VITAL FACTORS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH LIFE

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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ISBN: 978-0-87083-228-4

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PREFACE

The messages contained in this book were given during a conference in Seoul, Korea in October of 1984.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FACTOR OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Exo. 3:14-15; John 1:14, 29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; Gen. 3:15; John 3:14; Num. 21:8-9; Heb. 2:14; John 12:31; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 6:6; Col. 1:15, 20; Heb. 2:9; Eph. 2:14-15; John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 12:13

In this series of messages we will consider the factors that are vital to the recovery of the church life. The New Testament reveals to us that God has an eternal purpose. God's eternal purpose is to have the church for the expression of Himself in Christ (Eph. 3:10-11). Hence, the church is the central revelation of the New Testament. Ephesians 5:25 tells us that the Lord Jesus died for the church, and Matthew 16:18 tells us that He is now building the church. The church is the main subject of all the Epistles. The last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, reveals to us the local churches in many localities (1:11). Today in the Lord's recovery the main item to be recovered is the church. Therefore, it is crucial that we see the factors that are vital to the recovery of the church life.

In this chapter and in the following five chapters we will cover six factors that are vital for the church life. The first three form a group consisting of Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life are the basic and crucial factors of the church life. If we are going to fulfill the desire of God's heart, surely we must practice the church life; and for us to practice the church life, we all need to see Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life.

Christ is the focus of the entire Bible. Concerning Christ, the Bible reveals to us two main things: His person and His work. The Bible first tells us who Christ is and what Christ is. It then goes on to tell us what Christ has done, what He is still doing, and what He will do in the future. The revelation of Christ's person and work in the Bible is exceedingly rich and profound. In this chapter we will consider six main items concerning the person and work of Christ.

CHRIST BEING JEHOVAH, THE TRIUNE GOD

The first item concerning Christ's person is that He is the very Jehovah, the Triune God. This fact is revealed in Exodus 3. In Exodus 3 we are told that when God came to call Moses, He appeared to him in a burning bush as the Angel of Jehovah (v. 2). The Angel of Jehovah denotes the One sent by Jehovah. However, in Exodus 3 the Angel of Jehovah was actually Jehovah God Himself. According to Exodus 3:3-4, when Moses turned to see the burning bush, it was Jehovah God who called to him out of the midst of the bush. Then God told Moses, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (v. 6). The fact that God is the God of three generations indicates that He is triune. In verse 13 Moses asked God what His name is. God answered that His name is Jehovah (vv. 14-15). The divine title *Jehovah* in the ancient Hebrew language literally means "to be," or "to exist." God's name is simply To Be. This means that everything will cease to be, but God will ever continue to be. God is the great To Be.

Most English translations of Exodus 3:14 render this title "I AM WHO I AM." In this verse God told Moses that His name is I AM WHO I AM. This name implies that He is the One who exists, the One who is, the One who remains, and the One who is everything we need. In John 8 the Lord Jesus used the name I Am in reference to Himself. In verse 24 He told the Pharisees, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." The Pharisees knew that the name I Am referred to Jehovah. This was the reason they condemned the Lord Jesus, saying that He blasphemed God by considering Himself the same as Jehovah (10:33). Yes, Jesus is Jehovah. The name *Jesus* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Joshua* (Num. 13:16), which means "Jehovah the Savior," or "the salvation of Jehovah." Jesus is the One who is. Nothing is but Jesus. Do not think that I am something, for I am nothing. You also are nothing. We are all nothing, but Jesus is. Jesus is everything. He is life (John 14:6), He is light (8:12), He is love (1 John 4:16), and He is grace (John 1:17). He is the real food (6:51), He is the real water (7:37-39), and He is even the door (10:9). Jesus is all-inclusive. He is the great I Am.

The divine title *To Be* implies that He is the self-existing and ever-existing One. The word *self-existing* refers to something that exists of or by itself

without beginning. God is self-existing, having no beginning. The word *ever-existing* refers to something that exists forever, without ending. Jesus, who is Jehovah the Savior, is the very To Be. He exists by Himself without beginning, and He exists forever without ending.

Furthermore, this self-existing and ever-existing One is the Triune God. In Exodus 3:6 God told Moses that He is the God of Abraham the father, the God of Isaac the son, and the God of Jacob the grandson. The fact that He is the God of three generations, not of one, two, or four generations, implies that He is the Triune God. He is the unique God, yet He is triune. He is the Father in His relationship to Abraham the father, He is the Son in His relationship to Isaac the son, and He is the Spirit in His relationship to Jacob the grandson. Here we can see the Triune God applied to three generations, yet He is still one God.

This great To Be, this self-existing and ever-existing Jehovah, the Triune God, was the very One sent by God to call Moses. As the sent One, He was the Angel of Jehovah. He is both the Sender and the sent One. This same One was sent again in the New Testament to call us. In the Gospel of John Jesus said many times that the Father sent Him. He was the One sent by God. The sent One is simply the Angel. In the New Testament the Angel of Jehovah is Jesus, and Jesus is God Himself. He is the very Jehovah, the Triune God. He is the complete God. Colossians 2:9 says that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Jesus is the very embodiment of God. He is nothing less than the complete God.

Paul says in Romans 9:5 that "Christ...is God over all, blessed forever." Our God is Jesus. Jesus, our Redeemer and our Savior, is our God. We should not think that Jesus and God are separate. No, our Jesus is our God. In his Epistles to Timothy and Titus, Paul uses the titles *our Savior God* (1 Tim. 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), *our Savior Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 1:10), and *Jesus Christ our Savior* (Titus 3:6). Furthermore, in Titus 2:13 he refers to *our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. Paul's use of these divine titles is strong proof that Jesus is our Savior and our God.

A number of people who claim to be Christians do not believe and confess that Jesus is God. Many of these so-called Christians say that Jesus was a great man and that because of this people worship Him as God. Surely we must reject this as heresy. Jesus is God! He is the self-existing and

ever-existing God. He is the eternal God, and He is the complete God—the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He is nothing less than the very God, the God who is one yet three—triune. Hallelujah! We all must declare that our God is Jesus.

BECOMING INCARNATED IN THE FLESH

This very God became incarnated in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). One day He entered into the womb of a virgin named Mary, and He accomplished a wonderful conception in that human womb. This happened nearly two thousand years ago. According to the record of the Bible, God created Adam approximately six thousand years ago. Then, after two thousand years God came in to call Abraham. God then waited for another two thousand years, and He came to visit a young virgin by the name of Mary. The very God as the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and entered into her womb to conceive the child Jesus. In Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18 and 20 we are told that a child was conceived in the virgin Mary, not of any man but of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is the very God reaching man, entered into Mary's womb and accomplished a marvelous conception. He remained in that womb for nine months and was finally born out of that womb as a little child. After His birth that little child was put into a manger.

According to Isaiah 9:6, that little child born to us is called Mighty God. Do you believe that a child born out of a virgin and put into a manger two thousand years ago was the mighty God? Most of the Jews do not believe this. They say that their God, who is the very Creator of heaven and earth, could never become a little child who was born out of a human virgin and put into a manger. Therefore, the Jews deny that Jesus is their God. Even today, after twenty centuries, the Jewish people still reject Christ as God. Nevertheless, a small number of Jews were called by this Jesus. When Jesus came out to minister at the age of thirty, He called four disciples, Andrew, Peter, James, and John (Matt. 4:18-22). These four disciples were all Jews. Eventually, they believed that Jesus is God. Later, a strong one among the Jews by the name of Saul was opposing and persecuting the people who declared that Jesus was God. But one day, while Saul was on the way to Damascus to arrest all the people who believed that Jesus was God, all of a sudden a great light shone around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice from heaven say, "Saul,

Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:1-4). That was a great surprise to Saul. After hearing the voice from the heavens, he may have thought, "I never persecuted anyone in the heavens. I persecuted Stephen and other followers of Jesus, and I am going to Damascus to arrest all those who believe in Jesus. All these people are on the earth, not in the heavens. Why does someone in the heavens come to me and tell me that I am persecuting him?" In his bewilderment Saul said, "Who are You, Lord?" The answer was, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute" (v. 5). In Saul's concept Jesus was crucified and buried. How could this Jesus now be in the heavens? The answer is that Jesus is actually the very God of Saul's forefathers (22:14), the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Through this encounter Saul was converted; Saul believed. He had no choice but to confess that Jesus is God. If Jesus were not God, how could it be that after He was crucified and buried, He spoke to Saul from the heavens? Saul, who was also Paul (13:9), became the strongest among the Jews not only to believe that Jesus is God but also to preach this fact. Wherever he went, he told the Jews that the very Jesus whom they rejected is the very Christ, the Son of God (9:20-22).

In Genesis 18, one day Jehovah came to visit Abraham with two angels. While Abraham sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day, all of a sudden three men came to him, and he welcomed them (vv. 1-5). One of these three was Jehovah in the form of a man. We know that Jehovah had a human body because Abraham prepared water that He might wash His physical feet (v. 4). Furthermore, Abraham asked his wife Sarah to prepare a big meal for them, and Jehovah ate that meal (vv. 6-8). Eventually, Jehovah talked with Abraham as a man would talk with a friend (vv. 17-33). Who was that man who visited Abraham? Yes, He was Jehovah, but He appeared to Abraham in a human body. Was He merely God, or was He a man? Whether you dare to say that He was a man or not, still He was in a man's body. In John 13 Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. I do believe that while He was washing the feet of Peter and John, He still remembered how Abraham prepared the water for Him to wash His feet. You may say that this could not be true, because at the time of Genesis 18 Jesus was not yet born. The fact that God appeared to Abraham as a man before the birth of Jesus is indeed a mystery. This mystery points us to the fact that Jesus is Jehovah, the very eternal God.

LIVING AS A GOD-MAN

One day Jesus was born of a human virgin to be a God-man. After His birth He lived on this earth for thirty years in a carpenter's home. How mysterious it is that God became a man and lived as a man in a poor home for thirty years! Then He came out to preach and to do things for God and for man.

In the Divine Nature with the Godhead and the Divine Attributes

The four Gospels present us a portrait of a wonderful person. This person had all the divine attributes. He had the divine power, He had the divine authority, including the authority to forgive people's sins, and He had the divine wisdom. Furthermore, He was omnipresent, and He was omniscient. He was everywhere, and He knew everything. Jesus lived as a God-man with the Godhead. People worshipped Him as God because He actually was God. He was God in the Godhead, and He was God with all of God's divine attributes.

Expressing God in the Human Nature With the Human Virtues

The people who were around Jesus often wondered who He was (Matt. 13:54-56; Luke 7:49; 8:25). He was God, yet He lived as a man in the human nature with all the human virtues. He was humble, kind, and merciful, and He was always full of sympathy. He was a genuine man, a man with the highest morality and with the highest standard of ethics. He was God living in man. He was God expressing all His attributes in the human virtues. He was the complete God and the perfect man. He was perfect, not only in the human virtues but also in all the human makeup. He had skin, bones, flesh, and blood. He ate as a man, and at times He even wept as a man. He was a genuine man, yet at the same time He was the real God. He was both the real God and a true man at the same time. It was not that at one moment He was God, then at a later time He was no longer God but a man, and then after another period of time He became God again and was no longer a man. No, at all times He was both God and man. In John 11, while He was weeping as a man, He was also God. Hence, it is difficult to say whether God was weeping or man was weeping. We may say that both God and man were weeping, but actually it is better to say that a God-man was weeping there, because at that time God and man were one.

DYING AN ALL-INCLUSIVE DEATH

After thirty-three and a half years of living as a God-man, Jesus went to the cross to die. It is important to realize that the One who died on the cross was a God-man, and that the blood shed on the cross was the blood of a God-man. Two verses, 1 John 1:7 and Acts 20:28, give us the biblical ground to say that the blood shed on the cross was the blood of a God-man. First John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." *Jesus* no doubt refers to man, and *His Son* refers to God Himself. This verse shows us that the very blood shed on the cross was the blood of Jesus the Son of God. This blood is exceedingly precious (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Because Jesus died for man, the blood that He shed had to be the blood of a genuine man. The blood that washes away our sins must be the genuine blood of a genuine man. Only man's blood can wash away man's sins. Yet, if it is only man's blood, it does not have the guarantee of eternal efficacy. In the One who died on the cross and shed His blood, there was the divine nature. When Jesus died on the cross, He died not only in the human nature but also in the divine nature. Therefore the blood that He shed was not merely the blood of a genuine man; the divine nature was also involved. The divine nature ensures the effectiveness of that human blood.

Then Acts 20:28 refers to "the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood." The blood of Jesus was man's blood, but in Acts 20:28 this blood is referred to as the blood of God. In this verse we are told that God obtained the church through His own blood. When I read this verse as a young man, I asked myself, "How could God have blood?" In Himself God could never have blood, but in Jesus God did have blood.

Jesus is the God-man. In Him we have both the human nature and the divine nature. In Him we have both God and man. At the same time He is both God and man. Hallelujah! This is our God. The Jews believe in God according to the Old Testament, and the Muslims follow the Jews in this matter. The God of both the Jews and the Muslims does not possess the human nature. He is merely God, having nothing to do with the human nature. However, as Christians, we need to realize that our God today does have the human nature. The Jews condemned the Lord Jesus to death because He claimed that He was the Son of God. Again and again Jesus declared before the Jews that He was the Son of God. When Jesus said that He was the Son of God, the Jews understood the Lord to mean that He was

equal with God (John 5:18). In John 10:33 they accused the Lord of blaspheming because He considered Himself the same as God. The Lord Jesus considered Himself God because He was God. Outside of Him we cannot find God. God is altogether embodied in Jesus (Col. 2:9).

Jesus is God, but the Jews arrested Him and condemned Him to be crucified because they thought He blasphemed by saying that He was God. In Matthew 26, when Jesus was judged by the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jews, the high priest said to Him, "I charge you to swear by the living God to tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God" (v. 63). The Lord Jesus did not deny that He was the Son of God. When He was asked about other things, He did not say anything, but when He was asked whether He was the Son of God, He said, "You have said rightly. Nevertheless I say to you, From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (v. 64). The Jewish high priest asked the Lord Jesus whether He was the Son of God, but the Lord answered that He was not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man. If He were not the Son of Man but merely the Son of God, how could He be judged by them? Jesus could be judged by the Jews only because He was the Son of Man. Moreover, the Lord's response indicated that not only was He the Son of Man on that day as He stood before them, but after they put Him to death, and after He rose from the dead, He would still be the Son of Man in the heavens. Furthermore, they would see Him as the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.

In Acts 7, while Stephen was being stoned to death, he saw the heavens opened up and Jesus standing there in the heavens as the Son of Man (v. 56). Hallelujah, today there is One who is both the Son of God and the Son of Man! This is our Savior. This is our God. Today our God and our Savior is the God-man. As such a God-man, He lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. Then He went to the cross and died there as a God-man. In the first stanza of a well-known hymn, Charles Wesley wrote, "Amazing love! how can it be / That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" (*Hymns*, #296). When I first read these words, I was perplexed and wondered how God could die for me. In another stanza of the same hymn, Wesley wrote, "'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!" As I read this line, I wondered how God, the immortal One, could die. However, today I must boldly and strongly declare that my God did die for me. He died for me in the humanity of Jesus. Without humanity God could not die for me even if He wanted to do so. God in Himself could never die, but He died in the humanity of Jesus. He was the very Creator crucified

for us by His creatures. The Jews and the Roman soldiers who crucified Him were all creatures. When they put Jesus on the cross, they crucified their Creator. The Creator was crucified on the cross by His creatures.

The death of Jesus was not a simple death; it was an all-inclusive death. Many who have been Christians for years may not realize that Jesus died on the cross with seven qualifications. In this chapter I am burdened to point out to you the seven qualifications with which Jesus died on the cross.

As the Lamb of God

The first qualification is that Jesus died as the Lamb of God. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus died as the Lamb of God to take away the aggregate, the totality, of sin and sins.

In the Likeness of the Flesh of Sin

The second qualification of Jesus in dying on the cross is that He died in the likeness of the flesh of sin. In dying in the likeness of the flesh of sin, He was made sin for the believers (2 Cor. 5:21), and God condemned sin in the flesh through His death (Rom. 8:3).

The flesh of sin is just we, the fallen human beings. As fallen human beings, we all are the flesh of sin. If you were to ask me what I was before I was saved, I would answer that I was nothing but the flesh of sin. Now I would ask you to consider what you were before you were saved. You, too, need to realize that before you were saved, you were nothing but the flesh of sin. When the Lord Jesus became flesh, He became a man like us. But within Him there was no sin. He was only in the *likeness* of the flesh of sin. He was not in the actuality, the reality, of the flesh of sin as we are. We are in the reality of the flesh of sin, but He was not. Romans 8:3 says that God sent His Son in the *likeness* of the flesh of sin. Being in the likeness of the flesh of sin was the second qualification of Jesus in dying on the cross.

In the Form of the Bronze Serpent

The third qualification is that Jesus died on the cross in the form of the bronze serpent. In John 3:14 the Lord Jesus said that He would be lifted up on the cross as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent on a pole in the Old Testament (Num. 21:8-9). In dying on the cross in the form of the bronze

serpent, the Lord Jesus bruised the head of the old serpent, Satan (Gen. 3:15), and destroyed him (Heb. 2:14).

As the Last Adam

The fourth qualification is that Jesus died on the cross as the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45b). *The last Adam* denotes the last man, the last of mankind. Hallelujah, Jesus is the last of mankind! When He died as the last Adam, the old man was crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6).

As the Firstborn of All Creation

The fifth qualification is that Jesus died as the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). This means that He was the first item of all the creatures. Some Christians would insist that the Lord Jesus is the Creator but that He is not a creature. But this is not logical. Since Jesus is a man, is He not a creature? As God, He is the Creator, and as man, He is surely a creature. A man who has blood, bones, skin, and flesh is certainly a creature. In dying as the first item of all creation, the Lord Jesus terminated the old creation and tasted death on behalf of everything (Heb. 2:9). Thus, He redeemed all created things (Col. 1:20).

As the Peacemaker

The sixth qualification is that the Lord Jesus died as the Peacemaker. As the Peacemaker, He abolished all the ordinances and made peace for the creation of the new man (Eph. 2:14-15). He is our peace, and He made peace for us. He is the Peacemaker.

As the Grain of Wheat

The seventh qualification is that the Lord Jesus died as a grain of wheat to release the divine life for His propagation (John 12:24).

If we would understand the all-inclusive death of Christ, we need to realize that Christ died on the cross with these seven qualifications: He was the Lamb of God; He was in the likeness of the flesh of sin; He was in the form of the bronze serpent; He was the last Adam, the last of mankind; He was the first item of all the creatures; He was the Peacemaker; and He was the grain of wheat. He was not simple; rather, He was all-inclusive. He died on the cross

with these seven qualifications because He had to deal with a number of negative things. As the Lamb of God, He took away the totality of sin and sins. In the likeness of the flesh of sin, He was made sin for us. On the cross, in the eyes of God, Christ was made sin for us. He did not know sin, yet He was made sin for us, and through His death God condemned sin in the flesh. This is a profound matter. To take away sin is one thing, but to be made sin and to have sin condemned is another thing.

Christ had to deal with sin, and He also had to deal with Satan, the old serpent. Therefore, in the form of the bronze serpent He destroyed Satan. Then, when He died as the last Adam, our old man was crucified with Him. Furthermore, as one of the creatures, He terminated the old creation. When He died on the cross, at the very moment of His death, the veil of the temple was split in two (Matt. 27:50-51). On the veil cherubim were embroidered, representing all the creatures (2 Chron. 3:14; Ezek. 1:1-10; 10:14-15). When the veil was split, all the creatures were also split. This indicates that when Jesus died on the cross, all the creatures died with Him.

Jesus also died on the cross to make peace. He took away all the partitions and abolished all the ordinances, habits, and customs between different nations, especially the ordinances that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. Through His death on the cross Jesus abolished all these differences to make all peoples one Body in Christ to be the new man (Eph. 2:14-16). He also died as a grain of wheat to release the divine life within Him, that He might be multiplied, that He might be increased and propagated. How wonderful this is!

We all need to see that Christ died on the cross such an all-inclusive death with all His qualifications. He dealt with sin and sins, He caused sin to be condemned, He destroyed Satan, He had the old man crucified, He terminated the entire old creation, and He abolished all the differences between the nations. On the negative side He solved all the problems. Then on the positive side He released the divine life from within the shell of His humanity in order to produce many grains. These many grains are His multiplication, His propagation, in order to produce a Body for Himself. This is what He accomplished through His death.

RISING FROM THE DEAD

After He died and was buried, on the third day He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-4). In His resurrection He accomplished two main things: first, He imparted the divine life into His believers for their regeneration (John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3), and second, He became a life-giving Spirit to impart the Triune God essentially into His believers as their life and life supply (1 Cor. 15:45b). This is a profound matter. After He completed everything through His death, in His resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit to enter into His disciples to bring the processed Triune God into them as their life and life supply. Hallelujah! Today the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit indwells us to impart the processed Triune God into our being as our life and our life supply.

ASCENDING TO THE HEAVENS

Forty days after His resurrection He ascended to the heavens (Acts 1:9-11). He died, He rose, and He ascended.

Being Made the Lord and the Christ

He ascended to the heavens to be made the Lord and Christ (2:36). He was made the Lord in His ascension to possess the universe. Jesus is the Owner of the entire universe. We all need to realize that He is our Lord. He is our Possessor, and He is our Owner. He is also God's Christ to carry out God's commission and to fulfill God's purpose. Today in the heavens Jesus is the Lord of the entire universe, and there in the heavens He is carrying out God's commission. He is the Lord, and He is the Christ.

Being Made Head over All Things to the Church

In the heavens Christ was also made the Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23). What He is as the Head over all things is for the formation of the church, which is His Body.

Pouring Out the Spirit Economically on His Body

In His ascension Christ poured out Himself as the all-inclusive Spirit upon His Body (Acts 2:33). By the outpouring of the all-inclusive Spirit, all His believers were baptized into one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). Thus, the issue of the six

items in this chapter concerning the person and work of Christ is that He has obtained a Body for His expression.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FACTOR OF THE SPIRIT AND THE FACTOR OF THE DIVINE LIFE (1)

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:2; John 1:29; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 3:14; Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:45; Col. 1:15; Eph. 2:14-15; Gen. 1:2; 2:7-8; Luke 1:35; 4:1; John 7:39; 2 Cor. 3:17; John 20:22; Acts 2:33

In the previous chapter we covered the first factor that is vital to the recovery of the church life. This factor is Christ, the all-inclusive One. In this chapter we will cover two additional factors—the factor of the Spirit and the factor of the divine life. The Spirit is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, and life is the divine life, the eternal, uncreated life of God (1 John 1:2; Eph. 4:18). Before covering these two factors, however, I would like to say something further concerning Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

CHRIST DYING ON THE CROSS WITH A SEVENFOLD QUALIFICATION

Christ died on the cross with a sevenfold qualification: He was the Lamb of God; He was in the likeness of the flesh of sin; He was in the form of a bronze serpent; He was the last Adam, the last of mankind; He was the Firstborn, the first item, of all God's creatures; He was the Peacemaker; and He was a grain of wheat. These are the seven qualifications with which Christ died on the cross.

Among Christians it is commonly taught that Christ died on the cross as our Redeemer. This is absolutely correct, but it is too general. Christ died as our Redeemer, but what does this mean? When I was very young, I heard this kind of teaching and even preached this kind of gospel to others. However, I did not know what it meant to say that Christ died as our Redeemer. I only understood that Christ was our Redeemer to save us from God's judgment and from hell. But after I was saved, I spent a great deal of time studying the Bible concerning Christ's death. I have studied this matter for approximately fifty years, and I have come to the conclusion that, according to the complete

word of God in the Bible, Christ died on the cross as seven items. Christ died on the cross not only as one item—our Redeemer—but as seven items.

First, Christ died on the cross as the Lamb of God to take away our sin (John 1:29). Second, He died on the cross in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3). In other words, He died on the cross in our likeness. We are the flesh of sin. The fact that Christ died on the cross in the likeness of the flesh of sin means that He died in our likeness. *The flesh of sin* actually denotes sinners. To say that we are the flesh of sin means that we are sinners. Christ died on the cross in the likeness of sinners. He Himself was not a sinner. He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), and He had no sin (Heb. 4:15), yet He died in the likeness of sinners.

Then, third, Christ died in the form of a bronze serpent (John 3:14; Num. 21:8-9). When He was crucified on the cross, in the eyes of God He was a bronze serpent. He died in the form of a bronze serpent to destroy the old serpent, Satan, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Fourth, Christ died on the cross as the last Adam, the last of mankind (1 Cor. 15:45b). Fifth, He died as the Firstborn of all creation, the first item of all the creatures (Col. 1:15). Since Christ became a man, He surely was a creature. In the eyes of God, Christ as a man was considered the first item of all the creatures. He died as the first of the creatures to terminate all the creation. Then, sixth, Christ died on the cross as the Peacemaker (Eph. 2:14-15). As the Peacemaker, and even as the very peace, He made peace between us and God and between all the different nations. Last, He died as a grain of wheat to produce many grains for His multiplication, His increase, and His propagation (John 12:24).

CHRIST BEING CRUCIFIED ON THE CROSS WITH ALL THINGS

When Christ died as the Lamb of God, He died for us; that is, He died on our behalf. This is somewhat objective because it implies that He died on the cross by Himself, apart from us. However, He also died in the likeness of the flesh of sin, meaning that He died in the likeness of a sinner. This indicates that He identified Himself with us. The fact that He died in the likeness of the flesh of sin means that He died in our likeness. This is not objective but subjective to us. He joined Himself to us, the sinners. He even put us, the sinners who are the flesh of sin, upon Himself. Thus, He died in our likeness.

Then, when Christ died on the cross as the bronze serpent, He brought the devil with Him. However, we need to realize that the devil whom Christ brought to the cross is in us. On the day of man's fall, the devil, Satan, as the personification of sin, entered into man (Rom. 5:12). From that day until now, Satan as sin has been dwelling in our flesh, in our sinful nature (7:18-20). Therefore, when Christ died in our likeness, He brought the devil with Him to the cross. Hallelujah, Christ died in the flesh! Since Satan was in the flesh, when Christ died in the likeness of our flesh, the devil died with Him. In His death He brought the devil with Him. Thus, Hebrews 2:14 says that through death Christ destroyed the devil, the one who has the might of death. When Christ was crucified in the likeness of the flesh of sin, He crucified Satan in the flesh of sin.

Then, as the last Adam, Christ died with all of us, that is, with the old man. As the last Adam, the last of mankind, He brought all mankind to the cross. Thus, Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Christ.

Then, as the first item of all creation, He died on the cross not only with us, the sinners, but with all the creation. Hebrews 2:9 says that in dying on the cross, Christ tasted death on behalf of everything. In this way He redeemed and reconciled all the creation to God (Col. 1:20).

Then, as the Peacemaker, Christ died on the cross with the law. According to Colossians 2:14, when Christ died on the cross, God nailed the ordinances of the law to the cross. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:15 says that on the cross Christ abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances. One of the strongest ordinances in the law was the ordinance of circumcision, which required all the Jewish males to cut off a part of their flesh (Gen. 17:10-13; Lev. 12:1-3). Another strong ordinance was the requirement to keep the Sabbath (Exo. 20:8-11; 31:13-17). The third major ordinance in the law was the keeping of the dietary regulations recorded in Leviticus 11. According to these regulations, certain animals were considered clean and could be eaten by the Israelites, whereas certain other animals were considered unclean and could not be eaten. It is because of these regulations that the devout Jews, even today, do not eat pork. To them the meat of the swine is a most unclean thing. Circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and the keeping of the dietary regulations are the three main ordinances that separate the Jews from the Gentiles. However, when the Lord Jesus went to the cross, He brought all these ordinances with

Him, and they were all nailed to the cross by God. Therefore, the separation between the Jews and Gentiles has been taken away.

Finally, as the grain of wheat, the Lord Jesus died with the human shell. Every kind of seed has a certain shell. Within that shell life is concealed. Christ is God, and God is the divine life. This divine life, which is God Himself, was concealed in Christ's humanity. Christ's humanity was a shell in which the divine life was concealed. When He went to the cross to die, that human shell was crucified. The human shell was broken, and the divine life concealed within that shell was released.

Let us count how many items were with Christ when He was crucified on the cross. Actually, the number of items is countless. First, Christ was crucified with our sin, and second, with our sins. The third item was the flesh of sin, which is simply we, the sinners. The fourth item was the old serpent, Satan, and the fifth item was the old man. Christ was also crucified with the old creation, including the heavens, the earth, the birds, the cats, the dogs, the turtles, and all created things. They all shared in Christ's death. All creation was crucified with Christ on the cross. According to Matthew 27:51, at the moment Christ died, the veil of the temple was split in two. On the veil cherubim, the living creatures, were embroidered (2 Chron. 3:14; Ezek. 1:5, 10; 10:14-15). When the veil was split, the living creatures were also split. This indicates that when Jesus died as the first item of God's creatures, all the creatures died with Him.

Furthermore, the ordinances of the law were also included in Christ's crucifixion. These ordinances include the habits and customs of all the different peoples on the earth. Every nation has its own habits and customs. For example, the Orientals use chopsticks to eat their food, whereas the Europeans and the Americans use forks. However, we need to realize that both chopsticks and forks were nailed to the cross. Hallelujah, in the church there are no Chinese chopsticks and no American forks! This means that in the church life there are no Chinese and no Americans. In the church life there is only the all-inclusive Christ, the Son of God. Although I was born in China, I do not consider myself as Chinese, nor do I consider you as Chinese, Japanese, American, or Korean. We are all children of God, and we are all brothers.

In the church there are no Chinese, Japanese, Americans, or Koreans. According to tradition, the Japanese wear kimonos, and the Chinese wear long gowns. However, we all need to realize that the Japanese kimono and the Chinese long gown have both been crucified on the cross. Eventually, the human shell, our very humanity, was crossed out on the cross. The cross has terminated everything, including the devil, Satan.

CHRIST PRODUCING THE CHURCH THROUGH HIS CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION

In Christ's crucifixion, not only were all things terminated on the cross, but the divine life was released. The divine life was released out of the one grain of wheat to produce many grains, the many sons of God. Now we are no longer sinners and no longer the old man. We no longer belong to the old creation, but we are now sons of God and members of Christ. Ultimately, we are the church, the Body of Christ.

In His resurrection Christ imparted the divine life into our being. He brought the Triune God into our being to cause us to be born of God (1 Pet. 1:3). Furthermore, in resurrection He became the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit to enter into our being and to be one with us (1 Cor. 15:45b; John 20:22; 1 Cor. 6:17). Now the resurrected Christ is living within us (2 Cor. 13:5; Rom. 8:10). How wonderful!

After His resurrection He ascended to the heavens to be made the Lord of the entire universe in order that He might possess the universe (Acts 2:36; 10:36). In His ascension He was also made the Christ of God to carry out God's commission (2:36). Furthermore, He was made the Head over all things to the church and for the church (Eph. 1:22). This was for the formation of the church. Then in His ascension He poured out the all-inclusive Spirit, who was Himself, even the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God, upon His Body (Acts 2:33). In this way He baptized His members in the Spirit into one Body (1 Cor. 12:13).

Now within us we have the essential Spirit, the Spirit's divine essence, and upon us we have the economical Spirit, the Spirit of God's economy. In other words, within us we have the processed Triune God as our essence, and upon

us we have the processed Triune God for His economy. Within us we have the Spirit of life, and upon us we have the Spirit of power. Within and without, inside and outside, we are full of the Spirit. This is vital to the church life. The church is not an organization or merely a human society. The church is the living Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22b-23). It is an organic matter. It is an organism full of the Triune God, saturated with the Triune God, and clothed with the Triune God. The Triune God is within us as life, and the Triune God is upon us as clothing. Within we have the Triune God as our infilling, and without we have the Triune God as our clothing. Hallelujah, this is the church!

THE FACTOR OF THE SPIRIT

At this point I wish to say a word concerning the factor of the Spirit.

The Spirit of God for God's Creation

In the Bible the Spirit is first called the Spirit of God (Gen. 1:2). Actually, the Spirit of God is just God Himself. Let us use the current of electricity as an illustration. The current of electricity is simply electricity itself. The current of electricity is electricity in motion. If electricity is not in motion, there is no current of electricity. In like manner, the Spirit of God is God moving. When electricity moves, it is the current; when God moves, He is the Spirit.

We should not make the mistake of separating the Spirit of God from God Himself. To do so would not be logical. It is impossible to separate the current of electricity from electricity itself. If we could separate the current of electricity from electricity, there would be no current. In the same way we cannot separate the Spirit from God, because the Spirit is simply God Himself in His move. If we separate the Spirit from God, there would be no Spirit. Therefore, whenever we read in the Bible concerning the Spirit, we need to realize that the Spirit is God Himself in His move.

Throughout the ages God has moved in different ways. First, God moved in His creation. Speaking of God in His creation, Genesis 1:2 says, "The Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters." This verse indicates clearly that in God's creation the Spirit is called the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of Jehovah

for God's Contact with Man

After God's creation God had contact with man. God's contact with man was another move of God. In this move the Spirit is called the Spirit of Jehovah (2:7-8; 6:3). Throughout the Old Testament, when God came to contact man, the Spirit of Jehovah came upon certain persons (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 16:13). Thus, the Spirit of Jehovah is for God to move in contacting man.

The Holy Spirit for Christ's Incarnation

Two thousand years ago, God was incarnated to become a man. This was God's greatest move. In this move the Spirit is called the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit was for making God's creature holy. Man was God's creature, but before the time of Christ's incarnation, man was never made holy. But now God in His move desired to come into man to be one with man, even to be born of man. In such a move the Spirit is called the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit

But God still desired to move on. First, He moved in creation; God created man. Then He moved to have contact with this man. After a period of time God moved to enter into man to make Himself one with man. This is incarnation. In incarnation God became a little child in a manger. We need to realize that this child in a manger was God who had become one with man. However, this is not all. When God became a man, He made Himself one with man. After He made Himself one with man, He desired that man would be one with Him. Therefore, God had to take a further step to live on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, to die on the cross, to be buried, and to rise up to become the life-giving Spirit. In the New Testament this Spirit is called the Spirit.

The Spirit Being Not Yet before Christ's Glorification

John 7:39 says that "the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." This word is difficult to understand. The Spirit of God was there, the Spirit of Jehovah was there, and even the Holy Spirit was there, but the

Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. This indicates that when Jesus died, was buried, and rose up to be glorified, He Himself became the Spirit. Today, whenever a person opens to Him, the Spirit will enter into him, saturate him, sanctify him, transform him, and mingle with him to make him a man who is one with God.

In His move God needed to take four steps. These four steps were creation, contacting man, becoming man (that is, becoming one with man), and making man one with God. First, God created the heavens and the earth with man. Then, second, God contacted man, and, third, God made Himself one with man by becoming a man. Then, in the fourth step, the very God became a life-giving Spirit to enter into man, to regenerate man, to saturate man, to transform man, and to sanctify man in order to make man absolutely one with God.

In the first step of God's move, the Spirit is the Spirit of God. In the second step, to contact man, the Spirit is the Spirit of Jehovah, and in the third step, to become a man and to become one with man, the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. However, after becoming one with man, God still wanted to make this man one with Himself. In making man one with God, the Spirit is simply called the Spirit. Therefore, this wonderful One is the Spirit of God for God's creation, the Spirit of Jehovah for God to contact man, the Holy Spirit for Christ's incarnation, to make God one with man, and the Spirit to make man one with God. It is the Spirit who makes us one with God.

The last mention of the Spirit of God in the Bible is in Revelation 22:17. This verse begins, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come!" The divine title used in this verse is not the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, or the Holy Spirit, but *the Spirit*. *The Spirit* is the conclusion, the final title, of the Spirit of God in the Bible.

Christ Being the Spirit after His Glorification

The Spirit is the realization of Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of the Triune God (John 14:17-20; Col. 2:9). Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God. The entire Triune God is embodied in Christ, and this Christ is fully realized as the Spirit.

As the embodiment of the Triune God, Christ went through incarnation, human living, and crucifixion and entered into resurrection. In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). According to 2 Corinthians 3:17, today, after His resurrection, that is, after His glorification (Luke 24:26, 46), Christ is the Spirit.

Since the Spirit is the full realization of Christ, and Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God, the Spirit is simply the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. After passing through all the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, the Triune God in Christ became such a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit entered into us as our life and essence, and He also came upon us as our power for His economy. Now we are one with the Triune God, who is the Spirit.

THE FACTOR OF THE DIVINE LIFE

At this point we need to consider what is the divine life. As I mentioned previously, when the Triune God moves, He is the Spirit. Eventually, this Spirit comes into us to live within us. When He lives within us, He is the divine life. When God moves, He is the Spirit; when God lives in us, He is the divine life.

Thus far, we have covered the first three factors for the recovery of the church life. These three factors are Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. Christ is God embodied, the Spirit is God moving, and the divine life is God living in us. Hallelujah! We have Christ as the embodiment of God, we have the Spirit as God moving, and we have the divine life as God living within us.

Since we have the divine life, by what life should we live? We all need to realize that if we live by our natural life, practically speaking, we are outside the church. I was born a typical Chinese. However, I do not live by the Chinese life but by the divine life. This divine life is simply God living in us.

The church is a group of people living by the divine life. This divine life is simply the all-inclusive Spirit living in the believers. This all-inclusive Spirit is the realization of the all-inclusive Christ, and the all-inclusive Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God. Therefore, the church is the manifestation, the expression, of the Triune God (1 Tim. 3:15-16). Thus, we have Christ, the

Spirit, and the divine life as three vital factors for the recovery of the church life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FACTOR OF THE SPIRIT AND THE FACTOR OF THE DIVINE LIFE (2)

Scripture Reading: John 7:39; 2 Cor. 3:17; John 20:22; Acts 1:3; John 20:19; Acts 1:9, 12-14; 2:1-4, 33; Luke 24:49; Rom. 8:9, 2; Acts 16:6-7; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 5:10, 17; Rev. 20:6

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You for this gathering. You have gathered us together around You through Your Word. O Lord, how we love You, and how we love Your Word. We thank You that You are the very God, the very Word, and the very Spirit. We thank You that You are even the life, the divine life, that we are enjoying every day. Lord, we believe that You are with us and that we are really one spirit with You. We praise You that we are here in the church enjoying You as the Spirit, as life, and as the very God. Thank You for the cleansing blood. Thank You for all the enlightening words, and thank You for the anointing Spirit. We put our full trust in You. Thank You, Lord Jesus. In Your precious name. Amen.

In the two preceding chapters we covered three factors that are vital to the recovery of the church life: Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. In this chapter I wish to speak a further word regarding the factor of the Spirit and the factor of the divine life.

THE SPIRIT BREATHED INTO THE DISCIPLES

In the previous chapter we saw that the Spirit of God became the Spirit after Christ was glorified (John 7:39; 2 Cor. 3:17). It was at this time that the Spirit was first breathed into the disciples. On the day of the Lord's resurrection, He came back to the disciples in the evening, breathed Himself into them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The Greek word *pneuma,* translated "Spirit" in this verse, also means "breath." When the Lord Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," He meant that they were to receive the holy breath. The Holy Spirit is the holy pneuma, and the holy

pneuma is the holy breath. Thus, the Lord likened the Spirit to breath by which we live.

The Spirit as the holy breath was breathed into the disciples essentially for their existence so that they might live by this life-giving Spirit. This is the Spirit of life, the Spirit of the divine essence. When this Spirit of life was breathed into the disciples, this meant that the divine essence of God was breathed into their inner being. The processed Triune God as the Spirit in His divine essence was breathed into the disciples' inner being. God's divine essence thus became the very element in their inner being. From then on the disciples had the divine element in their being. This was for their existence, for their spiritual living. All this happened in the Lord's resurrection.

To repeat, in His resurrection the Lord became a life-giving Spirit, and in His resurrection He came to the disciples and breathed Himself as the Spirit into them as the divine essence. Now they had something divine in their being. This was for their spiritual being, their spiritual existence, and their spiritual living.

TRAINING THE DISCIPLES TO LIVE BY HIS INVISIBLE PRESENCE

After He was resurrected, the Lord Jesus stayed with the disciples for forty days in order to train them to enjoy His invisible presence (Acts 1:3). The Lord had been with them in the flesh for three and a half years. During those three and a half years, the disciples had enjoyed the Lord's physical presence, which was visible to all of them. But to their great dismay the Lord Jesus was crucified and was buried. They thought that that was the end of Him, and they were very disappointed. It was a great surprise to them when on the third day the Lord Jesus was resurrected.

That night He came back to them, not in a physical way but in a spiritual way. The doors of the room in which the disciples met were closed, yet the Lord Jesus came and stood in their midst (John 20:19). They did not know how the Lord entered the room, yet He came into the room, appeared to them, and breathed into them. Then after a while He disappeared. The disciples had never experienced this before. This was the Lord's spiritual presence, a presence invisible to human eyes. In those three and a half years the Lord's presence with them was physical and visible. But now in resurrection the Lord

Jesus came back to the disciples in a spiritual way, and His presence was no longer physical but spiritual and invisible. However, because of the weakness of the disciples, they sometimes needed His invisible presence to become visible for a short time. He then would disappear. For forty days the Lord Jesus was with the disciples in this way, appearing and disappearing, becoming visible and invisible. This might have troubled the disciples. After the Lord had appeared to them and then disappeared, Peter, John, and the other disciples might have asked one another what this meant. Was that not the Lord Jesus who had appeared to them? Surely it was He, but where was He now? They did not know where the Lord had gone. They needed to realize that Jesus never left them, for He was within them. In this way the Lord Jesus trained them for forty days to practice and to enjoy His invisible presence.

Although we cannot see Him, we believe that the Lord Jesus is here. He is not visible, but He is very real in us. I have the assurance that Jesus is in me. While I am speaking, I believe that the Lord Jesus speaks with me. If you really believe that the Lord Jesus is within you, it is impossible for you to remain silent or stay still. Because you have Jesus within you, you cannot help but jump for joy and shout Hallelujah!

THE SPIRIT POURED OUT UPON THE DISCIPLES

After training His disciples for forty days, the Lord ascended to the heavens. This was clearly seen and realized by the disciples (Acts 1:9). They returned to Jerusalem and prayed for ten days until the day of Pentecost (vv. 12-14). On the day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured out upon them (2:1-4, 33). This pouring out of the Spirit was different from what had taken place on the day of the Lord's resurrection. On the day of resurrection the Spirit was breathed into the disciples, but on the day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured out upon them. Before the Lord Jesus ascended to the heavens, He told His disciples, "Behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In speaking of the Spirit who was about to be poured out upon them, the Lord used the words *put on*, or *clothed*. This power from on high was the Spirit of God's economy, who was to be poured out upon the disciples. The pouring out of the Spirit was their being clothed with power from on high. This was not the Spirit of life within but the Spirit of power without.

THE SPIRIT AS BREATH AND WATER WITHIN AND AS CLOTHING WITHOUT

We have seen that the Spirit within is likened to breath (John 20:22). The Spirit of life is also likened to water for drinking. In John 7:37, Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." To drink is one thing, but to be clothed is another. We need to drink of Jesus, to have Jesus within us as the living water, and we also need to be clothed with the Spirit of power. We need the Spirit in both ways. We need the Spirit within as breath and as water for drinking, and we also need the Spirit without as our clothing.

With our physical life both breathing and drinking are crucial. If we cannot breathe, in a few minutes we will die. Furthermore, our life also depends upon our drinking. If we do not drink, we cannot live properly. The Spirit of life within is for our life and living, and this Spirit is likened to breath and to water for drinking. However, if I am breathing well and drinking sufficiently, yet I am not wearing any clothing, it is not proper for me to visit anyone. In order to speak to anyone, I need air and water within, and I also need to wear the proper clothing.

We may illustrate this principle with the example of a policeman. A policeman may be a small man, but when he puts on his uniform and stands in the street, people pay attention to him. This man has the authority to stop all the cars. But if the same policeman stands in the street without his uniform, no one will obey him. When a policeman in uniform orders someone to pay a traffic ticket, it must be paid, for the policeman is one who has authority, signified by his uniform.

When the Spirit of God's economy, that is, the Spirit of power, was poured upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, they were all clothed with power from on high. Peter was a small fisherman, but when he stood up on that day, he spoke with authority. This was because on the day of Pentecost Peter was clothed with the heavenly uniform. By this we can see that in our experience the Spirit has two aspects, an inward aspect and an outward aspect. Inwardly He is the breath and the living water, and outwardly He is the power, the uniform. The Spirit of power was not for the disciples to live but for them to work, to preach, to minister, and to carry out God's economy.

THE PROCESSED ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

This Spirit today is also called the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9), the Spirit of life (v. 2), the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6), the Spirit of Jesus (v. 7), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), and the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). When the Bible speaks of the Spirit of God, this means that God's essence, God's element, is in the Spirit. But the title *the Spirit of Jesus* means that the essence of Jesus, His humanity in particular, is in the Spirit. Because Jesus was the name given to Him at His human birth, the term *the Spirit of Jesus* denotes mainly the Spirit of Jesus' humanity. When the Bible speaks of *the Spirit of Christ,* this title implies that the element of Christ is in the Spirit. Christ is the One anointed by God, and He is the resurrected One. Therefore, in the Spirit of Christ there is the element of resurrection, and there is the element of anointing. When the Bible uses the title *the Spirit of Jesus Christ,* this means that in this Spirit there is the humanity, human living, and crucifixion of Jesus and the anointing, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Furthermore, the name Jesus means "Jehovah the Savior." Hence, the Spirit of Jesus Christ also includes divinity. Now we can see the many elements in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The elements of His humanity, divinity, human living, anointing, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are all in this one Spirit.

We may illustrate this by a cup of water to which many ingredients are added. It begins as plain water. But when tea is put into it, it becomes tea-water because the element of tea has been added to the water. Then when milk is put in, the element of milk is added to the water. When sugar and lemon are put into the water, the elements of sugar and lemon are added to the water. Now such a drink has the element of tea, the element of milk, the element of sugar, and the element of lemon. Because all these elements are in the water, it is now a drink composed of water, tea, sugar, milk, and lemon. Originally, it was merely a glass of plain water, but now the water contains tea, milk, sugar, and lemon.

This is an illustration of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is like a glass of plain water. However, although the Spirit of Jesus Christ is still the Spirit of God, He now includes the elements of Jesus' humanity, divinity, human living, anointing, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

With the Spirit of Jesus Christ there is the bountiful supply (Phil. 1:19). This is like the full supply of a drink that contains milk, tea, sugar, and lemon. This is the all-inclusive Spirit. Such a Spirit is also the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), the processed Spirit, the very Spirit who has passed through a long process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Therefore, today He is the processed, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. Hallelujah! This is the Spirit.

THE CHURCH LIFE BEING CHRIST, THE SPIRIT, AND THE DIVINE LIFE

We have seen that the Spirit is the realization of Christ and that Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God. We have also seen that when the Triune God moves, He is the Spirit. Just as the current of electricity is electricity in motion, the Spirit of God is God moving. As the Spirit, He moves into us, He stays in us, and He lives in us. When He lives in us, He becomes the divine life. The divine life is simply God Himself living in us.

When God is embodied, He is Christ. When God moves, He is the Spirit. When God lives in us, He is the divine life. These are three factors vital to the church life: Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. The church life is simply Christ, plus the Spirit, plus the divine life. Christ is God embodied, the Spirit is God moving, and the divine life is God living in us.

I hope that all of you, especially the young people, will speak all these things again and again until you can speak them in your dreams. Speak of the three factors vital to the church life: Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. Christ is God embodied, the Spirit is God moving, and the divine life is God living in us. This is the church life. The church is not something organized, not merely a human society. The church is Christ, the church is the Spirit, and the church is the divine life. What is Christ? Christ is God embodied. What is the Spirit? The Spirit is God moving. What is the divine life? The divine life is God living in us. We all must have this dream, the dream of the church.

A DAILY SALVATION BY THE DIVINE LIFE

We all must see that the divine life is the Triune God living in the believers. You have been regenerated with this divine life, and now this divine life is saving you with a daily salvation (Rom. 5:10). This divine life saves you from your bad temper, from anger, from worry, and from anxiety. It even saves you from murmuring. In the family life there is always murmuring. Husbands may murmur about their wives, and wives may murmur about their husbands. A husband may say that he does not always love his wife because sometimes she is not so lovable. This is murmuring. A sister may say that she does not always submit to her husband because sometimes he is not a proper head. This is also murmuring. In the church life the saints sometimes murmur about the elders. All this shows how much you need a daily salvation. If God lives in you in reality, this living of God will save you from murmuring. Then to you your husband or your wife will be wonderful, and all the elders will be wonderful. We all need this kind of salvation.

To be saved in life as mentioned in Romans 5:10 is not to be saved from perdition, from hell, but to be saved from our daily "hell." Perhaps this morning or this afternoon a sister was in "hell" for three hours because her husband offended her. Then she came to a meeting, heard the message, and became happy. In a sense this meeting saved her from her hell. However, I expect that every day you will be saved by God living in you. Do not forget that God living in you is the divine life. In Romans 5:10 Paul says that we will be saved in His life. *Salvation* in this verse does not refer to salvation from eternal perdition. To be saved in His life means to be saved from daily failures, from daily weaknesses. This is the life that we are enjoying today.

In the millennium the faithful believers will reign in life as kings ruling over all things (Rev. 20:6). However, even today we can be kings ruling over our anxiety, over our anger, over our bad habits, over our bad temper, and over murmuring (Rom. 5:17). We can be kings in our daily life and in our church life. We can be kings in our offices. The sisters who teach school can be kings in their schools, kings ruling in life. This is the divine life.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FACTOR OF THE PROPER PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH LIFE

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 15:41; Rom. 16:4; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:2; Rev. 1:4; Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 2:22; Rev. 1:11; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; Rom. 16:1; Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-12; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:12-13; Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:26, 29; Acts 14:4, 14; 21:8

In the previous chapters we covered the first three factors that are vital to the recovery of the church life. These factors are Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. When we consider these three factors, we should become excited and stirred up in the spirit. In this chapter we come to the fourth factor that is vital to the recovery of the church life: the proper practice of the church life. Concerning this factor, we all need to be very calm, quiet, and sober. We need to consider this fourth factor with a sober mind. In this chapter I wish to present to you a very basic truth in the Bible. To learn the truths in the Bible we need to have a sober mind, a mind that is clear, transparent, and enlightened by the Lord. We need such a mind to study the truth in the Bible concerning the church. We need to study the truth concerning the church, not in a general way but in a very particular way. We need to especially learn the truth concerning the proper practice of the church life.

Most Christians would agree that they need the fellowship of a church. Actually, there are very few Christians who are not members of a church. Most Christians have a church, but the question is, do they have the proper church or an improper church? Today in every large city there are too many different so-called churches. In the city of Seoul, Korea, the Roman Catholic Church is very prominent. However, it is wrong to associate the word *Roman* with the church. In the Bible there is no Roman Church. Colossians 3:11 tells us that in the new man there is neither Greek nor Jew. Thus, there is no such thing as the Jewish Church or the Greek Church in the Bible. Furthermore, there is no Anglican Church, no Chinese Church, no Korean Church, no Presbyterian Church, no Baptist Church, and no

Pentecostal Church. All these "churches" are improper because they are not scriptural, not according to God's holy Word.

In order to know what is proper regarding the church, we need to study the Bible. I have been studying the Bible concerning the matter of the church since 1925. In this chapter I wish to present to you a brief outline of this matter. This brief, accurate, and clear outline is the cream of my nearly sixty years of study concerning the church. I am happy to present this outline to you. My desire is to impress you with the proper practice of the church life according to the Bible.

There is nothing wrong with the church itself, but the way that Christians practice the church life might be wrong. Out of all the different ways of practicing the church life among Christians today, it is difficult to find one that is right. To be right in the practice of the church life is to be according to the Bible. The proper practice of the church life is not according to culture, not according to society, not according to any kind of religious background, and not according to our imagination; it must be absolutely according to the holy Word of God.

CHRIST BUILDING THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The church that Christ is building is the universal church, not the church in a nation or the church in a city. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said to Peter, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." In this verse the Lord considered Himself as the rock (cf. v. 16). Christ Himself is the very rock upon which the church is built. The church in Matthew 16:18 is the universal church, the one church in the entire universe.

The Universal Church Being the Unique Body of Christ

The universal church is the unique Body of Christ. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, Christ is the Head, and the church is His Body. Christ the Head has only one Body (4:4). It is abnormal for a head to have more than one body. If you saw a person with one head and two bodies, surely you would consider him a monster. In Christianity today, the unique Body of Christ has been divided into countless "bodies." These bodies are the many so-called churches in existence around the globe. All the different "churches" claim that their

Head is Christ. This means that the one Head, Christ, has many bodies. This is not only wrong, but this is grotesque. In the midst of today's abnormal situation, we strongly affirm that the Body of Christ is uniquely one. There is one Head and one Body. Surely this one Body cannot be a particular local church. This one Body must be the universal church, the church as a whole. Christ as the Head is unique, and the universal church as the Body is also unique.

The Universal Church Comprising All the Local Churches

This one universal church, one Body, comprises all the local churches. There may be thousands of local churches, but together they constitute one universal church. Each local church is only a part of the universal church. The universal church is the unique Body of Christ, and all the local churches are simply the local expressions of that one Body.

The local churches compose the one universal church. Acts 15:41 speaks of the churches in Syria and Cilicia, and Romans 16:4 mentions the churches in the Gentile world. Second Corinthians 8:1 speaks of the churches in the province of Macedonia; Galatians 1:2, of the churches in the province of Galatia; and Revelation 1:4, of the churches in the province of Asia. According to Revelation 1:4, there were at least seven local churches in the one province of Asia. In the New Testament we can see many local churches, and together these local churches are considered as one universal church. Today in the Lord's recovery there are nearly six hundred local churches on six continents. All these local churches together are just one universal church.

THE BELIEVERS LIVING IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES

The believers are living in the local churches. Actually, we cannot live directly in the universal church. It is impossible for us to live in the universal church without living in a local church. The Lord is building up the universal church, and each of us is living practically in a local church. In Matthew 18:17 the Lord said that if, as a believer, you have a problem with another believer, you should tell it to the church. Surely the church mentioned in this verse is not the universal church; it must be the church in the place where you are. If

you are in Seoul and you have any problem, you should tell the problem to the church in Seoul. If you are in Pusan, you should go to the church in Pusan; if you are in Hong Kong, you should go to the church in Hong Kong; and if you are in New York, you should go to the church in New York. The church to which you should tell your problem is the local church.

The Local Churches Being the Local Expressions of the Body of Christ

The local churches are the local expressions of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 2:22). There is only one Body, but there are many expressions. Universally, all the churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of that universal Body. A local church is not the Body; it is only a part of the Body. It is a local expression of the Body. The church in Seoul is not the entire Body; it is a part of the entire Body as the Body's local expression.

All the Local Churches Constituting the One Body of Christ

All the local churches constitute the one Body of Christ (4:4). In Matthew 16:18 the Lord said, "I will build My church." Here *the church* is in the singular number, indicating that it must be the universal church. But in the Acts and the Epistles, a number of times the Bible says "the churches"—the churches in Syria, the churches in Asia, the churches in Macedonia, and the churches in Galatia. How could the Bible refer first to one church and then to many churches? It is because the one church, the universal church, is the totality of all the churches, and all the churches are local constituents of the one universal church.

THE GENUINE GROUND

Now we need to consider what the genuine ground of the church is. The ground denotes the site on which a building is built. Every building is built upon a certain piece of land, and this land is the ground on which the building is constructed. The church has spread to many nations in Europe, North and South America, Africa, and Asia. In all the different nations the church is built upon the proper ground.

The Ground of Locality—One City, One Church

The proper ground for the building of the church is the ground of locality. When the church spread to Korea, it first came to Seoul. The church is now being built in Seoul. Thus, the city of Seoul has become its ground.

In the Bible the church does not bear any particular name. In this respect the church is like the moon. The moon does not have a particular name; its name is simply the moon. We do not name the moon the American moon, the Chinese moon, the Korean moon, or the German moon. There is only one moon, not many moons. However, we may speak of the moon in Seoul, the moon in Osaka, or the moon in Shanghai. This does not denote many moons but one moon appearing in different cities.

The city is the ground on which the church is built. Therefore, taking the city as the ground, we may denote the church according to the city (Rev. 1:11). For example, you may say that you are a member of the church in Seoul. Since my wife and I live in Anaheim, California, we are members of the church in Anaheim. Many of the saints attending this conference came from different cities. We use the names of these cities to denote the different local churches. Because of this, we may say that there are many churches. But actually, the many local churches are simply the one universal church appearing in many cities.

When the one moon is seen in Seoul, it is the moon in Seoul. When it appears in New York, it is the moon in New York. There is only one moon. The moon in America is the moon in Korea, and the moon in Korea is the moon in China. There is only one moon, but this one moon appears in different cities. Therefore, it is correct to speak of the moon in a certain city. It is the same with the church.

We may say that there are many churches, yet the many churches are still just one church. Are we all in different churches, or are we in just one church? The proper answer is that, locally speaking, we are in many churches, but universally speaking, we are all in one church. Are you in the local churches, or are you in the universal church? It is wise to answer, “I am in the universal church by being in a local church.” We are not in the Roman Church, the British Church, the American Church, or the Korean Church; we are in the universal church by being in the local churches. Since we are now in the city

of Seoul, we should say that we are in the universal church by being in the church in Seoul. Although my wife and I reside in Anaheim, we should remember that during our stay with the saints in Seoul, we are not in the church in Anaheim but in the church in Seoul.

Now let me ask, of what church are you a member? The best answer is that you are a member of the universal church, which Jesus Christ is building, by being a member of a proper local church. While we are in Seoul, we are members of the universal church by being members of the church in Seoul. This is the proper practice of the church. We are members of the universal church by being members of one of the local churches. As long as we are members of a proper local church, we are members of the churches universally.

The ground of the church in Seoul is the city of Seoul. Therefore, in one city there can be only one church (Titus 1:5; cf. Acts 14:23). Furthermore, the city can never be divided; a city always remains one city. Thus, the ground of locality is permanently one. Just as the city cannot be divided, the church ground can never be divided. Since we do not have two cities in Seoul, we do not have two churches in Seoul. In Seoul there is only one city; hence, in Seoul there is only one church. This unique ground keeps the church in oneness.

Today in a given city there may be many so-called churches. This may be likened to one city having many city halls. If a particular city has more than one city hall, this would mean that that city is divided. In any city there is only one city hall. This preserves the oneness of the city. A local church is built on the ground of its locality. This unique ground may be termed *the ground of locality*. The ground of locality is a protection to ensure that a church in a particular locality will always be preserved in oneness.

The Ground of the Genuine Oneness—One Body Universally

The ground of the church should not be merely local; it should also be universal. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality; universally, the ground of the church is the genuine oneness. Christ has only one Body. The oneness of Christ's Body is the universal ground of the church.

Suppose all the local churches in Korea are one with each other but are not one with the churches in other continents. If this were the case, the churches in Korea may have the local ground, the ground of locality, but they would not have the universal ground, the ground of the oneness of the Body. In the entire universe Christ has only one Body. All the local churches in the six continents—in North America, in South America, in Europe, in Africa, in Australia, and in Asia—are one Body. This is the universal ground of the genuine oneness.

The churches in England may say to the churches in Germany, "We are the churches in England, and you are the churches in Germany; therefore, don't bother us." Locally, they may be right, but universally, they are wrong. They may keep the local oneness, but they destroy the universal oneness. Locally, the ground of the church is the ground of locality, and universally, the ground of the church is the oneness of the universal Body of Christ. Hence, there is the local aspect of oneness, and there is also the universal aspect of oneness.

I hope that the young sisters will be clear about this and that they will teach their children, "Children, from my youth I have learned that the church should be one in two aspects: one in its locality and one in the universe." The church is one locally, based upon its locality, the city, and it is one universally, based upon the one Body of Christ. This local and universal oneness is the genuine ground of the church.

THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP

At this point we need to consider another two items related to the proper practice of the church life: the local administration and the universal fellowship. In the proper church life the administration of the church is local, but the fellowship of the church is universal.

The Administration Being Separate and Equal Locally

The administration of each local church is separate from the administrations of all other local churches. Furthermore, the administrations of all the local churches are on an equal level. In administration, no church is higher than another church, and no church is lower. In a country or nation there are different levels of government. The highest is the central

government, and under the central government are the provincial, or state, governments and the city governments. This kind of government with different levels may be likened to a pyramid. The central government is the highest level, and the provincial and city governments are on lower levels.

But in the proper church life there is not such a thing. All the local churches are on one level. In the Roman Catholic Church the highest level of administration is in the Vatican. The pope is at the top, and around him are the cardinals. The pope exercises control over Roman Catholics in all the nations. All over the earth he has a number of archbishops. Under the archbishops there are the bishops, and under the bishops are the priests. This kind of governmental organization is a religious hierarchy. Such a hierarchy should be condemned. In the proper practice of the church life, all the churches on the whole earth are on one level. On the top there is only one throne, the throne of the Head, Christ, in the heavens. Only the Head is on the throne. Under the Head all the churches are on the same level.

Suppose the church in Seoul is the largest local church in Korea. Would it be right for the church in Seoul to control all the other churches in Korea? Suppose the church in Pusan is the second largest church in Korea. Would it be proper for the church in Pusan to be under the church in Seoul? Then, suppose there is a smaller church in the vicinity of Pusan. Would it be right for the church in Seoul, as the largest church, to control the church in Pusan, and for the church in Pusan to control the smaller church in the same vicinity? In answer to such questions I must say strongly that this kind of hierarchy and control is absolutely wrong.

In reference to the administration of the local churches, I have used two adjectives: *separate* and *equal*. The administration of the church in Seoul is separate from the administrations in Pusan and Geochang. The administrations of these churches are separate and equal. Even the administration of the smallest local church in Korea is equal with the administration of the church in Seoul. If I were an elder in the church in Seoul, I might consider that, since the church in Seoul is the largest, I should exercise some control over the smaller churches. The elders of the smaller churches may also consider that, since the church in Seoul is the largest and the oldest, they should surely submit to the elders in Seoul. In human eyes this may seem right, but in the practice of the proper church life, it is absolutely wrong.

Every local church has its own administration, and this administration is separate from all the others. It is also equal with all the others. Although the church in Seoul has been in existence for a number of years, and a much smaller church may have come into existence only two days ago, the administrations of these two churches are separate and on the same level. The administration of the church is local. No church, regardless of how large and mature it may be, should control another church.

The Fellowship Being One Universally

Although the administration of the church is separate and equal locally, the fellowship of the church is one universally. In fellowship there is no separation. On this entire earth there is only one fellowship, and this fellowship is universally one. The fellowship of the church is one not merely in a particular nation but in the entire universe. There is not one fellowship in England, another fellowship in the United States, another fellowship in Germany, another fellowship in China, and another fellowship in Japan. In these nations there are separate churches in many cities, but there is only one fellowship in the entire universe.

This fellowship is called the fellowship of the apostles. Acts 2:42 says that the three thousand who believed in the Lord Jesus and became the members of the church on the day of Pentecost continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles. In the church both the fellowship and the teaching should be one universally. In all the churches we should teach only one thing—Jesus Christ as the Spirit to be our life for the producing of the church. This is the teaching of the apostles. If a different teaching comes in, we must reject it (1 Tim. 1:3-4). We accept only one kind of teaching, the teaching of the apostles, and have only one fellowship, the apostles' fellowship.

In the early days all the believers continued in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. This fellowship of the apostles is with the Father and with the Son. First John 1:3 says, "That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The apostles' fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. This means that it is with the Triune God. Around the globe there is only one Christian fellowship—the fellowship of the apostles with the Triune God.

This fellowship is expressed at the Lord's table. When we eat the bread, we participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ, and when we drink the cup, we participate in the fellowship of the Lord's blood (1 Cor. 10:16). The Lord's body and blood are unique, and the fellowship of Christ's body and blood is also unique. By partaking of the one bread, we have become the mystical Body of Christ (v. 17). Therefore, this universal fellowship is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It is the fellowship passed on to us by the apostles. Hence, it is the apostles' fellowship, and this fellowship is with the Triune God. Such a fellowship must be universal. In administration the churches are separate locally, but in fellowship they are united to be one universally.

THE APOSTLESHIP AND THE ELDERSHIP

The Apostleship Being Universal and Being over the Eldership

The apostleship is universal. When Paul and Barnabas were in the church at Antioch, they were not apostles but prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1). However, when they went out to preach the gospel to establish the churches, they were the sent ones. A sent one is simply an apostle. They were prophets and teachers in the local church in Antioch, but by being sent out in the ministry, they became apostles to establish the churches.

Since it is the apostles who appoint the elders, the apostles are above the elders (14:23). Because all the elders in the local churches are established and appointed by the apostles, the apostles are over the elders.

The Eldership Being Local and Being under the Apostleship

The eldership is local, and it is under the apostleship. First Timothy 5:19-20 indicates that an accusation against an elder should be made to the apostles. This shows that the elders are under the apostles.

The government of the church is very simple. The apostles go out and preach the gospel to establish the churches. Then they select the more mature believers and appoint them to be elders to shepherd, to take care of, a local church. The elders should take care of the churches according to the apostles' teaching. Because all the churches are established by the apostles, and the

elders are selected and appointed in different localities by the apostles, in taking care of the churches, all the elders should take the word of the apostles.

The Elders Not Lording It over the Believers

The elders should not lord it over the believers. Instead, the elders should be patterns, examples, taking the lead to love the Lord, to seek after the truth, to grow in life, and to serve in the church (Matt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). They should not think that as elders, they are rulers over the believers. This kind of concept is wrong. In Matthew 23:8-12 the Lord Jesus said that all the believers are on the same level. We all are brothers, including the elders. Among us there should be no lord except the Lord. We have only one Lord, and we have only one Leader. This unique Leader, the Lord Jesus, is our Guide, our Instructor, and our Director. The elders are not lords governing the believers; all the elders are still only brothers. They should set themselves up as a pattern, as an example, to take the lead in loving the Lord, in seeking after the truth, in growing in life, in preaching the gospel, and in serving in the churches. This is the right way.

THE GROUND AND THE REALITY

The ground of locality is the outward expression of oneness (1 Cor. 1:12-13). As we all are meeting in Seoul, the city of Seoul is our ground. But this is merely the outward oneness. The inward reality of oneness is the Spirit (Eph. 4:4). We must have the Spirit moving in us, living in us, and working through us. Outwardly, we have the ground of locality to keep the oneness; inwardly, we live by the Spirit for the oneness of the Body. If we have only the ground of locality without the Spirit, we have something merely outward with no inward reality. We need to have both the outward ground of locality and the inward reality of the Spirit.

THE GIFTS IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES

In the local churches there are only prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1); there are no apostles and no evangelists (cf. 14:4, 14; 21:8). All the believers should be gospel preachers, but some members in the Body do have a particular gift to preach the gospel. These are called the evangelists. The apostles and the evangelists are universal and are for all the churches. But the prophets and the teachers are local. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 14, a chapter concerning the

local meetings of the church, the prophets and teachers are mentioned (vv. 26, 29), but the apostles and evangelists are not. The apostles and evangelists are universal. They travel from city to city preaching the gospel to establish the churches.

In this chapter I have presented a brief outline concerning the proper church and the proper practice of the church life. As Christians, we all should be in such a proper church, and we should participate in such a proper practice of the church life.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FACTOR OF THE SPIRIT'S OPERATION THROUGH THE CROSS IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6b, 17-18; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:22; 3:8; Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13; 6:6; Gal. 2:20a; Matt. 16:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:18-19; Eph. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14; Gal. 6:14

In this chapter we will see the most practical factor vital to the recovery of the church life. This is the factor of the operation of the all-inclusive Spirit through the cross in the church life. This is not a doctrinal factor but a practical one. This factor is composed mainly of two elements: the Spirit and the cross. It is the Spirit who operates, and it is the cross that puts to death. The Spirit is the operating element, and the cross is the killing element.

This factor is vital to the recovery of the church life because, although we have been regenerated, we still live in the old man. Moreover, there are many negative things associated with the old man, and all these must be killed. In fact, the Lord Jesus has already crucified all these negative things on the cross. But this is only the objective side. This objective crucifixion must now be applied subjectively to us. This subjective application of the cross of Christ is carried out by the operating Spirit.

GOD, CHRIST, THE SPIRIT, AND THE DIVINE LIFE

In the preceding chapters we have seen that the Bible first unveils four main items: God, Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life. From these four items the believers are produced, and the believers are built together to be the church. Therefore, God, Christ, the Spirit, the divine life, the believers, and the church are the crucial matters revealed in the Bible.

The Bible reveals that God is embodied in Christ. God and Christ are one, and Christ is God Himself embodied. Furthermore, this Christ who is the embodiment of God is realized as the Spirit. We should not consider that

Christ is One who is separate from God or that the Spirit is a third One who is separate from Christ. This concept is according to human thought, not according to the Bible. The Bible states clearly that God and Christ are one (John 10:30; 17:22) and that Christ and the Spirit are also one (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17). God is embodied in Christ, and Christ is realized as the Spirit. When God moves, comes to us, and reaches us, He is the Spirit. This Spirit regenerates us, making us the believers, the sons of God, and the members of Christ. By this we see that God, Christ, and the Spirit are now one with the believers. We have God within us (Eph. 4:6), we have Christ within us (2 Cor. 13:5), and we have the Spirit within us (Rom. 8:9). The Triune God is now living in our spirit. As the One living in our spirit, He is our life, not our natural life but the divine life added into our being.

We all need to realize that, as believers in Christ, we are wonderful persons. Each of us is wonderful because we have God in us, we have Christ in us, and we have the Spirit in us. The Triune God today is living in us as our life. Therefore, we are God-men, human beings who have the Triune God in us. This very God who is in us today is Christ, this Christ in us is the Spirit, and this Spirit in us is the divine life. We are human beings, yet we have the divine life in us. This is wonderful, marvelous, and excellent. When we as people who possess the divine life come together, we are the church. In this sense the church is wonderful. The church is a wonderful people who possess God, Christ, the Spirit, and the divine life.

OUR NEED FOR THE SPIRIT'S OPERATION

On the other hand, in the church life the situation may not always be so wonderful. For example, in the meetings we may sing Hallelujah, Hallelujah, but at other times we may not be happy with one another, although we are all brothers and sisters in the church. You may even dislike a particular brother so much that when you meet him outside the meeting hall, you turn your face away to avoid looking at him. A sister may not feel happy about her mother-in-law or her sister-in-law. However, all three are sisters in the church. Although they all like to attend the meetings of the church, the sister does not like to see her mother-in-law or her sister-in-law, and she selects a particular seat so that they cannot sit next to her.

This kind of behavior is not at all wonderful; rather, it is very low. In Matthew 10:29-31 the Lord likened the believers to sparrows. Sparrows are

small, yet they can fly. But sometimes Christians behave in a way that is more like a turtle creeping than a sparrow flying. Perhaps a sister loves her husband, but feels that her mother-in-law is intolerable. Furthermore, she cannot bear her husband's younger sister. The sister, her husband, her mother-in-law, and her sister-in-law are all in the church, but they cannot love one another. This may be the situation with some of the families in the church life.

We may have a similar problem with our feelings about the church itself. Perhaps when you came to the church ten years ago, it seemed to you that the church was wonderful. That time was your church life "honeymoon." You felt that the elders, the sisters, the brothers, the old ones, and the young ones were all wonderful. Everything in the church life was wonderful. However, after some time things began to look not so wonderful. Some of the elders were very peculiar, very strong in their opinions. You could not bear this. Then you began to realize that the older sisters in the church talked too much and criticized others and that the older brothers were not knowledgeable in spiritual things. The young sisters were a little better, but the young brothers were intolerable. Thus, you began to have mixed feelings about the church. In a sense you liked it because its practices were according to the truths of the Bible. Because the church was so scriptural, so much according to the Bible, you felt that you must come to the church meetings. Although the church sometimes seemed to be very good, at other times it seemed to be not so good. The brothers and sisters in the church where you were seemed to behave more like turtles creeping than birds flying. When a problem arose, instead of flying away, they argued and criticized one another. I am familiar with all these things because I have been in the church life for more than fifty-two years. I have passed through many experiences in the church life in many different localities.

All these situations point out why we need another factor, the factor of the operation of the Spirit. In one sense we all are wonderful people because we have the divine life, but in another sense we still live in our old man. We need to realize that none of us is completely holy, because we are still in the old man. We still have our old nature, our bad temper, our likes and dislikes, our emotions, our intentions, our choices, and our peculiarities. Because we still have so many negative elements in us, we are not holy. At most, we are partially holy. This is shown by the fact that a sister who sings and praises the Lord in the meeting may be offended by her husband a short time later and speak to him sharply. Although in the meeting she was singing Hallelujah, in

this situation she is unable to say Hallelujah. This shows that we are not holy. Yes, we are wonderful because we have the divine life, but we also still possess our fallen natural life.

This is why we need to take Christ as our sin offering and our trespass offering every time we come to contact God (Heb. 10:19-22). We must confess that we are still sinful, that we are still not pure, and that we need the Lord's precious blood to cleanse us all the time. Without taking the Lord Jesus as our sin offering and trespass offering, we simply have no way to contact God. This is why 1 John 1:3-7 tells us that in order to remain in the divine fellowship of the divine life, we need the continuous cleansing of the Lord's blood. Our fellowship with God is often broken by our natural life. Therefore, we need the cleansing blood to restore us to the fellowship of the divine life.

Today in the church life there is the need of much operation by the Spirit. Today the Spirit is continually operating in you, in me, and in all the brothers and sisters. But although we may know this, we often do not care for the Spirit's operation. For example, perhaps you do not like a particular brother in the church. But the operating Spirit in you tells you that you must love him because he is your brother. Sometimes you may even argue with the operating Spirit, saying that although that brother is indeed a believer, you do not like him because his behavior does not suit you. Nevertheless, the operating Spirit tells you again and again that you must love that brother. Surely you have had experiences like this in which you talked to the operating Spirit within you.

Many sisters have problems getting along with their mothers-in-law. Some sisters have even told me that they argued with the Spirit within them about this matter. I told them that the Lord in His sovereignty gave them such a mother-in-law in order for them to learn some lessons. Although the sisters realized this, they said that they still could not bear their mothers-in-law, and they admitted that they argued with the Holy Spirit about it. This proves that we all have the operating Spirit within us. However, we need the Lord's mercy and grace to obey this operating Spirit. This Spirit is the realization of Christ, who is the embodiment of God. This Spirit is just God as the divine life living in you. Your destiny as a Christian is to listen to this Spirit. The Triune God is now within you as the all-inclusive Spirit with the bountiful supply. If you would cooperate with Him and listen to Him, He would supply you with His bountiful supply. Nothing is difficult for Him. For you your mother-in-law may be a problem, but by the Spirit your mother-in-law will become a

blessing. You cannot bear her, but the Spirit can. Simply commit yourself to the Spirit. Cast yourself upon the Spirit and tell Him, "I want to obey You, I want to trust in You, and I want to be one with You." Immediately you will enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The All-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ

Imparting Life

The Spirit who is operating in us is the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ, and He is operating in us in seven ways. First, He is within us imparting His divine life to us (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6b). He imparts His divine life into our being in the same way that water flows through a garden hose. The more water we use, the more water flows into the hose. There is a bountiful supply of water that flows out without our effort; we simply turn on the water hose. Likewise, in order to receive the supply of the Spirit, we simply need to turn to the operating Spirit. He will flow in us as the divine life and impart life into us.

Bearing the Fruit of Virtues

Second, the Spirit bears in us the fruit of all human and divine virtues. Galatians 5:22-23 says that the Spirit within us is bearing many kinds of divine virtues, such as love, joy, and peace. All these divine and human virtues are brought forth by this life-imparting Spirit.

Freeing the Believers from the Bondage of Dead Letters

This Spirit also sets us free from dead letters and from dead knowledge (2 Cor. 3:6, 17). Apart from the Spirit within us we may know many doctrines but in a dead way. The more we learn doctrine in a dead way, the more we become bound by dead knowledge. Only the Spirit can set us free from dead knowledge.

Freeing the Believers from the Law of Sin and of Death

At the same time this life-giving Spirit sets us free from the law of sin and of death (Rom. 8:2). In our sinful nature there is a law, a natural power, of sin and death. By ourselves we are unable to deal with it, but when we give ourselves to the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit sets us free from this binding law of sin.

Transforming the Believers into the Image of Christ from Glory to Glory

This Spirit also transforms us into the image of Christ from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Whether we are good or bad, our being is still natural. Anything that is natural is of no worth to God. Therefore, we all need to be transformed. To be transformed is not merely to change our character outwardly; it is to be changed in life by the divine element from within us. This is a metabolic change in which the old things are being discharged, and all the new elements are being added. We all are now undergoing this kind of metabolic change. The life-giving Spirit is changing us, transforming us from within, not merely to correct us but to change us metabolically with His divine element. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that we are being transformed into the same image of the Lord from glory to glory, that is, from one level of glory to another. The church life should be filled with this kind of transformation.

Renewing the Believers for the New Man

The life-giving Spirit is also renewing us. Because we all were born in the old creation, we all are old regardless of our age. Even little children are old. Therefore, we need the divine life, a new life with a new element. This life-giving Spirit is now renewing us with the divine life and with the divine essence (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10-11).

Building the Believers Together to Be the Dwelling Place of God

Finally, the Spirit is building us together to be the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). As we are being transformed and renewed, spontaneously we are being built together to be the dwelling place of God. This dwelling place is the

church life. The church life is simply all the saints built up by the renewing Spirit to be God's dwelling place.

With the Bountiful Supply of the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

For this sevenfold operation of the Spirit there is always in this Spirit the full, bountiful supply of the unsearchable riches of Christ (Phil. 1:19; Eph. 3:8). We should not say that we cannot make it, that we are weak, or that we have many shortcomings. We should forget about all this and realize what the Spirit is. We are weak, but the Spirit is strong. We are poor, but He is rich. When we cooperate with Him, He supplies us with all His bountiful supply.

THE SPIRIT'S OPERATION THROUGH THE CROSS

However, the Holy Spirit does not work in us by Himself; He works through the cross. We may liken the cross to the scalpel used by a surgeon to operate on a patient. In the church life the Holy Spirit is the Surgeon who operates on us every day by means of the cross. Many things in our being need to be cut off by the Spirit through the cross.

Crucifying the Flesh

The first item that needs to be crucified is the flesh. Galatians 5:24 says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." Our flesh is full of lusts and passions, sinful desires. Passions are evil, and lusts are sinful. All these need to be cut off. This verse shows that our flesh with its passions and lusts needs to be crucified. We need to put our flesh on the cross through the Spirit.

Putting to Death the Practices of the Body

The next item to be dealt with is the practices of the body. Romans 8:13 says that by the Spirit we must put to death the practices of the body. The practices of the body refer to the activities of our body. For example, our mouth spontaneously talks in a natural way, even in a gossiping way. If two brothers come together, it is difficult for them to sit quietly without speaking for five minutes. Spontaneously, they may begin to discuss the condition of

the church in their locality. We may consider this kind of talk to be rather good, but it comes from the natural activity of our mouth. This is the practice, the activity, of the body.

Our eyes also are a problem. Our eyes may be accustomed to looking into department store windows or reading newspapers in an unrestricted way. Through these kinds of things our eyes become contaminated. Therefore, we also need to put to death the practices of our eyes.

Furthermore, we must also by the Spirit put to death the practices of our ears. Perhaps a sister attends a meeting and hears a message concerning Christ as the embodiment of God and the Spirit as the reality of Christ. Although the speaker may repeat these points many times, after the meeting the sister may be unable to remember the content of the message. However, if she overhears some gossip after the meeting regarding a brother and a sister who are engaged to be married, her ears hear this talk clearly, and she cannot forget it. When she returns home, she immediately tells her husband about the young couple who plan to be married. However, she cannot tell him what was spoken in the meeting about Christ as the embodiment of God and the Spirit as the realization of Christ, because she has already forgotten these things. This is because our ears are accustomed to listening to gossip rather than listening to the word of God. We remember the things that are not pleasant to the Lord, and we forget those things that are pleasant to Him. Although we may try our best to remember the word that was spoken in the meeting, we still cannot do it. This again shows the need for us by the Spirit to put to death the practices of the body.

Often our body seems to be too tired to go to the church meetings, but it is full of energy to participate in worldly activities. When we think about going to a church meeting in the evening, we may feel quite tired and may even decide to stay home in order to rest. But when we hear that a particular sporting event will take place the same evening, we may suddenly feel strong enough to attend. Similarly, if we are offered a Life-study message, we may not show any interest in reading it. But if someone gives us a novel, we may be quite eager to read it. Again, these are the practices of the body.

The way we spend our money is also related to the practices of the body. If a husband talks to his wife about offering something to the Lord on the Lord's Day, she may say that it is not necessary to do it this week, since they made an

offering last week. But if she reads in the newspaper about a certain item that is on sale, she may insist that her husband buy it for her immediately. All these activities are the practices of our body. Every part of our body is accustomed to doing things apart from God. Our mouth, eyes, and ears do things apart from God. Even if these things are not sinful, they are nevertheless the practices of the body. Today in the church life we must cooperate with the Spirit to put to death all these practices of the body.

Crucifying the Old Man and Denying the Self

We must also experience the cross crucifying our old man and the self. Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Christ. The old man is our created and fallen being. Although the crucifixion of our old man has been accomplished objectively by Christ, we need to experience it subjectively by crucifying our soul life, our self. 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." This "I" is the self, the self is the expression of the soul-life, and the soul-life is the natural life of the old man. Our old man, the old "I," has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), and now we need to deny our self (Matt. 16:24) and put aside our soul-life (Luke 9:24). We must put all these things on the cross and leave them on the cross.

On the one hand, many problems in the church life are caused by the activities of the body. We talk too much, we hear too much, we see too much, we act too much, and we go too much. We use our feet, our hands, our ears, our mouth, and our eyes improperly. In the church life we sometimes use all our physical members in a wrong way. All these activities cause trouble. On the other hand, our old man, the self, and the soul-life are also a source of problems in the church life. There are many problems in today's church life because there is too much of the old man, too much soulish life, and too much self. Many problems come because "I" is first, and "I" is last; "I" is alpha, and "I" is omega. Eventually, "I" is everything. Therefore, this "I" must be cut off. "I" is the greatest cancer in the church life. Therefore, it must be searched out and cut off by the Spirit through the cross.

Annulling the Opinions

Furthermore, our opinions need to be annulled by the Spirit through the cross. The old man is the fallen man, the soul-life is the life of the old man, this soul-life is expressed in the self, and the self is expressed in opinions. Opinions are simply the expression of our self, of our soulish life. Therefore, opinions are just the activities of the old man. One day the Lord Jesus told His disciples that He was going to be crucified. Immediately Peter expressed his opinion. He said, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" (Matt. 16:22). That was Peter's good, loving opinion. Peter did not want the Lord to be crucified but to be the King on the throne. However, his opinion was the expression of his self. When the Lord heard Peter's word, He turned to Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (v. 23). This shows that Satan is in the self. The Lord realized that it was not Peter but Satan in Peter who had spoken such a word. Satan was expressed in Peter's natural life and in his opinion.

In the church life opinions cause many problems. If there is any fighting or dissension in the church life, it is because someone has an opinion. Every opinion has a good outward appearance. Our opinions may seem to be very nice, very much for the church, and very good, but this goodness is a cloak that covers up the true nature of opinion. Opinions are terrible. In order to have a good church life, we all need to condemn our opinions. We should have no opinion but Christ, no opinion but the Spirit, no opinion but the divine life. We should have no opinion, no self, no I, no soulish life, no old man, but only Christ, only the Spirit, and only the divine life.

Destroying the Wisdom and Understanding of Man

Furthermore, we need the cross to destroy all the human wisdom and understanding. First Corinthians 1:18 and 19 say that through the cross of Christ God has destroyed the wisdom of the wise and has set aside the understanding of those who understand. In the church there may be those who are wise, clever, and understanding. But as long as our wisdom and understanding are human, they are opposed to God. In the church, do not use your human wisdom, and do not employ your human cleverness. Your wisdom and your cleverness create many problems in the church life. Therefore, we all must condemn human wisdom and understanding. We must cooperate with the Spirit to nail our wisdom and understanding to the cross.

Abolishing the Ordinances

Next, we need to experience the cross to abolish all our ordinances. Ordinances are our habits, customs, ways of doing things, ways of living, and ways of practicing the church life. These ordinances always cause trouble. But Christ as the Peacemaker has put all the ordinances on the cross (Eph. 2:14-15). We need to cooperate with the Spirit to put all our habits and customs to death.

Destroying Satan

Next, we must experience the Spirit's operation through the cross destroying Satan, the one who has the might of death (Heb. 2:14). The previous items that we covered—the flesh, the practices of the body, the old man, the self, the opinions, the human wisdom and understanding, and the ordinances—are actually the cloaks that Satan uses to cover himself. Therefore, if we deal with all the foregoing items, we will actually be dealing with Satan himself.

Setting Aside the World

Finally, we need the Spirit's operation through the cross so that we may set aside the world. In Galatians 6:14 Paul says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." John 12:31 tells us that when the Lord Jesus went to the cross, He judged the world and cast out its ruler, Satan. Therefore, in the church life today we must set aside and reject anything worldly. Although today's Christendom has become a worldly religion and is full of worldly things, in the church life we must stay away from anything worldly. The church should move and act in a heavenly way, not in a worldly way.

If we cooperate with the operating Spirit, all the negative things that we have covered will be cut off. In this way the church will be rescued and preserved, and there will be no problems with anything of the flesh, the practices of the body, the old man, the self, the opinions, the human wisdom, the ordinances, Satan, or the world. Then the church life will be wonderful, marvelous, and excellent because of the Spirit's operation through the cross.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FACTOR OF THE TRANSFORMED HUMAN VIRTUES STRENGTHENED AND ENRICHED BY AND WITH THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:17, 19b, 8; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:2-4

In the previous chapters we covered five factors vital to the recovery of the church life: Christ, the Spirit, the divine life, the proper practice of the church life, and the Spirit's operation through the cross. In this chapter we will see the sixth vital factor: the transformed human virtues.

VIRTUE, NOT MERELY MORALITY, NEEDED FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

In the church life we need the human virtues. I prefer not to use the word *morality* but the word *virtues*. We need not just one virtue but many virtues. The word *virtue* actually denotes a higher quality than the word *morality*. A man may be moral but still not have many virtues. Virtues are higher than morality. Morality is merely to be right. As long as you do not deceive others, steal from others, or mistreat others, you may be considered right. You may be righteous and moral yet not have virtues.

For example, you may purchase a Bible from the bookstore and pay the proper price. This is right and moral. However, if you deceive the store owner and pay a lower amount, you are not right. You are not moral because you are not honest. But if in the transaction you receive too much back and return the difference, you are right. This is morality, but it is not virtue. Virtue may be illustrated by helping a poor neighbor. Suppose you do not owe him anything, and he did not do anything for you, but out of love you give him two hundred dollars to help him pay his rent. This is not merely morality; this is virtue. Though you do not owe him anything, and though he did not do anything for

you, yet you love him and give him two hundred dollars, expecting nothing in return. This is virtue. This is not merely the level of morality; this is the higher level of virtue.

In the church life, if we only have morality, then we may become quite legal. But we need to have virtue instead of legality. Legality is merely at the level of morality, at the level of being right or wrong. But virtue is at a higher level. If you are legal, you may demand an apology when you are offended by someone. Furthermore, you may not be satisfied with the apology once it is given; you may require further apology. This is legality. But if you have virtue, you will not care whether the person apologizes to you or not. Furthermore, you will not be concerned about the standard of his apology. Rather, you will forgive him; you will give in to him.

We must be impressed that virtue is higher than morality and legality. In the church life we should not be legal. If someone wants your books and takes them from you, you should not demand that he give them back. To do so would indicate that you are legal. If you have virtue, you will realize that he loves your books. Then you will say, “Brother, do you love that book? I would like to give you another one. I would like to give you all of them.” This is virtue. In human society, what is demanded, what is required, is merely morality. But in the church life, what is required is virtue, which is much higher than morality.

To continue this illustration, a third brother may ask the brother who took your books if it was right for him to do that. However, this brother should not be the judge. He should not judge the brother who took your books, for the Lord is within him. Today he may take all your books and be quite happy about it. But tomorrow the Holy Spirit may touch his heart and give him no peace to keep the books. The Spirit may convict him that the reason you gave him all your books was that he intended to steal them. Then the Spirit will work within him and cause him to return all the books to you, plus an additional hymnal. This giving of an additional hymnal is also virtue, something higher than mere morality. You may be very happy about receiving an additional hymnal. However, the next day the Lord may touch you to give the hymnal to another brother. This illustrates the virtue needed for the church life.

By these illustrations we can see that in the church life the standard of morality is much higher than the morality in human society. The standard in the church life is not morality; it is virtue. Let us further illustrate this by an incident that happened in Taipei. In the early 1950s we did not use chairs in the meetings. Instead, we used benches, and each bench was long enough for four persons. Sometimes a heavy person who occupied more than one-fourth of the bench would come. This would cause the other three to suffer. On one occasion these three contended with the heavy brother over how much space each should occupy on the bench. They were unable to solve this problem themselves, and eventually they brought the matter to the elders. Their fighting for one-fourth of the bench was merely legality. How could such people have the church life? Then I told the others to love the heavy one and help him to take care of his heaviness. Because he continually bore his heaviness, they needed to sympathize with him and have mercy upon him. I told them that one of the three brothers should have been willing to stand, if necessary, and allow the heavy brother to occupy his space on the bench. This is virtue. By this illustration we can see the difference between morality and virtue. In the church life we should have no legality. Furthermore, in the church life we should not have mere morality, because we have something higher—we have virtue. To quarrel, to fight, to insist, to grasp what is rightfully ours, is legality. This is common in human society, but it should not be the case in the church life.

Knowing that in the church life everyone practices virtue, some clever saints may take advantage of others. They may require others to practice virtue and so take advantage of them. If you are heavier or older, you should not require others to show virtue toward you. If you do, you become a robber, robbing others' virtue. But virtue is not gained by robbing; it is gained by others' giving. If I am a heavy person, when I come to the meeting and I realize that the bench is for four people, I should not occupy more than one-fourth. I should give more space to others. This is to practice virtue.

Even in human society there are those who practice virtue. I saw this when traveling this year on a bus to the airport in Stuttgart, Germany. The bus was full of passengers, and there was no seat for us. But two young Germans, when they saw that my wife and I were older, stood up and gave their seats to us. I was very touched that the local young people would give their seats to us foreigners. That was not only morality; that was virtue.

This principle should always be kept in the church life. We should always show virtue toward others and never take advantage of others. In the church life there should not be merely a standard of morality. The standard must be a higher standard of virtue. This is the church life: always giving others something and never taking advantage of others. Because we love others, we desire to give them something and to not take advantage of them. The church life is higher than legality and even higher than morality. The church life remains in virtue.

The word *virtue* implies beauty. You may be moral, but in your morality there may be no beauty. At times you are right, but you may even argue with people in order to claim your rights. This kind of morality is ugly; it is not beautiful. Sometimes our righteousness is neither beautiful nor sweet. In the church life all the righteousness should be beautiful and sweet. When our morality becomes beautiful and sweet, that is virtue. In the church life we should not only be right; we must be full of virtue. Whatever we do, we should do it in a way that is so sweet, so beautiful, in the eyes of all the others. This is virtue.

RENEWED, TRANSFORMED, STRENGTHENED, AND ENRICHED IN OUR HUMAN VIRTUES WITH THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Furthermore, in the church life we must have not only virtue but transformed virtues (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; 2 Cor. 3:18). Transformed virtues are the human virtues with the element of the divine nature added into them. A type of transformation takes place when you eat nourishing food. Before eating the food, you may be weak and pale in appearance. But after eating well for a few days, your countenance becomes bright and ruddy. In the church life all the virtues should be transformed. You may be a good man, and now that you have been regenerated, you may still try to behave yourself. However, in addition, because you pray and contact the Lord every day, the Lord infuses you. For the Lord to infuse you is for Him to inject you with the divine essence. When the divine essence has been infused into your being, your human virtues will be altogether transformed, strengthened, and enriched. Your human virtues will be strengthened and enriched with the divine attributes. Then you will live in the church a life that is full of virtues.

These virtues are not angelic; they are still very human. But all the human virtues have been enriched by the divine attributes. This is marvelous.

SATURATED WITH THE RICHES OF CHRIST BY HIS MAKING HOME IN OUR HEARTS, AND FILLED UNTO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD AS GOD'S EXPRESSION

In Ephesians 3:8 Paul tells us that he was ministering the unsearchable riches of Christ to the believers. Paul ministered not doctrine but the unsearchable riches of Christ. Doctrine may be likened to a menu or a recipe, whereas the unsearchable riches of Christ may be compared to the food itself. Paul ministered not the menu or the recipes but all the rich food. By eating the food, we obtain all the riches. Paul ministered the unsearchable riches of Christ. After ministering these riches to the believers, he prayed that the Father "would grant you...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts" (vv. 16-17). Paul prayed that the believers would not only enjoy the riches of Christ but be completely filled up and occupied by Christ. In this way Christ would make His home in the believers' hearts, and this very Christ would saturate their entire being. He would fill, strengthen, and enrich all their virtues. Eventually, all the believers would be filled unto all the fullness of God (v. 19).

By this we may realize what kind of persons the believers are. The believers are persons who always enjoy Christ and are filled with Christ, saturated with Christ, until they are full of God. Thus they become the very expression of God. They are saturated with God and even one with God. Their love, humility, and meekness are full of the divine essence. Their virtues are actually the mingling of divinity with humanity. Eventually, all the virtues in the church life should be just the mingling of God with man. In other words, the virtues in the church life should be God's expression in man. We are human beings, but we should live a life full of virtues, a life that expresses God. According to Paul's words in 1 Timothy 3:16, this is a great mystery—God is manifested in the flesh. The church life is simply God manifested in the flesh. We all are flesh, yet we manifest God, and God is manifested in our virtues. To repeat, the church life is just the divine attributes expressed, manifested, in human virtues. In other words, the church life is human virtues expressing God.

May we all be persons who enjoy the riches of Christ. Then Christ will make His home in our entire being, filling us and saturating us until we are filled unto all the fullness of God. Then we will become the manifestation of God in the human virtues that express the divine attributes. This is the factor of the transformed human virtues for the church life. For the church life there is the need of such transformed virtues, virtues that are human but strengthened, enriched, and transformed by the divine attributes. These are human virtues, but they express God.

Let us go on to see what the main virtues are for the church life. These are not virtues for the human society but virtues for the church life.

Lowliness

The first virtue is lowliness. Many translations of the Bible render the word *lowliness* in Ephesians 4:2 as "humility." But lowliness is very different from humility. A king or a president may be very humble and yet still remain in his high position. Although he may be humble, he may still remain in his dignity and honor. The Lord Jesus was not like this. He was equal with God, but He did not regard His equality with God as a treasure to be grasped (Phil. 2:6). He not only became humble, but He left His high position and came down to be a man. This was His lowliness. Furthermore, He came down not only to the low level of man but even to the lowest level of a slave (v. 7). Although the Lord Jesus was in the form of God, He did not grasp that form. Rather, He left that high position, the position of God, and came down to the low position of man. Moreover, as a man, He became a slave, and as a man-slave, one day He washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-17). How low the Lord Jesus became! When He washed the feet of Peter, John, James, and all the disciples, He was lower than all of them. Whoever washes the feet of another person must be lower than the one whose feet he washes.

In the church life the first virtue needed is lowliness. To be lowly is to remain in a low estate. If you are an elder, you must not remain in the estate of an elder. You must come down from the level of the elders. Come down to wash the feet of the saints. In 1952, in Taipei the five elders washed the feet of nearly one thousand brothers in one meeting. That was a real renewing of the church life. This shows that all the elders came down from the elder level. They became lower than all the brothers, and that washed away all the

complaints, all the dissatisfactions, and all the murmurings and gossipings. Furthermore, that brought in the real oneness.

In Matthew 11:29 the Lord said that He is meek and lowly in heart. These are the same virtues needed in the church life. In the church life we all should have lowliness and meekness. The Lord Jesus was the very God. He was very high, but He came down. He left the high level, and He became low by becoming a man. Then as a man, He came down further from the level of man to the level of a slave.

One day the disciples were quarreling concerning who was the greatest. The Lord Jesus seemed to tell them, "If you want to become great, you have to be low. Among you there is no ruler. All of you are brothers. Whoever would be great must be a slave. You have to serve your brothers. You must be like Me. I came not to be served but to serve others. Do you not remember that I washed your feet?" (Mark 10:36-45). In order to practice lowliness in the church life, none of the brothers or sisters, older ones or younger ones, should remain in a high estate. All of us must come down from our throne. We must come down to a low level. We all have to become low. Lowliness is the first virtue needed in the church life.

Meekness

The second virtue needed in the church life is meekness (Eph. 4:2). What is meekness? Humanly speaking, we may consider meekness to be the same as gentleness. If someone is gentle, walks slowly, and speaks slowly and softly, we consider him to be meek. But in the New Testament, meekness denotes much more than this. Meekness in the Bible means to not fight for oneself. The Lord Jesus told us that if anyone wants our jacket, we should give him our jacket and also our shirt (Matt. 5:40). In human society it is different. If someone takes another's jacket, they will fight over the jacket. This is not meekness. To be meek is to be like a lamb brought to the slaughter. The lamb does not fight; it simply goes without resisting. The Lord Jesus was such a lamb. When He was about to be crucified, He was brought to the slaughter like a lamb. He did not resist, and He did not fight; He simply gave in. If I am meek and you want me to walk with you for one mile, I will walk with you. Eventually, I would even walk another mile for you. I would not fight or resist but give in. If you want to occupy more than one-fourth of the bench, I will give you half of the bench. If you want half of the bench, I will give you

two-thirds of the bench. If you want two-thirds, I will give you the entire bench. If you say that you are right and I am wrong, I would not try to prove that you are wrong and I am right. This is meekness. Meekness is to not fight but to always give in. In the law court there is no meekness; there is only fighting for righteousness. In a court of law people fight to find out who is right and who is wrong. But we all must realize that the church life is not a court of law.

We may illustrate the virtue of meekness by the story of a sister whose husband always came home very late at night. The sister insisted that her husband was wrong and would not open the door for him when he came home. She purposely kept him outside knocking until an hour passed. Eventually, she would open the door for him, and then she would slam it shut. I advised her not to do this. I suggested that every night while her husband was away, she should make some very good dessert and tea and have it ready for him. Then she should wait by the door until he returned, even if it was after midnight. When she heard his steps, she should open the door and say, "Welcome home. Here is some tea and dessert." After hearing my words, the sister told me that it was impossible for her to do this. I said to her, "Yes, you cannot do it, but the Lord Jesus within you can do it." Eventually, I convinced her that this was the only way she would gain her husband, and she went back home to practice this. Later, she told me that not only did her husband stop going away at night, but he even began to go to the meetings with her. This is a real illustration of virtue.

With us there should be no legality, no fighting, no quarreling, but giving in. If your husband likes to go out, walk him to the door and say, "Goodbye, and have a good time." Even if you know that he is going to the theater, you should still wish him a good time and be ready to welcome him back. This is not legality but meekness. To be meek is to give in.

When we give in, we give the Lord an opportunity to come in to bless the situation. This is why we must forget the past. To forget the past means to give in. If you still hold on to the past, you are struggling; you are fighting. This kind of fighting is endless. Instead, you must give in. To forgive is to give in, and to give in is to forget. It is very hard for us Christians to forgive others. Often our forgiveness may be likened to burying a dead dog but keeping the tail outside the earth. After we have buried the dead dog, we may boast to our friends that we have forgiven others and have buried the past. After boasting

in this way, we then show them the tail of the dead dog. Quite often the wives may forgive their husbands in this way. And sometimes some of the saints may testify in the meeting, "The elders offended me, but one day by the Lord's mercy I forgave them all." Since they forgave them all, why did they need to come to the meeting to tell people? This means that they buried the dog but still kept the tail. We need to drop the tail, to give in and forget the offense. Then we should not say anything further concerning the offense. In the church life we should never struggle for anything, and we should never insist on anything. Meekness is simply to give in. Do not insist, do not attack others, and do not struggle for yourself. Just give in. Then you will have peace in the church life.

Long-suffering

In Ephesians 4:2 Paul says that, in addition to exercising the virtues of lowliness and meekness, we need to be long-suffering. These three virtues are wonderful. Lowliness is to be lowly; meekness is to give in without quarreling or fighting with others; and long-suffering is to suffer, to endure, the mistreatment of others. If a brother mistreats you, you should not say a word. Instead, you should suffer his mistreatment, not just for one week but for a considerable period of time. This is long-suffering.

In the church life we should all practice these three virtues: lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering. If we do, there will always be peace. Not only in every church but also in all the churches and among all the churches there will be no problems, because all the saints are practicing lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering. If these three virtues are here in the churches, the peace will be here, and God will be manifested. These virtues are practical factors that are vital to the church life. We all must be lowly, meek, and long-suffering.

Bearing One Another

We must also bear one another in love (v. 2). We should not forsake or turn away from one another but bear one another. If you discover one day that a certain brother has done something wrong, do not give him up or forsake him. Instead, you must bear him all the time. We all prefer those who are good in our estimation, but none of us likes to bear those who cause problems. We naturally love those whom we consider to be excellent and good, but this is

not the church life. In the church life we must bear all the weak and troublesome members. Although no one would want them, we would bear them. This is not easy, but for the church life we must do it. In our eyes some of the saints may be like turtles, gophers, and even snakes. However, if we would bear these saints, eventually all of them may become lambs. This is the church life. None of us is able to do this, but Jesus is able. Does not Jesus bear you? Although at times you cause the Lord a great deal of trouble, the Lord Jesus always bears you.

In the church life we all need to bear one another in love. The brothers need to bear the sisters, and the sisters need to bear the brothers. If we all bear one another for some time, then we all will be transformed. In the church life we should not forsake anyone or cast anyone out. Instead, we must keep them and bear them, even if they are false. If we keep the false ones, they may become the real ones. Some may say that, although the Lord Jesus bore Judas for three and a half years, he did not change. It is true that Judas never changed, but still we must admit that without Judas the Lord could never have been betrayed and crucified. In the church life we should not cast people out or forsake them. We must learn to always bear one another in love and in the uniting bond of peace. The bond that unites all the believers is the bond of peace (v. 3). This is the way to keep the oneness. This is the way for all of us to be kept in the oneness of the Body.

In this chapter we have seen that we need the human virtues transformed, strengthened, and enriched by and with the divine attributes. This is much higher than human morality. In the church life there should not be legality but lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and bearing one another in love and in the uniting bond of peace. Then we will have the oneness, and this oneness is the genuine church life. This is the testimony of Jesus, the lampstand, golden and bright, shining in the dark age.