have no desire to give many messages. We want to train and produce useful "foot soldiers" who will be in every city in Taiwan. Then whenever the gospel is preached, a person will be saved, and afterward, a whole family will be gained. If we gain a classmate, he will preach the gospel to his parents, and in this way family after family will be saved. This is our burden. It is the responsibility of the young people to spread the gospel all over Taiwan.

Many of the young people love the Lord and have consecrated themselves to Him. Some of them are willing to serve the Lord full time. This is more glorious than going abroad to study. The most glorious thing for our young people, especially for the Taiwanese brothers and sisters, is to receive a burden from the Lord to spread the gospel to every corner of Taiwan. Leading a thousand people to salvation is more glorious than making millions of American dollars. We need to see the Lord's way and receive a burden.

I do not intend to stir up the young people to be preachers. My desire is for them to graduate from college and then give themselves to preach the gospel throughout this island. They do not need to give up their jobs in order to preach the gospel. Before I began to serve the Lord full time, I gave messages seven days a week even though I had a job. I was working and serving the Lord at the same time. Hence, preaching the gospel does not depend on our

serving full time. Preaching the gospel depends on our taking Christ as our person. If the Lord leads us to serve full time, we should serve full time. If He does not lead us to serve full time, we should not serve full time. Either situation should not be a problem. We must make a resolution and tell the Lord that we were born in Taiwan, we grew up in Taiwan, and we live for the people of Taiwan; we give ourselves for their souls to be saved. The Taiwanese need us. Therefore, we should place ourselves in the Lord's hand. Do not wait until you graduate. Whether you are in college, high school, or junior high school, you should give yourself to the Lord while you are still a student. The students around you are your targets; whenever you gain one person, you gain a whole family. This is the Lord's present desire.

TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PERSON

Many of the saints are willing to serve the Lord full time but are not so clear. Sometimes the more we pray, the more confused we become. Should you serve full time, or should you first go abroad to study, or should you serve full time after you graduate? There is no need to pray concerning these questions. We need only to take Christ as our person and love Him. We do not have to consider our future; we should simply take Christ as our person and let Him live in us. If we continue with our education, we should let the Lord lead us to study while we testify for Him. We do not care for old Christianity. Neither do we care for serving full time or not serving full time. Forget about these things. We all need to take Christ as our person and let Him live in us. Then we will live to Him even in our studying. We will live to Him in whatever we do.

Paul is a good example. Before he served full time, he was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). Later, when it was needed, he made tents, and when it was not needed, he did not make tents. We are here to preach the gospel until people are saved. We should not worry about whether we serve full time or go abroad to study. We should not focus on these things; instead, we should simply take Christ as our person and begin preaching the gospel. The Lord is a living person. He will lead us concerning our future.

I guarantee you that you will not need to worry about your livelihood. I cannot say that the Lord Jesus will take care of your meals, but He will bear you. He is the Lord of heaven and earth; hence, no one who lives for Him will die of starvation. We should learn to experience the Lord Jesus as our person in big things and small things. In matters related to our livelihood we should

learn to experience Him as our person. In daily matters such as sleeping and eating, we must experience Him as our person. We should not worry about our livelihood.

I had a very good job before I served full time. My salary was more than a hundred silver yuan a month. That was considered a very good salary. However, the Lord led me to leave my job. When I left my job, I had nothing. At that time the practice in China was for extended family to live together. Hence, all the money in our family was controlled by my mother. My mother-in-law, who was a Christian, was concerned about our financial situation. She did not agree for me to leave my job. She said to me, "You have a good job. You can work during the day and lead the meeting in the evening. On the Lord's Day you do not have to work. Why do you want to quit your job? What are you going to eat and drink?" In spite of her advice, I listened to the Lord and dropped my job.

More than forty years have passed, and the Lord Jesus has never allowed my family to starve. Therefore, do not make plans for your future. Your future is in the Lord's hand. Your future is the Lord's future, and His future is bright. Do not worry. Going abroad to study is not the way, nor is serving full time the way. We need to take the Lord Jesus as our person and live with Him. We should practice living together with the Lord, living the church life, putting on the new man, and preaching the gospel to our classmates and colleagues.

There are about two to three thousand young saints in the churches in Taiwan. We must receive the burden to take Christ as our person in a genuine way and practice what we have fellowshipped in this chapter. I believe that by the summer of next year, we will gain at least ten thousand young students all over Taiwan. This should be easy to do. We must not miss this opportunity. The best time to serve the Lord is today, not in the future. A co-worker told me that there are saints who want to serve the Lord full time in the future instead of now. Do not say that you will serve the Lord in the future; rather, say that you will serve the Lord today and that you will serve in coordination with the church. Those who work in schools should serve with the students. We should all work with the students. This is my burden. After speaking this burden to the saints in Taipei, I will go down to Taichung and speak the same thing. After Taichung I will speak to the saints in Tainan, and after Tainan I will speak the same thing in Kaohsiung. I will speak to the young people in every locality until they are willing to serve in the schools. I was a student. I

know that the best place to do anything is in the schools and that we will be successful if we labor in the schools. We all need to go to the schools. It does not matter whether or not we are trained; the Lord will bear the responsibility. Our need is to cooperate with Him.

CHAPTER TEN

RELEASING THE LORD'S LIFE AND AGGRESSIVELY PREACHING THE GOSPEL

A COMMISSION TO LEAD CLASSMATES TO SALVATION

As young saints, you need to receive a commission to contact and preach the gospel to your fellow students. You do not need to preach the gospel to older people. The older saints can take care of this. However, you should preach the gospel to your parents. You should preach the gospel to the students in your school and lead them to salvation. It is not necessary to try to save many students at one time. It is best to gain one student at a time. Look to the Lord and ask Him which student He wants to gain. Then follow the Lord's leading. If you feel that the Lord wants to gain a certain classmate, you should exercise your faith and contact that classmate. In this way, your classmates will be saved.

After a classmate is saved, you must meet with him. Do not depend on others; do not depend on the co-workers, the elders, the responsible ones for the district, or those in the small group; do not depend on your parents or siblings. You should depend on the Lord. You need to pray and then meet with your newly saved classmate. Help your classmate to be stirred up by the Lord, just as you have been stirred up. Then the two of you can go and contact others. In this way one becomes two, two become four, four become eight, and so forth. Depend on the Lord who is a living person. This does not mean that you should not use the tools that we have, such as the literature, but that you should not rely on them. Lead your classmates as new ones, and preach the word to them. When you speak, avoid shouting and screaming. After speaking the word, you can lead them to pray-read and enjoy the Lord. Then go with your classmates and contact others. This way is very effective.

Every young saint who is still studying in school should contact his fellow students one by one. The best place to effectively contact people is your school. First contact your classmates. Other students can be contacted at your convenience, but your classmates should be your target. You must remember to earnestly pray for your classmates and for your school.

There is a Catholic university with about a dozen young saints. These saints should first come together at least two or three times a week for half an hour, maybe at noontime, to pray-read or fellowship. Next, they should contact their classmates one by one. They should not attempt to first contact the clergy. Instead, they should first contact their classmates. They should not merely distribute tracts or exhort their classmates to call on the Lord. Rather, they should focus on one person until he has no alternative but to be saved. They should pray for him unceasingly until he is saved. This can be compared to digging a hole in the ground. You should not dig a little here and a little there, but in the end there is no hole. If these twelve saints would each diligently work on one classmate, within a year they could gain more than fifty classmates. Furthermore, these new ones will be living. They will not be fruit that dies prematurely; they will be remaining fruit.

THREE CRUCIAL ITEMS FOR THE RELEASE OF THE LORD'S LIFE

Not Being Ashamed of the Gospel

The life in a Christian is a Lord-releasing life. If a Christian does not release the Lord, the divine life will be restrained within him and will not grow. Therefore, we must remember that if we desire to grow in life, we must release the Lord and supply others with His life. The more we release the Lord's life, the more we will grow in His life. The highest way to release the Lord's life is to preach the gospel. If we desire to contact others for the release of the Lord's life, that is, to lead others to salvation, we need to pay attention to a few items.

First, we must not be ashamed of the gospel. Satan's basic work in us is to cause us to feel ashamed of the gospel. We are not ashamed to discuss Chinese classics, the world situation, science, chemistry, or mathematics with others. However, when we speak to others about the Lord Jesus, we immediately feel ashamed. We all have had the experience of being ashamed when we speak with others concerning the Lord Jesus or the gospel. Believing in the Lord Jesus should not be a matter of shame. Why should we be ashamed when we speak to others about the Lord Jesus? We should be ashamed of stealing, lying, or provoking our parents to anger. However, we should not be ashamed when we speak to others about the Lord Jesus.

This sense of shame comes from the devil, Satan. In Romans 1:16 Paul said that he was "not ashamed of the gospel." Satan wants every believer to be ashamed of speaking to people concerning the Lord Jesus. The young people are the "best soldiers" in the churches. They must be strong in spirit. When they feel ashamed of the gospel, they should use their strong spirit to say, "Get behind me, Satan. You will not have any ground in me; instead, I will call on the Lord's name." Whether they are preaching the gospel to a classmate or putting on a gospel vest, they should simply say, "Get behind me, Satan. Stop troubling me." None of us should feel ashamed of the gospel. This is not a small thing.

If we are not ashamed of the gospel and of the Lord Jesus, we will overcome our weaknesses and our problems. If we are ashamed of the Lord Jesus and of the gospel, the enemy has a hold on us. Hence, I exhort the young brothers and sisters to deal with this problem of being ashamed of the gospel.

We need a thorough consecration to the Lord concerning the gospel. When Satan comes to disturb us, we should immediately declare, "Jesus is Lord!" and Satan will flee. We must overcome Satan's trap. We should first deal with the feeling of shame concerning the gospel. The gospel is glorious, and the Lord Jesus is glorious. No one in the entire universe is more glorious than the Lord Jesus. No matter how much we have achieved, if we do not overcome the feeling of shame related to the gospel, we will not be useful. Hence, we must deal with this matter of being ashamed of the gospel until we, like Paul, can say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Satan persistently uses this tactic to entangle us. Do not think that your sense of shame related to the gospel comes from you. This feeling comes from Satan; hence, it is a battle, and we must fight. We should always stand against any feelings of shame related to the gospel. We need a strong resolution not to be ashamed of the gospel.

Asking the Lord for the Infilling of the Holy Spirit

The second item for the release of the Lord's life is the infilling of the Holy Spirit. We need to go before the Lord in prayer and ask Him to fill us with the Spirit. There is no need to speak doctrine to the Lord. Simply say, "Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. Occupy me and fill me." Our Lord is true, living, and

practical. He is the living Spirit. He is also the Spirit of power. He will always be with us. We need merely to say, "Lord, possess me and fill me. You are the Spirit. You are the Spirit of life and the Spirit of power. Lord, fill me." When we pray, we should believe, and we should believe what we pray. We pray by faith. We do not seek feelings, ask for results, or care about doctrine. We simply say, "Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Fill me now."

Confessing to the Lord and Obeying His Leading

The third item for the release of the Lord's life is to confess our sins and obey the Lord's leading. Whenever we feel that we have offended the Lord, we must immediately confess by telling Him that we are wrong. We should also ask Him to forgive us and cleanse us with His blood. After confessing in this way and asking for the Lord's cleansing, we should put the matter that we have confessed behind us. Sometimes Satan does not want us to confess our wrongdoings, but after we confess, he wants us to remember what we have confessed so that we do not go on. However, there is no need to repeatedly confess a particular sin. After we confess our sin, asking for forgiveness and the cleansing of the blood, we should not think about that sin any longer. Otherwise, we will be deceived by Satan. We must believe God's word, not Satan's thoughts. First John 1:7 and 9 say, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin...If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Once we confess our sins to the Lord, He cleanses us with His blood. We should stand on the living word of God and be full of peace. If we still have a disturbing thought related to a confessed sin, we should say, "Satan, I will not listen to anything you say. The efficacious blood of Christ has cleansed me." Whenever we sense that we have offended the Lord, we should immediately confess and ask Him to cleanse us with His blood. This is practical and definite. This is something between us and the Lord.

As we practice this, we will be clear concerning the Lord's leading and concerning His moving within us as our person. The living Jesus is in us as our person. All we have to do is follow Him closely. We should never bargain with the Lord in regard to His leading. The Lord will never change His leading. We should simply follow His leading.

A brother may consecrate himself to the Lord and ask the Lord to fill Him. As a result, the Lord may tell the brother that he has offended God and mistreated others. After he confesses these matters, he will be cleansed by the blood, and there will be no insulation between him and the Lord. Then the brother will know the Lord as his person. Suppose the Lord asks the brother to give fifty dollars to another brother who has a need. The brother may hesitate or bargain with the Lord for a reduced amount. If he bargains too strongly, the Lord may increase the amount that He wants the brother to give. The Lord never gives in. He wants us to obey. When He leads us, we should follow Him.

We all have experiences of trying to bargain with the Lord. The Lord does not bargain. When we take the Lord Jesus as our person, we should obey His leading. However the Lord leads, we should follow. The more we bargain with Him, the higher His demand will be; the more we comply with His leading, the more flexible He will be.

Suppose the Lord tells a young brother, who is consecrated, who is not ashamed of the gospel, and who experiences the Lord as his person, to apologize for offending an older brother. If the young brother obeys, he will have the Lord's presence. However, if he bargains with the Lord by offering to write a note rather than to apologize face to face, he will lose the Lord's presence. After a day the Lord may have mercy on the young brother and again ask him to apologize, but this time the Lord may require more. The Lord may ask him not only to apologize but also to pray with the older brother. If the young brother still does not obey but continues to bargain, the Lord may require even more. He may want the young brother to assist the older brother in some practical matter. The Lord is very persistent. The more we bargain with Him, the higher His demand will be. The Lord is always willing to "raise the price." It is good to obey the Lord in a simple way.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

We must ask the Lord to fill every part of our being for the sake of the gospel. The Lord is pure, holy, and righteous. When He says that we are wrong in a certain matter, we should confess that matter and ask Him to forgive us, cleanse us, and cover us with His precious blood. When we fellowship with Him in this way, our relationship with Him becomes transparent, peaceful, and bright. We are able to sense His presence and live

in His presence. Then the Lord will be our person, and we will be able to follow Him in a simple way.

It may seem that there is a price to pay in following the Lord's leading, but there is actually no price to pay. Wherever He leads, we can simply follow, and however He moves in us, we can simply say Amen. This is the way to receive the power of the gospel. When we live a life of following the Lord, the people whom we contact with the gospel will be subdued. We may not be aware of it, but those whom we contact will be subdued by the power of the gospel and will believe in the Lord. They will feel compelled to believe. Believing in Jesus is something wonderful. Sometimes a person may not be convinced in his mind, but he feels compelled to believe. This indicates that the Lord's Spirit has reached him.

Christians always try to persuade others to believe in Jesus; however, it is very easy for people to believe in Jesus. Once a person believes, it is impossible for him to disbelieve. There is something in every genuine Christian that cannot be shaken, chased away, or beaten down. When some saints encounter difficulties, they say that they no longer believe in the Lord; however, eventually faith within them rises up. This is the Lord's grace; this is the Lord's Spirit reaching them. Hence, it does not matter whether we subdue people by our gospel preaching. What matters is that we are connected to the Lord. Then when we contact a person, the Lord's Spirit will reach him. Outwardly he may feel that our speaking does not make sense, but inwardly he will sense the preciousness of the Lord. This is the Lord's grace; this is the Spirit's confirming our speaking and reaching him. We must always be living and connected to the Lord so that our gospel preaching will also be living. Then there will be something like electricity that flows from us to our gospel contact. We will be like electrical wires that convey electricity. Whenever a person touches us, he will immediately be "electrified" and believe in Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the Spirit who flows through us into whomever we preach the gospel to. This is the power of the Holy Spirit that transcends human knowledge. We cannot explain it. Just as we are unable to explain electricity, we are unable to clearly explain the power of the Lord. However, our Lord is more real than electricity. Our experience of Him depends on our allowing Him to flow through us.

MEETING WITH NEW BELIEVERS BY THE SPIRIT

If a young saint brings a classmate to salvation, he should begin meeting with the new one immediately. We do not need formality, nor should we expect others to lead us. The young saint and his classmate should meet together. They can meet at noon for half an hour or after school for half an hour. Such informal meetings should begin as soon as someone has believed in the Lord. When another classmate believes in the Lord, there will be two meetings, and when three classmates have believed, there will be three meetings. The meetings do not have to be held in a classroom; the meetings can be on the lawn. First pray with the new one, and then read a portion of the Bible. We can teach new ones how to pray-read and pray with them. The Lord's Spirit will follow us.

We must not take the old way of Christianity to rely on pastors and preachers. Neither should we depend on the responsible brothers or co-workers. We should depend on our spirit and on the operating Spirit. If our meetings with the new ones are good, three believers will become four, four believers will become five, and five believers will become six; our number will continue to multiply. If we are willing to take this way, the Lord will be with us. In such meetings the words in the Bible will be bright and clear, full of anointing, watering, and very sweet. Not only so, our temperaments and problems will spontaneously fall away. Whenever our relationship with the Lord is normal, all our problems leave us, we become bright and clear within, and it is difficult for Satan to touch us. Gradually, we can bring our classmates to the meetings of the church. We should also fellowship with the other brothers and sisters in our school in order to help one another bring our classmates into the church. We should also establish contact and fellowship between our saved classmates and the saints in the church as well as the other brothers and sisters in our school. In this way, the new ones will be brought into the church life.

If we all have this kind of practice, we will be effective. If there are two thousand brothers and sisters in a school, that is two thousand little speakers, who are more effective than one preacher. This is the Lord's way.

THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL BEING CONTINUAL

Furthermore, the parents of the young people whom we gain will be affected. When young people graduate from high school and enter college, it is very easy for them to lead their parents. It is not easy for the children to

listen to their parents, but it is rather easy for the parents to receive what their children say. When young people hear the gospel in school, they will tell their parents what they heard, and it will be easy for the parents to follow. Gaining a classmate is equivalent to gaining a family. This is a continual cycle, and the effect is also continual. May the Lord have mercy on us. From this day onward the work with the young people should be carried out by the young saints.