

《The Word of the Cross》

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PREFACE

The four major works of Watchman Nee in the 1920s are *The Christian Life and Warfare*, *The Christian magazine*, *The Spiritual Man*, and *The Present Testimony magazine*. In addition to these, we have collected some of Watchman Nee's miscellaneous works during the early stage of his ministry in this present volume. Chapters one, two, three, and four are of a deeper nature and are for Christians. Chapters five, six, seven, and eight are defenses of the Christian faith against modernistic teachings. Chapters nine and ten are Bible study materials for new believers.

Chapter one, "The Word of the Cross," is actually a series of two articles by Watchman Nee, first published in *Spiritual Light Journal* in Nanking in 1925. The first article, "Dying with the Lord to Sin," appeared in Issue No. 27 on June 10, 1925. The second article, "Dying with the Lord to Self," appeared in Issue No. 28 on August 10, 1925.

Chapter two, "The Messenger of the Cross," was a book written in Kulangsu near Amoy in Fukien province on January 15, 1926. The book was announced in

Issue No. 9 of The Christian. An excerpt of the book was printed as a separate article in Issue No. 7 of The Christian (pp. 849-857 of Volume Six in the Collected Works) under the same title.

Chapter three, "Walking in God's Will," is an article that first appeared in Spiritual Light Journal in Nanking on November 4, 1924. It is a record of a message delivered by the author to the Quaker Revival Church in Nanking.

Chapter four, "How to Know God's Will," is a combination of two articles which first appeared in Spiritual Light Journal in Nanking in February and June of 1925. It was later published as a separate book by the Gospel Book Room. In Issue No. 8 of The Christian (June 1926), the book was announced as a new publication. In Issue No. 10 of The Christian (August 1926), there was the following introduction:

Ten cents per copy. One reader said, "This book has taught me to know that in many ways I have been unwilling to obey the Lord." This book answers many questions concerning knowing God's will. All those seeking after the spiritual way must have a copy on hand.

Chapter five, "Where Is Heaven?" was written on board the Ho Sun Liner on the way to Hong Kong on December 13, 1924. It was first mentioned in the "Announcement" section at the end of Issue No. 3 of The Christian (January 1926). Chapter six, "Universal Fatherhood: a Fallacy," was first mentioned in the "Announcement" section at the end of Issue No. 20 of The Christian (August 1927). Chapter seven, "A Preface to Modern Science and the Long Day in Joshua," is the preface written by Watchman Nee to the Chinese translation of the book Modern Science and the Long Day in Joshua by Harry Rimmer, president of Research Science Bureau, printed by Glendale Printers and published in 1927 by Research Science Bureau, Inc. The actual book was a scientific explanation of the long day in the book of Joshua. Chapter eight, "Is the Higher Criticism of Modern Theology Believable?", is a refutation of modernism. It was published in The Salvation Magazine in February of 1926.

"Bible Studies for Beginners" forms chapter nine of this volume. It is a compilation of verses into twenty-six topics for beginners and was completed on January 11, 1927. Brief explanations are given for some verses, but the majority of them are quoted without any explanation.

Chapter ten, "Once a Year through the Bible," was prepared with the intention of helping new believers read through the Bible in a year. It divides all the verses in the Bible into three hundred sixty-five daily readings. The title appeared among a

list of books published by the Gospel Book Room on the back of Issue No. 27 of Notes on Scriptural Messages in 1932.

A few other books and articles published in the 1920s are unavailable to us. These include the following:

(1) The Work of the Holy Spirit. In Issue No. 3 of The Christian, the following announcement concerning this book was included:

This book explains in depth the three stages of the work of the Holy Spirit—regeneration, sanctification, and baptism. The important thing about this book is that it affords the saints a clear analysis of the work of the Holy Spirit in their pursuit after the Holy Spirit.

In Issue No. 10 of The Christian, the following additional reference to this book was included:

The worth of this book can be seen from the fact that a few months after its publication, we sold more than one thousand copies. A principal of a Bible college remarked, "This book is the word of the Holy Spirit." There are only a few copies left from the first edition.

We also have the following excerpt of the book from the notes of Mrs. K.H. Weigh.

The differences between regeneration and filling: (1) Regeneration has to do with salvation, while filling has to do with victory. (2) Regeneration is a matter of life, while filling is a matter of our living. (3) At regeneration we are justified, while at the time of filling we are sanctified. (4) Regeneration is the addition of a new life to that of the old Adamic one, while filling is the development of the new life through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. (5) Regeneration is the result of the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit through the substitutionary death of the cross, while filling is the consequence of the infilling of the human spirit with the realization of the full meaning of the cross. (6) Regeneration is the beginning of life, while filling is the maturity of life.

(2) A Diagram of Things to Come. This is a diagram on prophecy. In Issue No. 3 of The Christian, the following announcement concerning the diagram appeared:

The order of events in the diagram is designed by the editor of this magazine. It shows an outline of all the prophecies and sketches of the rapture of the believers, the coming of the tribulation, the establishment of the millenium, etc. At the back are explanations to

the diagram. The pictures in the diagram are drawn by an artist and are very attractive.

(3) Bible Exposition in Three Hours. This was a translated work. In Issue No. 11 of The Christian, the following announcement appeared:

This book was written by the great evangelist to Japan, Mr._____. One third of the Christians in Japan today have been saved through his preaching. Every sermon of his lasts for three hours and contains the same message. He is a preacher "with only one sermon." The book has three chapters: (1) God, (2) sin, and (3) salvation. The book is both inspiring and interesting.

(4) Gleanings from Matthew. This was a series of studies on Matthew chapters one and two published in The Morning Star magazine, Issue Nos. 220 to 239, between August 1924 and May 1926. We do not have the original manuscripts of these articles.

May the various articles in this volume shed light and impart life to the readers.

CHAPTER ONE

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

I. DYING WITH THE LORD TO SIN

When the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, not only did He die for the sinners, opening a living way for sinners to obtain eternal life and to come to God, He also died with the sinners on the cross. If the effectiveness of the cross were merely in the aspect of substitution so that sinners would have eternal life and be saved from perdition, God's way of salvation would not be complete. This is because a person who is saved by believing in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) still lives in this world; there are still many temptations. Moreover, the devil often cheats him, and the sinful nature within him operates continually. Although he has received salvation, he is not yet free from sin in this age. He does not have the power to overcome sin. Therefore, in His salvation the Lord Jesus had to accomplish both aspects: to save man from the punishment of sin and also to save man from the power of sin. When the Lord Jesus died for the sinners on the cross, He delivered man from the punishment of sin—the eternal fire of hell. When the Lord Jesus died with the sinners on the cross, He delivered man from the power of sin—the old man is dead, and man is no longer a slave of sin. Sin does not come from without but from within. If sin were to come from without, it would not have much power over us. Sin dwells in us. Therefore, it is deadly to

us. Temptation comes from without, while sin dwells within. Since everyone in the world is a descendant of Adam, everyone has Adam's nature. This nature is aged, old, corrupted, and filthy; it is a nature of sin. Since this "mother" of sin is within man, when outside temptations come, that which is within responds to that which is without, and the result is the many sins. Because we have pride inside (though hidden at times), as soon as outside temptation comes, the opportunity to be proud comes, and we become proud. Because we have jealousy inside, as soon as outside temptation comes, we see others better than we are, and we become jealous. Because we have a quick temper inside, as soon as outside temptation comes, we lose our temper. All the sins that man commits come from the old man within.

This old man is truly worthless, irreparable, unchangeable, incorrigible, and incurable. The way God deals with the old man is to crucify him. God wants to give us something new. The old man has to die. God's words charge us to wash away all of our sins in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7). He "loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev. 1:5). The sins here refer to the acts of sins committed by a person outwardly. The Bible never tells us that the old man within is to be washed. God's Word never says that the old man should be washed. (The blood of Jesus Christ washes our sins, not the old man.) The old man needs to be crucified. This is the word of the Bible.

God does everything in this age through the Lord Jesus Christ. He needs to punish sinners, yet He punished the Lord Jesus instead because the Lord Jesus stood in the position of and on behalf of sinners. God wants the old man to die, but He caused the Lord Jesus to die on the cross instead. By doing so, He brought all the sinners along with the Lord onto the cross. First there was a substituting death, then a participating death. This is the clear word of the Bible. Jesus Christ is the One who "died for all, therefore all died" (2. Cor. 5:14).

This point should be emphasized and should not be glossed over easily. A believer, that is, a saved one who confesses that he is a sinner and believes in Jesus, should remember that the crucifixion of his old man is not an independent activity apart from the Lord Jesus, but is done in union with the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus died, our old man died together with Him and died in Him. This explains the failure of many people. Many times believers exercise their own strength to crucify their old man. However, they find out again and again that the old man is still alive. They try, mostly unintentionally, to crucify the old man

independently by themselves without Christ. This can never be done. Unless one dies with the Lord Jesus, there is no crucifixion of the old man. The old man is crucified together with the Lord Jesus.

We do not die by ourselves; rather, we die together with the Lord. We were baptized "into His death" (Rom. 6:3); "we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death" (v. 5); "we have died with Christ" (v. 8); and "our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves" (v. 6). We cannot crucify ourselves and die. This "co-crucifixion" is an accomplished fact. It was accomplished when the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross. The death of the Lord Jesus is a fact; that the Lord Jesus died for us is also a fact, and our being crucified together with Him is also a fact. "Has been crucified," according to the original, is a continuous word; it is in the absolute perfect tense, which means that our old man's crucifixion with the Lord Jesus is an act that was accomplished once for all when the Lord died. But what is the result of dying with the Lord? What is the goal? We know from Romans 6:6 that the result is that the body of sin is annulled, and the goal is to make us no longer the slaves of sin. Let us use an illustration to explain this fact. There are three things: the old man, sin, and the body of sin. Sin is like a master, the old man is like a housekeeper, and the body is like a puppet. Sin does not have the authority and power to take over the body of sin or to direct it to sin. Sin directs the old man; when the old man consents to it, the body becomes the puppet. So while our old man is alive, it remains in the middle. The body is outside, and sin is inside. The sin within tempts the old man, and the lust of the old man is stirred up. This causes the old man to give the order to the body to sin and to engage in transgressions. The body is most pliable; whatever you tell it to do, it will do. It is something that has no dominion over itself. By itself, it cannot do anything; it can only act according to the order of the old man. When the Lord saved us, He did not put our body to death, nor did He destroy the root of sin. Rather, He crucified our old man with Himself on the cross.

What is the result of crucifying the old man? The result is "that the body of sin might be annulled." In the original Greek, "annulled" means "unemployed." This means that, without the old man, the body of sin cannot do anything anymore. Formerly, the body of sin functioned daily according to the old man's order. It seemed as if to sin had become its occupation. All it did was commit sins. The old man loved sin exceedingly; it wanted to sin, craved for sin, and was fond of

doing sinful things; the body followed after the old man to sin and became the body of sin. Now, after the old man is dealt with by the Lord and is crucified, the body of sin becomes unemployed; there is no more work for it to do. When the old man was alive, it was the profession and the occupation of the body of sin to commit sins every day. Thank the Lord, this hopeless old man has been crucified! The body of sin has also lost its job! Even though sin still exists and still tries to be the master, I am no longer its slave. Although time and again sin tries to instigate the body to commit sin, it cannot break through because the Holy Spirit has become the Master within the new man. As a result, sin is unable to activate the body to commit sin anymore. Hence, the goal of the crucifixion of the old man and the unemployment of the body of sin in Romans 6:6 is that "we should no longer serve sin as slaves."

We have seen these three items: one fact—"that our old man has been crucified with Him," one result—"that the body of sin might be annulled," and one goal—"that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." These three are linked together and cannot be separated. We know the fact, the result, and the goal. But how can we achieve this? What is the condition that we need to fulfill before we can have the experience of dying together with the Lord? It is to believe. There is no other condition except to believe.

The way one receives the substitutional death of the Lord Jesus is the same way he dies together with Him. Through faith, not works, one shares the result of the Lord Jesus' substitutional death, which is deliverance from eternal punishment. In the same way, through faith, one shares the result of dying with the Lord Jesus, which is freedom from sin. It is a fact that the Lord Jesus has already died for you. It is also a fact that you have already died with the Lord Jesus. If you do not believe in Christ's substitutionary death for you, you cannot partake of the effectiveness of this death—deliverance from punishment. If you do not believe in your death with Christ, you will likewise not be able to receive the effectiveness of death with Him—freedom from sin. All those who believe in the substitutional death of Christ are saved, and all those who believe in their death with Christ have overcome. To share in the death of the Lord Jesus—whether it be the substituting or the participating death—requires faith. God requires that we believe. We need to believe in the Lord's death for us and our death with Him. Romans 6:11 says, "So also you, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin." The word "reckon" is extremely important. Oftentimes we like to "sense" that our old man has died. We like to "feel" that our old man has died. If we try to sense or feel,

our old man will never die in our experience. Our old man does not die from our "sensing" or "feeling." The more we "sense," the more we notice that our old man is not dead, and the more we "feel," the more we see that our old man is still alive. The old man is not crucified by "sensing" or "feeling." The old man experiences crucifixion through "reckoning." What is reckoning? "Reckoning" is an act of faith; "reckoning" is the application of faith; "reckoning" is the judgment of the will and the execution of the will. "Reckoning" is completely contrary to "sensing" and "feeling." "Sensing" and "feeling" have to do with one's feelings, while "reckoning" has to do with faith and the will. Therefore, the crucifixion of our old man is not something we have to feel. It is wrong to say, "I do not feel that my old man is dead." Whether the old man has died or not does not depend on your feeling; it depends on whether or not you have reckoned it.

How do we "reckon"? To reckon yourself dead to sin is to reckon yourself already crucified. It is to reckon that your old man has already been crucified and that the cross of the Lord Jesus was also the cross for your old man; it is to reckon that the death of the Lord Jesus is the death of your old man and to reckon that the time the Lord Jesus died nineteen hundred years ago is the time your old man died. The old man has already been crucified on the cross with Christ. This is a fact, an accomplished fact. In the eyes of God, the old man is dead. Now we reckon that our old man is dead. If we reckon in our heart the things we believe in, God will accomplish the same things. Furthermore, we should exercise our will to reckon ourselves dead to sin. If we do this, we will no longer be a slave to sin. To reckon is an act as well as an attitude. An act is a one time matter, while an attitude is something one maintains all the time. An act is a one time action toward a certain matter, while an attitude is a lasting evaluation toward something. We should reckon ourselves dead to sin. This means that we should take a definite step to reckon ourselves dead to sin. After this, we should continually maintain an attitude of being dead to sin. The act is the beginning, and the attitude is the continuation. We should have at least one time before God where, in a definite way, from that very day and hour, we reckon ourselves as dead. After that specific reckoning, we should daily maintain this attitude of a definite reckoning, an attitude that declares ourselves dead to sin. The failure of many people is this: they have reckoned themselves dead to sin and have received the word of dying with the Lord on the cross. However, they think that this matter is once for all and that once they have made such a reckoning, they

will have no problem from then on. They think that just as one is dead when his physical body dies, so it is with the death of one's old man. They do not realize that the same is not true in the spiritual realm. We need to daily and hourly reckon ourselves dead with Christ. Whenever a believer stops reckoning, his old man, in experience, will not be dead. This is why many people find that their old man seems to have resurrected. If this is something that can be settled once for all, we do not need to be watchful anymore. But we know that we need to be watchful. Watchfulness is something we need to exercise moment by moment. In the same way, to reckon our old man dead is something that is continual and uninterrupted. If God's children are more aware of this, they will avoid many failures.

To take such an attitude is not a mental exercise of the mind, but a lasting evaluation of ourselves in our will. One should be able "to reckon oneself as dead" whether consciously or unconsciously. God's children often find it difficult to do this. Oftentimes, they think that they have "forgotten" to reckon. They have used the wrong organ. To reckon is an exercise of the will, not a grappling in the mind. Whether or not you overcome depends on whether or not you have adopted the attitude of reckoning yourself dead. It does not depend on whether or not you remember to reckon. If you exercise your will by the Holy Spirit to maintain this attitude of death, you will find that consciously or unconsciously this attitude will be with you. The attitude is always the same whether you remember it or not. Naturally, our mind has its place, but we should not let the mind influence the will. The will should control the mind and should cause it to assist the will in maintaining this attitude.

Therefore, daily and hourly, consciously or unconsciously, no matter what we do, we should always stand on the foundation of the cross and should reckon our old man as dead. Here is the secret to overcoming sin and the devil. Sin and the devil are related to each other. If sin cannot be our king, spontaneously the devil will not have any ground in our hearts.

If the believers realize and receive the truth of the cross, there will not be so many backsliding and failing ones. Long-lasting victory can never be separated from a long-lasting stand on the foundation of the cross.

However, this is not to say that, after we have "reckoned" the old man dead in conduct and in attitude, the sin within us will be eliminated and nullified. As long as we are still in the body, sin will still be with us. To say that sin can be nullified in this life is not the teaching of the Bible. We can put our old man to death

through trusting in the cross of the Lord on Golgotha, and we can cause the body of sin to be powerless, to wither, and to be paralyzed as dead; but we can never cause sin to be nullified. Whenever we are careless, unwatchful, and not standing on the death ground of Golgotha, our old man will be activated and will exercise its authority and power again. Satan is seeking an opportunity all day long to activate him. Wherever there is an opening, Satan will try to restore our old man to his original position.

This being the case, how we need to be watchful and on the alert so that the old man will never have a day to rise up again! But is not this very difficult? Surely the flesh regards this as difficult. Therefore, in order for the cross to work in the believers, they must have the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The cross and the Holy Spirit can never be separated. The cross makes it possible for the believers to overcome sin; the Holy Spirit makes real in the believers' lives what the cross has accomplished. A believer who wants to be delivered from sins must not make provisions for the flesh; he must be watchful and must be ready to pay any price. He should have less hope in himself and more trust in the Holy Spirit. With man it is impossible; with God, nothing is impossible.

The death of the cross is different from any other kind of death. This kind of death is most painful and slow. Therefore, if we truly reckon ourselves dead and take the cross of the Lord as our own cross, it will be painful and miserable as far as our flesh is concerned. The Lord Jesus hung on the cross for six hours before He died; His death was very slow. In the lives of Christians, the experiences of co-crucifixion belong often to this six-hour period. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, He had the power to come down if He desired. The same is true for those who are crucified with the Lord. Whenever one allows his old man to leave the cross, his old man will leave the cross. The old man is hung on the cross through one's reckoning. If one maintains the attitude that the old man is dead, the old man will be as powerless as the dead. But once a person relaxes, the old man will be activated. Many of God's children often wonder why their old man keeps resurrecting. They forget that the death of crucifixion is slow.

Satan is very alert; he takes any opportunity to resurrect the old man and to cause the believers to commit sin. Whenever we are not watchful, his temptation and deception come. When outward temptation and deception come, the old man within is quick to respond. At such times, we should come back once again to the foundation of the cross and should once again reckon ourself dead. We

should wait (through this reckoning) for the Holy Spirit to apply the power of the cross until the temptation loses its drawing power. Every believer should have this extraordinary experience. When we are about to be defeated, we should come again to the cross and reckon ourself dead; by this we will experience power coming into us, preserving us, and strengthening us to resist the temptation. However, is it not true that sometimes we reckon over and over again and still do not see any result, but instead we sin? This is the experience of many. This means that our "reckoning" has some problem. If we have truly reckoned, we will surely find extraordinary power coming into us. We should remember that this "reckoning" is not to say with our mouth, "I am dead, I am dead"; neither is it to think in the mind, "I am dead, I am dead." It is the judgment of our will to reckon ourself dead and to maintain this attitude of reckoning with a believing heart. We may say that this is a decision in our will by which we declare, "I am dead." In other words, first we are willing to die, then we reckon ourself dead. We need to learn to reckon with the will and with faith.

If we really stand on Romans 6:11, we will constantly have the experience of being free from sin. When a believer first takes this attitude, Satan will purposely try to stir up a storm and will cause the believer to feel that things are too much for him to handle. At such times, he should calmly rely on the Holy Spirit to apply to him the power of the cross. Do not struggle. Do not be anxious. Do not think that the temptation is too great, and do not encourage the enemy because of this. You should reckon yourself dead to sin. The cross has the power to overcome the world.

If unfortunately we fail, we should rise up even more and should trust more in the power of the cross. The Holy Spirit will lead us to victory in the Lord Jesus. Brothers, "sin will not lord it over you, for you are...under grace"! (Rom. 6:14).

II. DYING WITH THE LORD TO SELF

In our experience, death to self is deeper and more advanced than death to sin. Usually God's children pay much attention to overcoming sins. They suffer much from the harassment of sin. They know very well how that after they sin, their regenerated life grieves over the evil and bitterness of sin. They have tasted much of this, and they hope very much to overcome sin and to be no longer a slave of sin. Therefore, after they have received the light and have realized how to die with the Lord and how to reckon themselves dead to sin, they rely on the power of the Holy Spirit and begin to seriously reckon themselves dead and to

allow the victory of the cross to be expressed in their heart and through their body. Yet, frequently there is something lacking: after they have the experience of victory over sin, they think that this is the highest expression of life and that nothing can be higher. They pay too much attention to their sins. As a result, once they overcome them, they become satisfied. It is right for us to pay attention to our sins, and it is right for believers not to neglect their sins. Victory over sins is the basis of all righteousness and is the beginning of a proper Christian living. If sin has dominion over us, we cannot expect to have any spiritual progress. But this does not mean that we can stop at victory over sin and draw a boundary line and call an end to our advance. We have to know that this is only the first step in the experience of a Christian. There is still a long way before us. Do not consider it an end! After overcoming sins, the immediate problem facing the believers is how to overcome the "self."

Believers often misunderstand the true meaning of "self." Some confuse self with sin. They consider self as sin and believe it should be put to death. Naturally, self and sin have a lot to do with each other, but self is not sin. They use the yardstick with which they measure sin to measure every outward behavior. Anything they consider as wrong, they condemn as sin and regard as self and as the "mother" of sin. They consider that it ought to be crucified. Little do they realize that as bad as the self is, it is not always evil. It is true that everything that springs from the "mother" of sin is sin and is corrupt and defiled, and it is also true that what is expressed by the "mother" of sin through the self can in no way be good. However, sometimes when the self is expressed, it can appear very good in man's eyes and can appear very virtuous, very kind, and very righteous. If we take the yardstick with which we measure sin to measure the self, we will surely eliminate the evil part of the self and keep its good part—good, of course, according to man's view. Because believers are unaware of the source of self and do not realize that it can produce that which both God and man condemn as evil as well as that which is recognized by man as good, they remain in the realm of the "self" and fail to enter into the enjoyment of the full and rich life of God. Satan is most subtle; he hides this fact and keeps the believers in darkness, causing them to be contented with the experience of victory over sin and to stop looking for a higher experience—the experience of victory over the self.

The self life is just our natural life. The natural life has been affected by Adam's fall and has become very corrupt. Through Adam's fall, man acquired the sinful nature. This sinful nature is intimately interwoven with the natural life, which is

the self. Our self is just our ego; it is what constitutes our own individual personality. In other words, it is our soul. Because the sinful nature is so intimately related to the self, it is difficult to separate the two in their operation, that is, in their acts of sins. They are so united that as soon as the "mother" of sin moves, the self agrees and executes, and man commits the outward sins.

Of course, we can never make too clear a separation between self and sin. With an unbeliever, self and sin are as one, and it is very hard to separate them. The self is already able to transgress by itself. But sin, being so powerful, affects the self, dominates the self, suppresses the self, and forces the self to come up with more ways to sin. Under the influence of Adam's fall, the self is already corrupt to the uttermost. Now when it collaborates with sin, the two have little reason for conflict. Even though sometimes the conscience makes a very faint protest, it is so short and weak that it disappears in no time. The self and sin cooperate with each other so well that in unregenerated persons, the two are mixed together. To them, sin is just self incarnated. To them, self is just the many evils that appear in the fallen human life; it is the root, the branches, and the leaves of sin. To them, self is not only the origin of sin, but the very life of sin. To them, sin is self, and self is sin. After a man is regenerated, in the initial stage of his Christian life, he still finds it difficult to differentiate in experience between sin and self. Later, as he receives more grace from God, and as the work of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit become more apparent in him, he begins to separate sin from the self. Along the way in their Christian life, God's children are gradually able to differentiate the self from sin. Those who have experienced Romans 6:11 will realize that though a man may have overcome sin, he may still not have overcome the self. To those believers who are advanced in life, victory over sin is easy, while victory over the self is very difficult. If a believer has the full experience of victory over the self, he will have attained the life that the apostles had.

The self-life is just the soul-life. The self is our personality and everything contained in our personality. Out of the self grow our personal opinion, taste, thought, longing, bias, love, and hatred. The self-life is the power by which one lives. We must keep in mind that the self is just ourself plus our likes and dislikes. Its life is the natural power by which we perform good and do work. The self is a life, because it lives in the believers whose self has not been removed. Even in

the believers who have died to their self, it often attempts to rise up. The self-life is a life that centers on one's own self.

After the believers receive the dealing of the cross with respect to sin, the body of sin will be paralyzed and will not be able to act anymore. However, because no attention has yet been paid to the self-life, the latter still lives. At this stage, the self-life is like the life of Adam before the fall. It was not spiritual because it was not transformed by the fruit of the tree of life, and it was not fleshly because it had not sinned. It belonged to itself, and as such it could sin if it wanted to sin, and it could be spiritual if it wanted to be spiritual. The believer's life at this time is very similar to this. It is not spiritual because his spirit is still not free, and it has not reached a walk according to God's higher life. It is not fleshly because the person has received the accomplishment of the cross and has reckoned himself dead to sin. He is of the self, soulish, natural, and untransformed. If he is not careful, he will fall and will be contaminated by the sin of the flesh. If he goes forward and claims the accomplishment of the cross, he will become completely spiritual. Nevertheless, if believers stay in the realm of the self, they will mostly fall and will many times become fleshly.

At this time believers are in a most vulnerable condition in their Christian life. On the one hand, they must protect themselves from falling; on the other hand, they must resolve to have some practical righteous works. The danger then is to do good by self effort. It may not necessarily be obvious; sometimes it can be very obscure and hidden. Sometimes it takes God a long time to show the believers that they are still in the self and are still trying to carry out God's will by their self effort.

The self includes many things. Our will, emotions, love, and intelligence are within its domain. The self is our ego. The life of the self is the power by which we live. The self is also the soul; it is an organ. The life of the self is the life of the soul; it is the power that motivates this organ. When a man is in the self, the life of the self will impart power, that is, the self's own power, into the various parts of the man—the will, the emotions, the love, the intelligence, etc., and will cause the man to do good and to work. Its will is strong enough to resist the outward temptations. Its emotions make one happy and cause one to think that God is very close to him. Its love to the Lord is deep and sincere. Its intelligence causes him to come up with many wonderful Bible teachings and many methods for doing God's work. But, after all, these are done by the self, not by the spiritual life of God. During this time, God often gives special grace to the believers so that

they receive many wonderful gifts. By realizing that all these gifts are from God, it is hoped that man will turn completely away from himself to God. However, in experience what a believer does is completely opposite to what God intends. Not only does he not turn completely to God, he takes advantage of these gifts for his own use. As a result, these gifts become a help for prolonging the life of his self. Therefore, God has to work many days and years before such a person will give up himself and turn to Him completely.

After a believer is brought by God to a deep realization of the evil of the self, he will be willing to put his self to death. But what is the way for the self to die? There is no other way but by the cross. We have to read two passages of Scripture to understand the relationship between the cross and the self.

"I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

"If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

What Galatians 2:20 speaks of is something accomplished once for all. After we realize that our self needs to be put to death, we should then by faith acknowledge in a definite way that "I am crucified with Christ." The word in the original text is ego, the "I," the self. Besides the cross, there is indeed no other way to put the self to death. We should also pay attention to the words "with Christ." The crucifixion of the self is not an independent act of the believers. Believers are not to crucify the self on the cross by themselves in their own strength. The crucifixion of the self is to be joined to Christ and in conjunction with Christ. This is not to say that we help Christ to put the self on the cross. Rather, it means that Christ has already accomplished this fact, and we now merely acknowledge and believe its reality. Here the main focus is Christ. This is why it says, "I am crucified with Christ," not "Christ is crucified with me." It is not that we want to put the self to death, and Christ comes merely to accompany us. Rather, it was Christ who in His death brought all our "ego," our self, to the cross and nailed it there. Therefore, we are not crucifying the self again but are merely acknowledging the fact. The word "am" shows us that it is a fact and not a wish. A life that dies to the self is possible, real, and attainable. The apostles in the ancient time obtained this kind of life already; their self passed the test. Therefore, it is possible for us to obtain this life also. However, we should remember that this is "crucified with" and not "crucified alone." Apart from the Lord we can do nothing. To crucify the self with the strength of the self is an impossible task and can never be done. If we are not united with the Lord in His

death, our self will never die. Christ alone brought all the old creation, every part of it, to the cross in His death. If we try to find another way besides the Lord's way and try to accomplish anything besides the Lord's accomplishment, we are not only foolish but also wasting our time. Therefore, we are to do nothing but come to the Lord with full assurance of faith and acknowledge the Lord's accomplishment as ours; following this we should pray for the Holy Spirit to apply in us the work of the Lord's cross and express this very work through us.

We should come before God to rebuke our self and offer up everything to Him. By the Spirit of the Lord, we should put to death everything that is included in our self-life. We should tell God, "Hereafter, it is no longer I, no longer my own likeness, opinions, tastes, or preconceptions. I will put all these on the cross. Starting from today, I will live only according to Your will. O Lord! It is You...not I." We should submit to the Lord in such a way as to put all we have to death. But this does not mean that from now on we will have the self exterminated. The self cannot and will not be exterminated; it always exists. Why then do we say to nail the self on the cross? Here we must know one important thing: the question before us is one that has to do with the spiritual life. For this kind of question, we must emphasize spiritual experience more than mere literary fluency. There are many things which seem to contradict one another in semantics and which seem utterly incompatible. Yet they fit very harmoniously together and have no awkwardness of any kind in the realm of the spiritual life. This is what happens here. According to the literal meaning, if the self is dead already, how can it not be exterminated? We have to know that the word "dead" here refers to a kind of process in the spiritual experience. The self being dead does not mean that the self is from now on non-existent. It means that the self will hereafter submit to God, that it will not allow its likes and dislikes to take over, but that it will allow the cross to crucify and terminate all its selfish thoughts and activities. To stop the self-life from driving the self means that the living which is derived from the self-life is dead, that there is no more self-life and self-living, and that only the shell of the self remains. The self includes the will, the emotions, the intelligence, etc. This does not mean that when we believe in our self being crucified with Christ, our will, emotions, intellect, etc., will be annulled! No one can annihilate the few faculties which make up his being just by believing in his having been crucified with the Lord! To die with the Lord simply means to no longer allow the self to be the master, to no longer act according to one's own will, emotions, and thoughts,

and to no longer allow the self-life to have its way; it means to allow the Lord's Spirit to rule over everything that the self encompasses so that the person can obey God's life within. As long as the self is not dead, it will not yield to the Holy Spirit. Once the self walks away from the cross, it will right away resume its old posture. Believers have neither the power nor the way to subdue themselves. Galatians 2:20 sheds a lot of light on this point. "I [the self] am crucified with Christ;...and the life which I now live in the flesh...." Does not the Scripture speak very clearly here? In the first part of the sentence Paul made it very clear that his self was crucified on the cross, yet in the second part of the sentence, did he not say that his self still existed? Therefore, the crucifixion of the self does not mean the extermination of the self; rather, it means to cease from the activities of the self and allow the Lord to be the Master. This should be very clear.

What has been said above was achieved once for all. But is it enough for us only to believe once that we are crucified with Christ? Will this solve the problem once for all? This leads to the second passage of Scripture: "Let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). This verse points out that the three things we ought to do are actually not three but one thing divided into three steps. The first step is to deny the self. Denying means rejecting, discarding, ignoring, and not acknowledging one's demand. The meaning of denying the self is simply to not allow the self to be the lord. This step is a definite act; it is to believe specifically that "I am already crucified with Christ." In order to maintain the work of this step, we must carry out the second step, which is to "daily" take up the cross. This means that even though we have willingly given the self over to the cross once and have disallowed it from being the lord, we should continue to deny the self daily. Denying the self should be daily and uninterrupted. This matter of denying the self cannot be accomplished once for all. The Lord must give us a daily cross to bear. The self is very alert, and Satan who takes advantage of the self is also untiring. Every moment, the self is looking for an opportunity to restore itself and will never let even the slightest chance pass by. Therefore, it is extremely important to bear the cross daily. This is where the believers must be watchful. We should "daily" and moment by moment bear the cross the Lord has given us; we should continuously acknowledge that the Lord's cross is our cross and should not give any room to the self or allow it to assume any position. The third step is to follow the Lord; this is to positively honor the Lord as Lord and to completely obey the Lord's will. In this way, the self will have no chance or possibility to develop itself. These three steps are all based and

centered upon the cross. The first step of denying the self is on the negative side. The second step of taking up the cross is negatively positive. The third step of following the Lord is on the positive side.

The teaching in these two passages should not be separated from one another. If we consider them together and practice them together, we will have the overcoming experience all the time. However, we should allow the Holy Spirit to do His own work and should allow the accomplished work of the cross to be wrought into us.

Our common thought is that we are very willing to give our bad, filthy, sinful, and satanic things over to Christ and have them nailed on the cross with Him. We are very willing to get rid of the evil things in the self. However, our frequent problem is that we think we should keep the good things of the self. In the sight of God, the self is totally corrupted and deeply affected by the fall of Adam. According to God, He cannot heal the life of the self, nor can He remedy it. There is no other way but to crucify it with Christ on the cross. The world is willing to let everything go and is willing even to sacrifice its own money and time, yet it finds it too difficult to deny the self and to crucify it. We always consider that the self is not all bad. This is the human viewpoint. Of course, the natural man has no intention of retaining only its goodness. However, unconsciously and unwittingly, one keeps the good part of the self and puts the evil part of the self to death. Little do we realize that the self is either totally alive or totally dead. If the good part of the self is kept alive, there is no guarantee that the evil part of the self will be dead. Therefore, believers have a serious lesson to learn here. They have to be willing to crucify with Christ both the good and the evil parts of their self. Many people's natural self is honest by birth. Some are very patient, and some are loving. It is very hard for those people to put all their self to death. Subconsciously, they keep their honesty, patience, and love and let the other wrong things be crucified with the Lord. These believers must be taught by God to realize that they themselves are not trustworthy. Only then will they submit themselves to the Lord. We can learn a lesson from Peter on this point. Before he experienced the death and resurrection of Christ and the filling of the Holy Spirit, he truly thought that his love toward the Lord was right. However, was his promise to die with the Lord carried out? Peter's failure was caused by his total trust in himself; he trusted in his own goodness. Yet he did not realize this. After all, it is difficult to

realize the self. We should trust in God's evaluation of ourselves and should put the self on the cross.

If we consider God's evaluation of the world, we will be more sure about this fact. God said, "There is none righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10). To the world, is there really none righteous? There are quite a few righteous persons according to the world's point of view! The reason God considers none righteous is that all their righteousness is produced by themselves. The self is deeply cultivated by Adam's nature. "Does the spring, out of the same opening, gush forth the sweet and the bitter?" (James 3:11). Man thinks that he has what the world approves as righteousness. Yet, "because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and sought to establish their own righteousness, they were not subject to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). The self-righteous ones are not righteous. They are also sinners destined to perdition. Only those who receive the entire person of the Lord Jesus are the righteous ones.

We can look into another portion of the Word which tells us how the goodness of the self-life should be put to death before one can bring forth good fruit. This passage, however, deals more with the self-life than with the self itself.

"Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). The Lord is speaking to His believers. His word is a calling. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me" (v. 26). After He spoke the words in verse 24, He did not leave us in darkness, but He continued by explaining, "He who loves his soul-life loses it [i.e., in eternity bears no fruit]; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it [i.e., not be barren] unto eternal life [in the original, the spiritual life]" (v. 25). The teaching here is that the self-life should be put to death.

Life is very precious. One can suffer the loss of everything except life. Yet here is a call for us to lose our life. Our self-life is endowed to us by birth; it is legitimate and is good. Yet here the Lord requires that we put it to death.

What is this life? This is a natural life, a life that we have in common with all animals, a life with mobility. Our intellect, love, and emotions are all dominated by this life. Every faculty of our body is controlled by this life. Every part of our being is controlled by this life. Although it is not wrong to exercise our intellect, love, and emotions, this dominating life, this life which comes by our natural birth, is not a spiritual life. Unless the spiritual life becomes the expression and the motivating power of all the faculties of the believers, a believer will "lose" his life, that is, he will never bear fruit.

This self-life is beautiful and attractive. Our Lord uses wheat as an illustration. The exterior shell of a grain of wheat is very attractive. Its color is golden yellow. Although it is beautiful, it is useless if it remains merely a grain. It must be separated from (or go together with) its companions and fall into the ground—a dark, hidden, suffering place—and die there. When it dies, it will lose its beauty and all it has. It will no longer be an object of man's praise as before.

If we are truly willing to die, and if we truly die, we will lose many praises of man. Our natural beauty will be destroyed. Formerly, we might have had the intelligence to come up with many new reasonings and theories. When the self dies, we will have to wait for the Lord's direction and leading and will not dare to depend upon our own intelligence anymore. Formerly, we might have had love and could have loved many. We could have motivated ourselves to love the Lord. When the self dies, we will have to let the Lord's love love through us, and we will have to allow the Holy Spirit to permeate our heart with the Lord's love. We will not dare to be motivated by our natural love. Formerly, we might have had emotions and could be joyful, angry, sad, and happy at will; we could fellowship with the Lord through our feelings and could sense His joy. With the death of the self, we will have to let the Lord control our emotions. We will be sorrowful when the Lord is sorrowful. We will be happy when the Lord is happy. We will have to let the Lord have the freedom in us. Even though at times we will lack the sense of the Lord, yet we will have to remain faithful, and we will not change our attitude. We will not dare to change because of the emotions. What seemed profitable to us before will be counted loss for Christ's sake (Phil. 3:7). When we die with the Lord to sin, we let go of the unlawful things. When we are crucified with the Lord to self, we let go of the lawful things. This step is indeed hard to take. Narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

What kind of death is this? It is like the death of the cross that the Lord knew about (John 12:33). Therefore, we do not have any other choice except to fall into the ground willingly and die. We should die joyfully with the Lord and participate in the fellowship of His cross. Every day we should maintain the attitude of hating the self-life so that we can keep it unto life eternal, that is, bearing fruit unto life eternal and bringing forth many grains. This is not an overnight matter. If this were so, it would have been easy. But our Lord's word is, "He who hates his soul-life in this world..." (John 12:25). We should hate our self-

life as long as we live in this world. If we practice this unceasingly, our craving self will be stripped of its power.

We must not consider the word "death" lightly. It is not enough to be a grain of wheat alone. As a born-again son of God (Matt. 13:38), one is merely a babe and cannot do much for God. It is not enough just to fall into the ground, for even if one is willing to suffer and to be hidden, he is still not dead and is still one grain; there is still no increase. Death is the ultimate and most important step. Death unlocks the gate of life. Death is the only requirement for fruit bearing. Death is indispensable. And yet how many are there who truly experience this death? Death terminates all activity. Death is the end to our human life. After death, there remains no room for the activity of the self-life. This death is not a reluctant death, because the Lord said we should "hate" this self-life. To hate is a kind of attitude; it is a lasting attitude. Therefore, we should willingly put this life to death; we should have a full understanding of the poverty of this life and should hate it.

What is the result of the death of this life? The result is many grains. The reason, the very reason, the Lord cannot use us is that we work by our intellect, love, etc. This soul-life is a low-level life; it is not a high-level life. As such it can hardly bear fruit. Although it contains some merits, only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The self-life, and everything that comes with it, is completely useless. If we really put ourselves, our self-life, that is, all that we can do and all that we are, completely on the Lord's cross, we will see how the Lord will use us. If we are empty within, there will not be any blockage to the gushing out of God's living water from us. This kind of fruit bearing is different from ordinary fruit bearing because the fruit that we bear will be plentiful. Our fruit bearing depends totally on our death.

Therefore, believers, just as our self once filled us, even so now must Christ fill us. Otherwise, we have not yet received full salvation. The key for us to receive our salvation and the key for us to be saved is to be delivered from the self. It is easy for a believer who is in the self to fall into sin. This is why in order to die completely to sin, one must die completely to self. Christ is not only our Savior who frees us from sin; He is also our Savior who saves us from the self. To die to self is the only pathway for our spiritual living. Yet, besides God, no one can put our self-life to death. However, if we are not willing, God can do nothing. The activity of the self is sometimes quite hidden under a spiritual veil. A believer may not recognize it at first by himself. This is why God has to remove the veil through all kinds of outward circumstances in order that the believer will come to know

himself. The most difficult thing for a person to do is to know himself. We do not know ourselves. This is why we have to go through God's dealing hand before we realize the evil of the self. If in our experience we have not died to self, we have not made any real progress in our spiritual life. If you and I are willing to let the Holy Spirit of the Lord apply the death of the self in us and to work it out of us today, we will see great progress in our lives.

Brothers! May we declare together in one accord, "Not as I will, but as You [the Father] will" (Matt. 26:39).

The above article deals with questions on the spiritual life. May the reader not consider this as a theory. One should compare his spiritual experience with the words here. If he does this, he will understand these words. We are all babes in Christ. May the Lord guide us step by step. If we do not have the experience of the death of the self, it is better to say we do not have it. But we must never take the self-life as the spiritual life. May God bless us.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MESSENGER OF THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION

Recently many people seem to be tired of hearing the word of the cross. However, we thank and praise God the Father that He has reserved for His own great name many faithful ones who have not bent their knees to Baal. Still, I feel that there is one thing the faithful servants of Christ should know. Why, after they have done so much preaching of the cross, have the results been so discouraging, and people have not had much change in their lives after hearing the true Word of God? I think this problem deserves our greatest attention. We who labor for the Lord should understand why we cannot gain others by the gospel we preach. I hope that we would pray quietly before the Lord and ask the Spirit of God to enlighten our hearts that we may know where our failure lies.

THE FAILURE OF THE MESSENGER OF THE CROSS

At the present time, we should pay attention to the word which we preach. We do not have to mention those who preach the wrong gospel. Their belief is in error anyway. What we preach is the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ and how it saves sinners from the condemnation of sin and the power of sin. When we preach, we pay much attention to the outline, the logic, and the thought. We do our best to make our doctrines clear. In this way, even the most unlearned person may understand. We also pay attention to man's psychology. We try as

hard as we can in our homiletics to match man's psyche. What we preach is truthful and scriptural—our topic is the cross of the Lord Jesus. We know that the Lord Jesus died for sinners on the cross so that all who believe in Him can be saved apart from any work. We also know that the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is not only for substitution but also for the crucifixion of the sinner and his sin together with Him. We know the way to be saved. We know how to die with the Lord, how to apply the death of the Lord by faith, and how to die with Him to deal with sin and self. We are also clear about other related doctrines in the Bible. Our preaching is presented in a nice and clear way so that anyone in the audience can understand. The audience pays much attention to us when we preach the cross of the Lord; they like it and are touched by it. We may even be gifted in our eloquence and be able to present the truth in a persuasive way which causes us to think that our work is very effective. We may think that our work is very effective! Under such circumstances, we ought to see many people receiving life and many believers gaining the more abundant life. However, the results are the opposite of what we expect. Although the audience may be touched at the meeting hall, they do not gain anything that we hope to see them gain after they leave the meeting hall, even though the speech is still fresh in their minds. They do not have any change in their lives. They understand what we preach, but it does not have any influence on their daily living. They only store the word preached in their brains. They do not apply it in their hearts.

One possible reason for this is that what you have is only eloquence, words, and wisdom. It seems that behind your speech you do not have the power that touches people's hearts. You have the best words and voice, but behind the words and voice you do not have the kind of authority that "controls" people's lives. In other words, you can make people listen attentively to you at the meeting hall, but the Holy Spirit is not co-working with you. Therefore, your labor is either ineffective or it lacks lasting results. Your words cannot leave a lasting mark on people's lives. Although your mouth flows out words, your spirit does not flow out life to nourish, raise up, and quicken the dying audience.

In recent years, the Lord has told me to be careful about this kind of preaching. We do not want to be popular orators (our Lord is a Life-giver); we want to be channels of life, directing life into people's hearts. When we preach the cross, we should have the life of the cross flowing into others' lives. The saddest thing to me is that so many people are preaching the cross today, but men have not gained God's life. Men seem to agree with and gladly receive our words, but they

have not received God's life. Many times as we preach the substitutional death of the cross, men seem to understand the meaning and reason for substitution, and they seem to be touched at the time. However, we cannot see the grace of God working in the audience to the point where they truly obtain the regenerated life. We also preach the co-crucifixion of the cross. We explain it in a very clear, moving way. At the time when people hear it, they may pray and may make up their minds to die together with the Lord and to gain the experiences of overcoming sin and self. But after the whole thing is over, we do not see them gaining the more abundant life of God. Such results sadden me very much. It humbles me before the Lord to seek His light. If you have the same experience as I have, I hope that you will grieve before the Lord as I do and will regret our failures. What we indeed lack now are men and women who will preach the cross, but what we need more than this are preachers who will preach the cross in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us now read the Word of God. Paul said, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, came not according to excellence of speech or of wisdom, announcing to you the mystery of God. For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling; and my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:1-4). In these verses we see three things: (1) the message that Paul preached, (2) the person of Paul himself, and (3) the way Paul preached his message.

THE MESSAGE PAUL PREACHED

The message Paul preached was the Lord Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The subject of his preaching was the cross of Christ and the crucified Christ. He did not know anything except this. If we forget the cross and do not make the cross and Christ our unique subject, how much will we and our audience miss! I believe that we are surely not those who do not preach the cross.

Our message and our subject may be good. However, do we not have the experience of having a good message yet being unable to dispense life to others? Let me point out that inasmuch as the message we preach is important, if it cannot give life to others, our work is mostly in vain. We should remember that the goal of our work is to give life to people. We preach the substitutional death of the cross in order that God can give His life to those who believe. If

others are stirred up or excited or even repent and agree with what we preach, but do not have God's life in them, what good will this do? They may show their sympathy outwardly, but they are not saved. Therefore, our goal is neither to make people repent by themselves nor to influence them in their mind, but to dispense God's life into them so that they can have life and be saved. Even when we preach the deeper truths or try to help others to understand the truth of co-crucifixion, the same principle holds true. It is easy to make people know and understand what we preach. It is also not hard to make others accept our teachings in their mind. Any believer with a little knowledge can understand if you explain matters to him clearly enough. However, if you want him to gain life and power and to experience what you preach, there is no other way except for God to dispense through you the richer life into him. We should know that our only work is to be the channels of God's life, conveying life into others' spirits. Therefore, even if the subject or the message we preach is good, we still need to find out whether or not we are the suitable channels for God to convey life into others.

PAUL HIMSELF

The message Paul preached was the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The message he preached was not in vain because he was a living channel of life. He begat many people through the gospel of the cross. What he preached was the word of the cross. Concerning himself, he said that he was "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." He was a crucified man! Only a crucified man can preach the crucified word. He had no confidence in himself. He did not rely on himself. Weakness, fear, trembling, being void of self-confidence, considering oneself as totally useless—these are the characteristics of a crucified man. He said, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20) and "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31). Only a dead Paul could preach a word on crucifixion. If he had not died in a genuine way, the life of the Lord's death could not have flowed out from him. It is easy to preach the cross, but it is not easy to preach it as a crucified man. Unless one is a crucified person, he cannot preach the word of the cross and cannot give to others the life of the cross. Strictly speaking, unless one knows the cross experientially, he is not worthy to preach the cross.

THE WAY PAUL PREACHED HIS MESSAGE

Paul's message was crucifixion. He himself was a crucified man, and he preached the cross by way of the cross. It was a man of the cross preaching the message of the cross with the spirit of the cross. Many times what we preach is

the cross, but our attitude, our words, and our feeling do not seem like we are preaching the cross! Many preachings of the cross are not done in the spirit of the cross! Paul said, "I...came not according to excellence of speech or of wisdom, announcing to you the mystery of God." Here the mystery of God refers to the word of the cross. Paul did not preach the cross with excellence of speech or wisdom. "And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." This is the spirit of the cross. The cross is wisdom to God but foolishness to man (1 Cor. 1:23-24). When we preach the word of this foolishness, we should have the form of "foolishness," the attitude of "foolishness," and the speech of "foolishness." Paul gained the victory because he was a truly crucified man. He preached the cross with the spirit of the cross and the attitude of the cross. Those who have not experienced crucifixion will not be filled with the spirit of crucifixion, and they are not worthy to preach the word of the cross.

After seeing the experience of Paul, does it not tell us the reason for our failures? The message we preach may be good, but we should examine ourselves in the light of the Lord—are we truly crucified men? With what kind of spirit, word, and attitude do we preach the cross? May we humble ourselves before these questions so that God can have mercy upon us.

We are not talking about those who preach a "different gospel." We are talking only about those who preach "the gospel of God's grace." The word is not wrong, our message is not bad, but why do others not gain life? This must be due to the failure of the preacher! It is the person who is wrong, not the word that has lost its power. It is the man who has hindered God's life from flowing, not the Word of God that has lost its effect. When the man who preaches the cross does not himself have the experience of the cross nor the spirit of the cross, he cannot dispense to others the life of the cross. We cannot give others what we ourselves do not have. If the cross does not become our life, we cannot give the life of the cross to others. The failure of our work comes because we love to give the cross to others before we know whether or not we have the cross in ourselves. Those who are good at preaching to others must be good at preaching to themselves first. Otherwise, the Spirit will not co-work with them.

Although the message we preach is important, we must not stress the message too much and forget ourselves. We can gain some knowledge from books about the word of the cross which we preach. We can use our mind to look for many meanings in the Bible. However, all these are borrowed; they do not belong to

us. Those who have clever minds are more dangerous than others. A preacher is in more danger than others, because all the studying, reading, researching, and listening may be done for others and not for himself. He may labor for others only to find himself starved spiritually! We can hear deep words about various aspects of the cross or read from books about the meanings of substitution and co-crucifixion. If we have a clever mind, we can even add a proper order to these teachings, so that when we speak, we can develop the things we have heard and thought in a very clear and sincere way, having everything well-organized and all the points clearly presented and the arguments neatly divided up. We may cause our audience to think that they have understood everything. Yet, despite the fact that they have understood everything, there is not an urging power to make the audience pursue what they have understood. They seem to think that to understand the doctrines of the cross is enough. They stop at the things they understand and do not pursue what the cross promises to give them. Even if the speaker understands the audience's mind, has a loud, sincere voice, and urges them not to understand the doctrine only but to pursue after the experience, his audience can only be stirred up at that moment. They still have not received life. They still have the theory only, not the experience. We must never be self-satisfied and think that our silvery tongue can maneuver the audience. They may be affected at that one moment, but have we only given them thoughts and doctrines, or do we need to give life to them? Without giving life to man, we contribute nothing to his spirituality. What use is it to give man only thoughts or doctrines? May this thought be planted deeply into our being so that we would repent of the vanity of our previous work!

The reasons why no one gains life through our preaching of the cross are: (1) we ourselves do not have the experience of the cross, and (2) we do not use the spirit of the cross to preach the word of the cross.

THE REASON FOR THE FAILURE OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE CROSS

Those who are not crucified cannot be and are not worthy to preach the message of the cross. The cross which we preach should crucify us first. The message we preach should burn in our life first so that our life and our message can be mingled together. In this way our life will become our living message. The cross we preach should not merely be a message. We should daily live out the cross in our life. What we preach should not be merely a message but a life which we

daily live. When we preach, we dispense this life to others. The Lord Jesus said that His flesh is meat and His blood is drink (John 6:55). When we partake of the cross of the Lord Jesus by faith, it is like eating His flesh and drinking His blood. But to eat and to drink are not just empty words. After we eat and drink, we digest what we eat and drink so that it can become part of us—become our life. Our failure lies in the fact that many times we study the Word of God with our own wisdom and prepare our notes with our own thoughts. We often take the knowledge we gain from books and the doctrines we hear from our teachers and friends and make them our sermons. Although we have many good thoughts and ideas, and although the audience listens to us with much attention and interest, all the work ends right there. We cannot dispense the life of God to others. Although we preach the word of the cross, we cannot dispense the life of the cross to others. We can only give thoughts and ideas to people. However, what people lack is not good thoughts but life!

LIFE

We cannot give to others what we do not have. If we have life, we can give life to others. If what we have is only thoughts, we can only give thoughts to others. If we do not have the experience of crucifixion in our life, if we do not have the experience of dying together with the Lord in overcoming sin and self, if we do not have the experience of bearing the cross and following the Lord to suffer for Him, and if we only know the word of the cross from others' speaking and writings but have no experience of it ourselves, we surely cannot give life to others. We can only give the theories of the life of the cross to others. Only when we are transformed by the cross and when we receive the life and the spirit of the cross can we dispense the cross to others. The cross should daily do a deeper work in our life so that we can have solid experiences of the suffering and the victory of the cross. Then when we preach, our life will spontaneously flow out through our words, and the Spirit will pour His life through our life to nourish the dried up ones—the audience. Ideas can only reach man's brain; they only result in more thoughts for man's brain. Only life can reach man's spirit, the result being that man's spirit either receives a regenerated life or a more abundant life.

Man's thought, words, utterance, and theories can only move and reach man's soul, because they can only move man's provocation, emotion, mind, and will. Only life can reach man's spirit. All the work of the Holy Spirit is in our spirit (Rom. 8:16; Eph. 3:16). Only when we are in the experience of the spirit, flowing out the life of our spirit, will the Holy Spirit pour out His life to others' spirits

through us. Therefore, it is a most vain thing to save the sinners and edify the saints by man's own mind, utterance, and theory. Although what one speaks may be very persuasive outwardly, we have to know that the Holy Spirit is not co-working with him. The Holy Spirit is not behind his words and is not working with him through His authority and power. The audience only listens to his words; there is no change at all in their lives. Although they sometimes make vows and resolutions, these are only excitements in their soul. There is no life behind his words. As a result, there is no power for them to gain what they have not yet gained. Where there is life, there is power. In spiritual matters, there is no power if there is no life. Therefore, if you do not let the Holy Spirit pour out His life through your life to others' spirits, others will not have the life of the Holy Spirit and will not have the power to practice what you preach. What we desire is not eloquence but the power of the Holy Spirit. May the Spirit of God make us realize that thoughts can only reach man's soul, and only life can flow to man's spirit.

The life we are speaking of here refers to the experience of the word of God in our lives and the experience of the message we preach. The life of the cross is the life of the Lord Jesus. We should first test our message through our experience. The doctrine we understand is only a doctrine. We should let the doctrine work in us first so that the doctrine we understand becomes part of our life and part of the vital elements of our daily living and no longer just a doctrine, but the life of our life. It is like the food we eat becoming the flesh of our flesh and the bone of our bones. Thus, we become a living doctrine. In this way, the word we preach is no longer just a theory we know but our own true life. This is what the Bible means by "doers of the word" (James 1:22). Often we misunderstand the word "doer." We think "doers" are those who try their best to follow the word they hear and understand. But this is not the "doing" in the Bible. It is true that we should resolve to practice what we hear, but the "doing" in the Bible is not a "doing" with one's own strength. Rather, it is to allow the Holy Spirit to live out from one's life the word he knows. This is a kind of living, not a kind of work. If there is the living, there will spontaneously be the work. To have some sporadic works is not the "doing" described in the Bible. We should cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our life through our will so that we can experientially live out what we know. In this way we will be able to dispense life to others.

We will know what to follow if we will look to the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "So must the Son of Man be lifted up, that every one who believes into Him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15) and, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all

men to Myself. But He said this signifying by what kind of death He was about to die" (12:32-33). The Lord Jesus had to be crucified before He could draw all men to Himself and dispense spiritual life to others. He Himself had to die first, experience the cross first, and have the working of the cross within and without, making Him a crucified man in reality first, before He could have the power to draw all men to Himself. The disciple is not over his master. If our Lord had to be lifted up before He could draw all men to Himself, should not we who lift up the lifted-up Lord Jesus be lifted up ourselves and be crucified before we can draw men to the Lord? In order for the Lord Jesus to dispense spiritual life to others, He had to be lifted up on the cross. In the same way, if we desire to dispense spiritual life to others, we must also be lifted up on the cross. Only then will the Holy Spirit pour out His life through us. The source of life dispenses life to others through the cross. Should not the channel of life also dispense life to others through the cross?

THE CHANNEL OF LIFE

We have said that our work is to dispense life to others. However, we ourselves do not have the life to give to others, to enliven others, and to nourish others. We are not the source but the channel. The life of God flows through us and flows out from within us. We are the channels. The channels should not be silted or else water cannot flow through. The word of the cross is doing the dredging work, removing all that belongs to Adam and the natural man, so that we can receive the life of the Holy Spirit and be saturated with the Holy Spirit. In this way, our spirit will constantly bear the cross of the Lord to the extent that our life becomes the life of the cross. We will cover this point shortly. Since we are saturated with the Holy Spirit and have the life of the cross, the Holy Spirit will use us to pour out the life of the cross from within to those who are surrounding us. If we truly allow the cross to do a deep work in us, to the extent that we become filled with the Holy Spirit, we will spontaneously flow out life to nourish those whom we touch whenever we speak or preach in public or to individuals. This is something that requires no intentional effort or pretension; it will be something very spontaneous. Spontaneously we will bear fruit. This is what the Lord Jesus means in John 7:38: "He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." There are several meanings here. The innermost being of the believer must first be emptied and must first receive the full work of the cross. His innermost being must be filled with the

living water of the Holy Spirit. The life in him is not only sufficient for his own need, but is overabundant and sufficient to the extent that out of him flow rivers of living water to supply others with the same living water. We should heed the word "flow" here. It is not by maneuvering, by voice, by psychology, by eloquence, by doctrine, or by knowledge. Although these methods may help us sometimes, they are not the living water. Neither is the employment of these methods the flowing out of the living water. To flow is something very natural; it does not require any human labor. Rather, everything glides along. We do not need any eloquence or theory. We only need to preach the word of the cross of the Lord faithfully, and others will receive the life which they lack. The life and power of the Holy Spirit will somehow spontaneously flow through our spirit. Otherwise, even if we teach diligently, the audience will listen indifferently! Sometimes one's audience may listen attentively and may understand and be touched by what they hear. Yet they will only respond with the word, "Wonderful." They will still not have the power and life to carry out what they hear. Oh, may we be the channels of God's life today!

In order to be the channels, we must have the experience. We have covered this in the above discussion. Unless we have this, the Holy Spirit will not work with us. After we have received the power of the Holy Spirit, all our works will be in the nature of a witness (Luke 24:48-49). Actually, all our work is a witness to the Lord. A witness cannot witness what he has not seen. One cannot even witness what he has heard from others. One cannot witness what he has not experienced. Seriously speaking, one bears false witness if he has no experience in what he preaches! If we do this, the Holy Spirit will not work with us. Another thing we should know is that whether it is the Holy Spirit who is working or the evil spirit who is working, there must be men as the outlets of power. If we have no experience in what we preach, the Holy Spirit will definitely not be able to use us as His channel through which He pours His life into people's hearts.

Hence, may the cross we preach crucify us on it! May we bear the cross we preach! May we first gain the life which we want to dispense to others! May the cross we preach be the cross which we daily experience in our life! If the message we preach is to have a lasting effect, it must first become the food of our spirit. It must be deeply engraved on our heart and be burned and seared into our life through the sufferings in our daily living. By this, our every move will bear the brand of the cross. Only those who bear in their bodies the brands of

Jesus (Gal. 6:17) can preach the Lord Jesus. Brothers, let me tell you, although the thoughts that suddenly come across your mind or the knowledge that you gain from books earn you your audience's smile, they will not have a lasting effect. If our work is just to make people smile, we may think that we are doing a great work with our sermons by merely collecting some material from the mind and the emotion. This, however, is not the goal of our work!

THE SUCCESS OF THE APOSTLE

The message of the cross deeply touched Paul. His life was a manifestation of the life of the cross. He was not only one who preached the cross but one who lived the cross. The cross he preached was the cross he lived. Therefore, when he spoke of the cross, he could add to it his own experience and testimony. He not only knew the Lord Jesus' substitutional death, but he took the Lord Jesus' cross as his own cross in experience. He was able to say, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20) and, "The world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (6:14). His meekness, endurance, infirmities, weepings, sufferings, and chains were all the manifestation of the life of the cross. Because he was one who lived the cross, he could preach the cross. Men sometimes criticize others as being those who do not practice what they preach. Yet, in reality, no one can ever preach what he does not practice! Because Paul was able to live out his gospel, he was able to beget many spiritual sons and daughters through the gospel. He himself possessed the life of the cross. As a result he was able to "reproduce" this cross in others' hearts.

THE CROSS AND ITS MESSENGER

Personal Experience

After we read 2 Corinthians 4 (please read it), we will realize the inner experience of this servant of the Lord. The secret of all his work was "death operates in us, but life in you" (v. 12). He passed through death daily. Every day he allowed the cross to do a deeper work in his heart so that others could gain life. If one does not have the death of the cross in himself, others cannot gain the life of the cross. Paul was willing to be put to death that others could gain life. Only those who have died can give others life. Still, how difficult this is!

What does death mean here? The death here is not only a death to sin, self, and the world. The death here has a deeper significance than this. This death is the spirit that is manifested by the Lord Jesus' crucifixion. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not die for His own sin. His cross was a manifestation of His holiness. His

crucifixion was altogether on behalf of others. He died in obedience to God's will. This is the meaning of death here. It is not only for our own sake that we are crucified to sin and the world, but it is for the sake of our obedience to the Lord Jesus that we are daily opposed by sinners and are put to death. We should allow the death of the Lord Jesus to work in us to the point that we truly have the experience of death to our self and are sanctified. Furthermore, we should allow the Holy Spirit, through the cross, to do a deeper work in us so that we can live out the cross. We should not only have the death of the cross, but even more we should have the life of the cross. When we have the death of the cross, we are dead to sin and the Adamic life. When we have the life of the cross, we go one step further and take the spirit of the cross as the very life in our daily living. This means that we manifest in our daily living the spirit of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb, who suffered silently and who "being reviled did not revile in return; suffering, He did not threaten but kept committing all to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). This is a step deeper than being crucified to sin, self, and the world. May the cross become our life so that we can be a living cross and manifest the cross in everything.

Paul was able to give others life because for him to live was the cross. He not only passively applied the death of the cross to terminate everything from old Adam, but he actively took the cross as his life and daily lived out the cross. Day by day, he apprehended the significance of the Lord's cross. At the same time, day by day, he expressed the life of the Lord as the Lamb (the cross). He was "always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in [his] body" (2 Cor. 4:10). He was willing to be "always...delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also [the cross] may be manifested in...mortal flesh" (v. 11). Therefore, he could be "pressed on every side but not constricted; unable to find a way out but not utterly without a way out; persecuted but not abandoned; cast down but not destroyed" (vv. 8-9). He allowed the death of the Lord Jesus to "operate" in him (v. 12). A death that can operate is a "living death." It is the life of death, the life of the cross. He was willing to be always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. He was willing to endure ear-grating words, high-handed methods, cruel persecutions, and unreasonable misunderstandings for the Lord's sake. He was willing to be delivered unto death without saying one word. Under such circumstances, he was like his Lord who, though having the power to ask the Father to send twelve legions of angels to His rescue and to evade the

circumstances by human method, would not choose to do it. He would rather let the "living death" of Jesus—the life and spirit of the cross—work in him to the extent that he acted and behaved in the spirit of the cross. He realized that with the cross there was the power, a power which enabled him to yield to death for Jesus' sake and to suffer persecution and tribulations under man's hand. How deeply had the cross worked in Paul! How good it would be if we could also bear "about in the body the putting to death of Jesus"! Who can say to the Lord that he is willing to die and not resist in the midst of all opposing and suffering circumstances? If we want others to gain the cross, the cross must first take hold of us in our lives. It is only after the cross has been wrought into our lives through the fiery sufferings and oppositions that we can duplicate this cross in others' lives. In other words, the life of the cross is the life that puts into practice the Lord's Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5—7, see 5:38, 44).

The passage here in 2 Corinthians clearly tells us that we are not just for preaching, but we are for the manifestation of the life of the Lord Jesus, and we are to flow out the life of the Lord Jesus from our body. We can flow out His life only when we always bear about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, when we are delivered unto death for the Lord Jesus' sake, when we suffer loss in our reputation, mind, and body for His sake, and when we express the way of the Lamb of Golgotha in the midst of all such sufferings (vv. 10-11). Unfortunately, we often like to take the shortcuts! Little do we realize that there is no shortcut in manifesting the life of the Lord Jesus!

"Death operates in us, but life in you" (v. 12). "You" refers to the Corinthians and all the saints (1:1); they are Paul's audience. Because the death of the Lord Jesus was able to work in Paul, he was able to have the life of the Lord Jesus work in his audience and to have them receive the spiritual life. The word "life" in this verse is *zoe*, which in the original language means the spiritual life, the highest life. What Paul was able to lift up and give to others was not just his speech, thoughts, and a wooden cross. Paul desired that they gain the spiritual life of the Lord. This spiritual life operated in their hearts and enabled them to reach the goal of Paul's message. This was not a vain preaching, but one that entered the dried-up hearts of his audience with extraordinary life and power so that they actually received the life of the cross which he preached. Our preaching of the cross should produce such a result. We should not be satisfied if our preaching does not have a result like Paul's. In summary, one who does not live the cross as Paul did cannot expect to have a result as Paul had. If we are not

crucified persons, it will surely be hard for us to preach the cross and to give others life.

The Method of Preaching

We know that Paul not only preached the cross as a crucified person, but he preached the cross in the spirit of the cross. In his daily life he was a crucified person; in his preaching he was also a crucified person. He announced the cross by living the cross. Paul was a person who was crucified with Christ. This was his experience in life. When he announced the cross, he did not exercise his "excellence of speech or wisdom," or "persuasive words of wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:1, 4) which he was good at. He knew that these would not serve as proper outlets for God's channel of life. Instead, he relied on the "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (v. 4). Such preaching is one in which the word of the cross is preached with the attitude of the cross. With his genius and experience, Paul could surely have articulated the truth of the cross in persuasive words and clever theories, capturing his audience's attention and making them understand what he had to say. He could have made the cruel cross sound very interesting. He could have used many suitable illustrations and simple proverbs to expound the mystery of the cross. He could have quoted the Scripture and expounded on the philosophy of the cross, clarifying to others the substitutional death and the co-crucifixion of the cross. Paul was capable of doing these things, but he would not do them. His heart did not rely on these things because he knew that these things could not give life to others. He knew that for him to do this would be to preach the great truth of the cross with ways that are contrary to the cross. To the world, the cross is humble, low, foolish, and ugly. This is what the cross is anyway. To announce it with worldly excellence of speech and wisdom would be contrary to the spirit of the cross and would not be of any profit. Paul was willing to abandon his natural intellect and to announce the cross with the attitude and spirit of the cross. This was why God used Paul greatly.

Every one of us has our own natural gifts. Some may have more while others may have less. After we have gone through the experience of the cross, we tend to rely on or draw upon our natural gift to announce the cross which we have newly experienced. How our heart desires that our audience could see what we have seen, or would desire to acquire the same experience as we have! Yet, how cold and indifferent is our audience! How they disappoint us! Little do we realize that our experience of the cross is still immature, that our natural, excellent gifts

need to be crucified with the Lord, and that the cross should work in us. We should manifest the cross not only in our lives but in our work as well. Before we reach the place of maturity, we tend to consider that our talent is not harmful but profitable. We wonder why we cannot draw upon our natural strength. It is not until we see that the work done by drawing upon our natural genius only elicits temporary acceptance from others and that it does not bring about a solid work of the Holy Spirit in others' spirits. It is then that we begin to understand that our natural gift is insufficient and that we ought to seek for greater power. How numerous are the ones who preach the cross with their own self strength!

I am not saying that these do not have the experience of the cross. It is possible that they do have the experience of the cross. While they are working, they do not declare that they are trusting in their own gifts or power. On the contrary, they pray diligently and seek after God's blessing and the help of the Holy Spirit. To a certain extent, they know that they are not trustworthy. Yet, all these realizations do not help them, because in the deepest part of their hearts they still trust in themselves, thinking that their eloquence, logic, thoughts, or parables will move others! The meaning of crucifixion is to be helpless, in weakness, and in trembling and fear. It means to die. This is what happens when a person is crucified. Hence, if we are manifesting the life of the cross in our daily lives, we should also manifest the spirit of the cross in the Lord's work. We should reckon ourselves helpless and should always consider ourselves untrustworthy, being in fear and trembling for ourselves. If we do this, we will gain fruit through trusting in the Holy Spirit.

Only those who are crucified are willing and able to trust in the Holy Spirit and His power. Whenever we have a little trust in ourselves, we will not trust in the Spirit. Paul himself was one who had been crucified with the Lord. When he worked, he manifested the spirit of the cross. He was not at all self-assured. Because he preached the Savior of the cross with the way of the cross, he had the demonstration of the Spirit and of power (v. 4). We ought to be able to say with Paul that "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance" (1 Thes. 1:5). If the Spirit and His power are not working behind our speaking, our words are useless even if they are enticing. May we despise our natural abilities, and may we be willing to lose all to gain the power of the Holy Spirit of God!

Herein lies the key to the difference between fruitfulness and fruitlessness in an evangelist. Sometimes, we see two evangelists having the same utterance and expressions. Yet God is able to use one to gain much fruit. The other may be spiritual and scriptural in his speaking, and his audience may also pay much attention to him, but nothing results from his speaking; there is no fruit. It is not difficult to discover the reason behind this difference. According to my observation, I can see that one is a genuinely crucified person; he has the experience. The other only remains in his imagination. Those who have nothing but imaginations surely cannot preach the cross with the way of the cross. If those who have the life of the cross proclaim their experience from their spirit, the Holy Spirit will surely be with them. Even if some have better eloquence than others and are able to analyze and illustrate well, the Holy Spirit will not be working with them unless the cross has done a solid work in their hearts already. What we lack is the deep work of the cross in us, which results in the Holy Spirit working with us in our gospel preaching and in His life flowing out through us. Although the Lord may at times use our natural gifts, this is not the source of fruitfulness. Those works done through the natural life are mainly vain works. Only those works done through the supernatural life can produce much fruit.

Here we can consider another passage of the Scripture. This will explain to us the difference between trusting in the natural life and trusting in the supernatural life. The Lord Jesus said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life" (John 12:24-25).

Here the Lord spelled out the principle of fruit bearing. The grain of wheat must first die before it will bear much fruit. Death is the necessary pathway to fruit bearing. Death is the unique way to fruit bearing. We usually pray for the Lord to grant us greater power so that we can bear more fruit. However, the Lord told us that we must first die and must first have the experience of the cross before we can have the authority of the Holy Spirit. Often we try to skip over Golgotha to reach Pentecost. Little do we realize that without the cross crucifying us and stripping us of everything natural, the Holy Spirit cannot work with us to gain others. Only through death can there be fruit bearing.

The nature of the fruit here also proves what we have said before, that the purpose of our work is to give life to others. When this grain of wheat dies, it begets many grains. When it dies, it dispenses life to many other grains. All these

other grains contain life in them. The life that they possess originates from the one dead grain. If we truly die, we can become God's channel of life and can dispense life to others. This life is not an empty term; with it there is the genuine power of God. When this power is released from us, it gives life to others.

Here, the fruit resulting from this grain of wheat is manifold; it is "much fruit." When we are confined to our own life, the most that we can gain through our work is one or two persons. This does not mean that we will not save anyone. However, when we die like the grain of wheat, we will gain "much fruit." Whatever we do, even if we are negligent in a few words, will still cause others to be saved or be edified. May we bear much fruit.

But what exactly does it mean to fall into the ground and die? We will understand it when we read the following word of the Lord: "He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life." Here soul-life is mentioned a few times. In the original text, different words are used for "life." One denotes the soul-life and the natural life. The other denotes the spiritual life and the extraordinary life. Therefore, what the Lord Jesus is saying here is, "He who loves his soul-life shall lose the spiritual life, and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep his spiritual life unto eternity." Simply put, this verse tells us that we should put our soul-life to death in the same way that a grain of wheat is put into the ground. Afterwards, we will bear much fruit in our spiritual life, which will remain forever. We want to have much fruit. However, we do not know how to put to death the soul-life and how to make alive the spiritual life.

The soul-life is just our natural life. Our flesh is able to live because of our soul-life. The soul-life is the organ by which we live. Everything that a person possesses by nature, such as his will, power, emotion, and thought, are all part of the soul. Everything that the natural life possesses is the by-product of our soul-life. Our intellect, thought, eloquence, emotion, and abilities all belong to our soul-life. The spiritual life is God's life. This life does not evolve from any part of the soul-life but is specifically given to us by God when we believe in the Lord's cross and are regenerated. What God is doing in us now is developing this spiritual life and causing it to grow. All our good works and the power to work issue from the spiritual life. His intention is to bring our soul-life to death. (The death here is different from the death in 2 Corinthians 4. The death there is another aspect of death.)

Many times the power of our work comes from our natural ability or our soul-life. We find that frequently we need to use our eloquence, wisdom, knowledge, and abilities. One of the most awesome things is the power we employ in our preaching; it comes from our soul-life. We are exercising our natural power. This greatly diminishes our fruit. In our work, we do not know how to apply the power of the spiritual life. Many times, we take the soul-life as the spiritual life. As a result, we end up drawing upon our natural power. Often, we have to wait until all natural power of our body is depleted before we begin to rely upon the power of the spiritual life. Many people do not even come up to this standard. Whenever they feel weak in their physical strength, they concede that they can no longer work. Others who are more advanced would continue on in their weakness and would go on working by trying to trust in the Lord's strength. However, if we truly realize the way to die to our natural (soulish) strength, and if we trust in the power of the spiritual life which God put within us, we will not depend on the natural strength for our work when we are without strength as well as when we are full of strength. I feel sad that many believers' work remains in the soul, despite the fact that these believers are very zealous and sincere. Such work never touches the spiritual realm. The difference between the use of spiritual power and soulish power is something that words cannot explain. We can only comprehend it in our spirit and in our heart. Yet when the Holy Spirit enlightens us, we will come to the full realization of it in our experience.

For the sake of taking care of the weakness among many of God's children, we will discuss this question in detail. However, we can only look to the Holy Spirit of God to personally show us the real significance of this truth and the way to practice it in our experience. There are mainly three characteristics of the work of the soul. First is the natural ability, second is the emotion, and third is the mind.

Natural Ability

We have mentioned earlier the matter of our natural abilities. Some people are more intelligent; they are naturally sharper than others. Some people are very eloquent; when they speak, their arguments are always very reasonable. Some people are very analytical; they can analyze a problem logically. Some people are very strong physically; they can labor day and night without any rest. Some people are very capable; they are very good at managing affairs. We know that God does use man's natural abilities, but man often takes occasion in God's use of his abilities to trust in all his natural abilities. For example, here may be one

person who is slow in communication but capable in managing affairs, and another person may be very eloquent but incapable in managing affairs. If the Lord asks both to give a message, the first one will surely feel that he is slow in utterance and that he must therefore fully trust in the Lord. The second one will consider himself very eloquent. Although he also will pray, he will not be as desperate as the first one. On the other hand, if the Lord asks both of them to manage an affair, the first one will not trust in the Lord as desperately as the second one! Our natural ability is the power of our soul-life. We do not realize how much we are confident in ourselves and how much we depend on the power of the soul when we work! In God's view, too many of our works are done through the power of the soul.

Emotion

Some emotions originate from ourselves. Others originate from other people. Sometimes our loved ones are not saved, or they have not come up to our expectation. As a result we are stirred up. We try our best to save them or to edify them. This kind of work is usually ineffective, for the motive of such work originates from our emotion. Sometimes we receive special grace from God; our hearts are filled with light and joy. It seems that a fire is burning within which gives us unspeakable joy. At such times, the presence of God becomes very real. When our soul is stirred up this way, emotional feelings run high. At such times, it is easy to work for the Lord. Our hearts feel as if they are ready to overflow. We can hardly hold ourselves back from speaking to others about the Lord. Ordinarily, we may be conscious that we ought to be careful in our words. However, at such times when the heart is filled with special light, we babble unceasingly about the things of God. Such works are fully of the emotion. Some think that they can only work when they sense this kind of fire in their hearts and when they themselves are carried away as if in the third heavens. When the Lord takes away this "noticeable" joy, such ones will feel that tons of weight have come on their shoulders and that they cannot go one step further. Sometimes their hearts are cold as ice; there are no emotional feelings at all. At such times, they feel that they can no longer preach. They feel dry and cold within. As a result, they are unable to work. Even when they force themselves to work, they have absolutely no taste for it. Their labors are absolutely controlled by their inward feelings. When the right feelings are present, they soar like eagles. When the right feelings are gone, they wobble and refuse to go forward. Feelings, stimulations, and emotions are all parts of the soul-life. Hence, those saints who

are dominated by their feelings, stimulations, and emotions are working by the power of their soul-life. They are not yet capable of putting these things to death and still are not able to work in the spirit.

The Mind

Our work is often influenced or controlled by our mind. Because we do not know how to seek after God's will, many times we take the thoughts of the mind as God's will and are led astray. To go along with the mind and to base one's conduct on the mind is a very dangerous thing. Sometimes when we prepare a sermon, we try hard to exercise our mind to come up with outlines, sections, expositions, significances, and examples. Such sermons are very dead. They may stir up others' attention and may generate some interest, but they cannot dispense life to others.

There is another work of the mind. I believe many of God's workers often find themselves falling into such ill. It is the memory. We often preach to others from our memory! We memorize the messages that we have heard, and we speak to others from what we remember. Sometimes we speak to others from the Scriptures that we have memorized or from our old sermons, old commentaries. These are all works of the mind. This does not mean that we have never experienced what we preach. Perhaps what we know and what we remember are things taught by God. Perhaps we have indeed experienced the things we know and remember. However, this does not take away the fact that they are still works of the mind. We may have experienced a truth, which at the time of our experience may have been life to us. However, after a while the knowledge of the truth remains only in our head. We begin to preach from our memory the truth that we formerly experienced, but this has become merely a work of the mind. Our mind and memory are both organs of the soul. For us to trust in our mind and memory is for us to trust in the power of the soul-life. We are still under the control of the natural life.

These three things are the chief items in the work of the soul. This type of soulish work is not sin or absolutely incapable of saving people. However, the fruit will be rare. We should overcome this work of the soul by trusting in the cross. The Lord Jesus told us that the soul-life should fall into the ground and die like a grain of wheat. According to our experience, we love our natural abilities very much. We love our feelings, and we trust in our mind. However, our Lord told us that we should hate our soul-life. If we do not hate it but instead love it, we will lose the power of the extraordinary spiritual life. In this matter, the death of the cross

should perform a deep work. We should hand over to the cross the soul-life which we cherish. We should be willing to die with the Lord here and remove our dependence on the natural abilities, the feelings, and the mind. We are not removing these works with reluctance. Rather, we hate these works from our heart. In our work, we should not only be unconcerned about having or not having natural abilities and we should not only be unconcerned about having or not having emotions and thoughts, but we should go further to nurture a direct hatred for such power of the natural life and be willing to hand them over to the crucifixion of the cross.

If we take the constant attitude of hating our soul-life on the negative side and if we will not compromise at all, we will learn in experience how to trust in the power of the spiritual life and bear fruit unto God.

THE WAY FOR A CRUCIFIED PERSON TO PREACH THE CROSS

In our practice, every time and anywhere the Lord burdens us to testify for Him, we should drive away afresh any desire that is in us to rely upon our natural abilities. We should set aside our emotions and pay no attention to our own feelings. Even at times when we have no feelings at all, or when our emotions are as cold as ice, we need to kneel down before the Lord and ask Him to do a deeper work of the cross in us so that we can be able to direct our emotions and can act according to the Lord's command, regardless of whether our emotions are cold or hot. We can ask the Lord to strengthen our spirit and apply a fatal blow to our soul on the cross. If we do this, the Lord will be gracious to us and will defeat our cold emotions. Even though we already know what we are going to preach, we do not try to dig out such teachings from our head or our mind. Rather, we humble ourselves before God and ask Him to freshly enlighten us with the teachings that we have known before and to freshly impress such teachings upon our spirits so that what we preach does not become merely a recollection of our old experience but a fresh encounter in our life. In this way, the Holy Spirit will confirm what we preach with power. It is best for us to spend a long time before the Lord prior to our preaching to allow His word (some of which we have been familiar with for a long time already) to be impressed upon our spirit afresh. Sometimes it does not take a long time. The Lord can impress His message upon our spirit within a few minutes. In order to do this, our spirit must be very open to the Lord and be intimately connected to Him at ordinary times.

We must pay attention to this point. It has much to do with our success or failure. One can ask a backslidden saint to deliver a message. He can speak of his former experience by exercising his memory. He may even speak persuasively. However, we know that the Holy Spirit cannot possibly work with him. All the works done by us through the exercise of our memory are more or less equivalent to the preaching of backslidden believers. We have to realize that many times the work we accomplish through our mind is a waste of energy. The mind can only reach others' minds; it can never move their spirit or give life to them. Old experiences can never equip us for fresh works. We must let God renew in our spirit the old experiences.

The same is more true in the matter of preaching the salvation of the cross to sinners. We may have been saved many decades ago. If we work from our memory, is not our message too old and tasteless? Only when we realize afresh in our spirit the evil of sin, taste afresh the love of the cross, and sympathize with Christ in His intense desire for sinners to come to Him, will we be able to portray the cross vividly before men (Gal. 3:1) and cause men to believe. Otherwise, if we try to persuade others by our love and zeal, we may end up being hardened and cold ourselves! It is possible that while we are preaching the suffering of the cross, our hearts are not at all touched by the sufferings and are not melted by them!

We should open up our spirit before the Lord and should allow the Holy Spirit to pour out His words and His message through our spirit, so that we may first be infused in our spirit by the Lord's word and by the message we preach. We should not depend on our feelings, natural abilities, and thoughts, but should trust solely in the power of the Holy Spirit and should allow His message to be impressed upon our spirit as well as the spirit of the audience. Every time we preach, we should be like Isaiah, who received first a burden for prophecy and then uttered his prophecy. In Isaiah 13—23, the phrase "the burden concerning such and such which such and such saw" is very meaningful. Every time before we preach God's word, we should first receive God's burden in our spirit. Every time we preach, we should bear the burden of the message we preach in our spirit and should not consider this burden relieved until our work is done. We should pray that the Lord would give us this burden so that our work would not be of the emotions, the natural abilities, and the mind. We should also have the experience of Jeremiah, who said, "If I say, I will not mention Him / Or speak any more in His name, / Then it is in my heart like a burning fire, / Shut up in my

bones, / And I am weary of holding it in, / Nor can I" (20:9). We should not preach His words carelessly or foolishly. Rather, we should first let His words burn in our spirit to the extent that we are compelled to speak. However, if we are not willing to put our soul-life and its strength to death, we will never be able to receive the word of the Lord afresh in our spirit.

Therefore, brothers, if we want to be used by the Lord to save sinners, to revive the saints, and to announce the word of the cross, we should let this cross work in us. Through this working, on the one hand, we become willing to be put to death for the Lord's sake, and on the other hand, we become willing to put our soul-life to death. At the same time, we no longer rely on ourselves or on anything that issues from us. Instead, we hate all our natural strength. In this way we will see the life of God and His power flowing into others' spirits through our speaking.

However, although as the preacher of the gospel we are ready on our side, we may still fail. Of course we may not fail completely, but why do we fail? It is because there is:

OPPRESSION AND ATTACK FROM SATAN

Satan does not like our preaching of the cross at all. When we are faithful in speaking about the cross of the Lord, he surely will raise up many oppositions. He can frequently initiate the following attacks against the messengers of the cross.

Satan attacks the messengers of the cross by causing them to be ill or to lose their voice in the course of giving a message. He may put them in dangers, cause them to be depressed in their spirit and to lose their freedom, and suffocate them. He can also work in the environment to stir up misunderstandings, oppositions, and sometimes even persecutions. He can bring in bad weather to discourage people from coming to the meetings. He can cause a sudden disturbance or confusion in the meetings. He can bring in animal noises and baby cries. Sometimes he works in the meeting atmosphere, making it heavy and suffocating and bringing in drowsiness and darkness. All these are works of the enemy. The preacher of the cross should be well aware of these things.

Since we have such an adversary and such oppositions, it becomes necessary for us to know the victory of the cross. The Lord's accomplishment on the cross not only solved the problem of the sinners, it also pronounced the judgment on

Satan. The Lord has defeated Satan on the cross already. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "That through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil, and might release those who because of the fear of death through all their life were held in slavery." Colossians 2:15 says, "Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The cross is the place where Satan is overcome. Satan received his death wound on the cross. We know that "the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), but where were the works of the devil undone? The obvious answer is, "at the cross." We also know that the Lord Jesus came to bind "the strong man" (Matt. 12:29), but where did He do this? Naturally, it was also at the cross of Golgotha. We need to know that the Lord Jesus has won the victory on the cross.

THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

We should know that Satan is already a defeated enemy. For this reason, we should not be defeated anymore. The enemy should not be able to claim victory over us anymore. He has no right to be victorious anymore! He can have no claim to anything except total defeat. Hence, both before we see Satan's work and after we see his work, we should lift up the victory of the cross. We should praise the victory of Christ with our voice. Before we begin our work, we should say before the Lord, "Praise the Lord, for He is victorious! Christ is the Victor! Satan has been defeated! The enemy has been destroyed! Golgotha means victory! The cross means victory!" We can declare this continually until we are assured in our spirit that the Lord will win the victory this time. We should stand on the ground of the cross and pray for God's victory. We should ask God to defeat all the works of the devil. Both for ourselves as well as for those coming to the meeting, we should beseech God to cover us with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus so that we will not come under the attack of Satan but will overcome him instead. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11). This time while I was working in south Fukien province, Satan came to oppress and attack me many times. What the Lord showed me was that I should stand on the ground of the cross and should praise Him. Sometimes my spirit felt a great oppression; I could not be free. It was as if a thousand tons of weight were on my heart. A few times when I entered the meeting hall I could feel the atmosphere polluted; the devil was busily working. Under such circumstances I prayed much, but to no avail. However, the minute I began praising Christ's victory on the cross, boasted in the cross, and scorned the enemy, telling him

that he could no longer work and that he was doomed for failure, I felt a genuine release, and the atmosphere of the meeting hall was changed. Praise the Lord! The cross is victorious! Praise the Lord! Satan is defeated! We should learn to apply the manifold victory of the cross through our prayer to oppose the wiles, the power, and the attacks of the enemy. Should oppositions and confusion arise, we can call upon the victory of the cross at Golgotha. Although we may not feel anything, we should believe that as soon as we invoke the victory of the cross, the enemy is defeated.

If we are truly identified with the cross in this way, if we allow the cross to do a deeper work in our lives and our work, and if we fully trust in the victory of the cross, God will grant us the victory everywhere we go. May God make us, the useless servants, His blameless workers.

CHAPTER THREE

WALKING IN GOD'S WILL

This is an important subject. Many believers do not grow in their spiritual life because they do not know how to walk in God's will. They have many thoughts in their mind. This appears to be God's will, and that also appears to be God's will. They are lost concerning which way is the right way. Since they are not conforming to God's will in their walk, thoughts, and work, they do not grow spiritually. We would exhort those who are not seeking God's will to seek after God's will and to be free from self-confidence and self-will. God is our Redeemer, and He has the right to demand obedience from us. This is based on God's right; it is also based on His love for us. We are constrained to seek after His will because His love has touched our hearts. I would extend an invitation to those who do not know how to walk in God's will to read the following:

I. SEEKING FOR GOD'S EXPRESSED WILL

INSTEAD OF HIS PERMITTED WILL

God's expressed will is the original will in His heart; God leads and guides us toward His original will. God's permitted will is what God permits as a result of man's pleading. For example, a father and mother may see a need for a picnic with their children and then take them on an outing. The children may be attracted by the country scenery and request another outing. The parents may not see the need for this, yet because of the request and their failure to dissuade the children, the parents grant the request. In the first case, the parents' expressed will was involved, while in the latter case, the parents' permitted will

was involved. What a pity that many believers only ask God to permit them to do certain things, but do not come before Him to ask if He has expressly commanded them to do such things.

We can understand this point from a case in the Old Testament. In Numbers 22, Balak sent men to invite Balaam to curse the Israelites; he enticed Balaam with much gold and many benefits. Balaam was moved (Jude 11; 2 Pet. 2:15), and he wanted to go. Yet he feared God and thought that he ought to first inquire of Him before he should make any decision. God had told him clearly, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed" (Num. 22:12). This was God's expressed will. Balaam should have canceled his plans right there and refused to go. But he told the messengers, "Jehovah has refused to let me go with you" (v. 13). How reluctant was his expression refused to let me go! The reason for this reluctance was that he wanted to go, but the Lord would not allow him. When Balak baited him the second time with greater honor, Balaam again went to God. This was strange! Balaam, did God not clearly tell you His will the last time? Why are you asking God again? Has your heart been touched by the offer of honor? Has God been touched by the same thing? Do you think that God's will constantly changes? Do you not realize that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever? If Balaam was sincere in doing God's will, he should have told the messengers, "God clearly told me the last time that I should not go. Please go back. I will not go." But he was too greedy for gain, and he went to God again. The Lord then told him, "Rise, go with them" (Num. 22:20). This word means, "Since I cannot keep you back, go." Many people do not understand why the messenger of Jehovah tried to stop Balaam and kill him. They do not realize that his way before the Lord was a "crooked pathway." This is true of many Christians. They know the Lord's will in their heart concerning what they should not do. Yet their heart craves to do it. As soon as an opportunity arises, they bother God again. They may refrain for a while, but their heart is far away from the Lord. When they finally have the Lord's permission, they cannot escape the Lord's rebuke either. We should strive for the Lord's "best," not His "second best." If our heart is not in a matter, but we still pretend that we are seeking after the Lord's will, the result will be nothing but chastisement.

II. NOT SEEKING THE LORD'S WILL

BY TAKING THE SCRIPTURES OUT OF CONTEXT

God's will has been fully declared in the Bible. All those who seek to know His will can find His intention concerning any matter through searching the Scriptures. But many believers take one or two verses and consider that to be God's will and act accordingly. They do not care what the Bible as a whole has to say concerning this matter. This is very dangerous. Consider Matthew 4:7: "Jesus said to him, Again, it is written." Again! Again! Again it is written! The devil can tempt by quoting the Scriptures. If the Lord was like believers today, He would have considered the devil's words the words of the Bible and followed them. Did He do this? No, He did not. He considered the teaching of the whole Bible. He said, "Again, it is written." Therefore, if we want to seek after God's will, we must not take things out of context. We must not choose some verses randomly and think that they are the teaching of the Bible! We must always consider if there are other teachings in the Bible that have more to say about the matter in view and not decide in a rash way. The devil is the same today as he was then; he will use many isolated verses to deceive man, cause man to listen to one-sided truths, and do many things which are against the Bible and God's will.

Some believers are quite peculiar in the way they quote verses out of context. For them, reading the Bible is a kind of fortune-telling. When something comes along and they do not know what to do, they open up the Bible and pray, "Lord, I am about to do something, and I do not know if this is according to Your will. I will open the Bible. The first verse that catches my eyes will be Your instruction to me." Some may say, "I will open the Bible, and whatever verse my finger points to will be Your will." Still others may say, "When I open the Bible, a certain number of verses down (or up) from my finger will be Your will." This kind of soothsaying style of seeking after God's will is bound to be filled with errors. Satan can easily make our fingers slip to the wrong verse or wrong page. He can devise many ways and supply many opportunities for us to fall into his traps. It may be that we should stay in a place, but the devil can make us move away. It may be that we should say something, but the devil can make us shut up. It is entirely against God's will to make the Bible a fortune-telling book. It is very difficult to know God's will with a method that is far from His will! We should never seek after the Lord's will this way. We have to spend much time in the Bible in our daily life so that we can know the teaching of the Bible concerning a certain matter. When things happen, we will not be caught by surprise and not pick a verse hastily, taking it as God's will and acting accordingly.

III. NOT PROCEEDING WITH THINGS THAT DO NOT BRING PEACE TO THE HEART

"And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts" (Col. 3:15). "You will keep the steadfast of mind / In perfect peace / Because he trusts in You" (Isa. 26:3). If we encounter some difficulty and do not know God's will, a good principle is to consider if we will have the peace afterwards. If we will not have the peace, we should not do it. The meaning of peace is not a sensation of peace. It means an unchanging and normal calmness in our spirit. If by doing a certain thing, we will lose the calmness in our spirit, it is better that we do not do it. However, this is not an absolute indicator. Sometimes we feel peaceful when we do things that we ought not to do, and we are restless when we do not do them. Satan can work in our feelings to give us a false peace or false restlessness and cause us to do what he wants. Therefore, in considering if a matter is according to God's will, we should regard the matter of peace as a partial factor for consideration and should not trust in it completely.

IV. NOT CONSIDERING SOMETHING AS GOD'S WILL BASED ON CIRCUMSTANCES OR NEEDS

Many people consider their circumstances when they seek after God's will. Their circumstances are their only guide. The result of this practice is confusion and failure. We can look at the story of Jonah. God's will was for Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish. When he reached Joppa, he met a ship which was sailing for Tarshish, paid the fare, and went aboard. The Bible says, "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah, and he went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare for it and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah" (Jonah 1:3). If Jonah had considered the circumstances, he surely would have thought that it was God's will for him to go to Tarshish! Otherwise, why else would the circumstances have worked out so well for him? The first part of verse 3 says that he intended to go to Tarshish, and immediately there was a ship going there (v. 3b). He had money in his pocket and could pay the fare. The circumstances were absolutely favorable for taking this way. If a Christian was put in these circumstances, he would surely say that he was walking according to God's will. "When I do this, my relatives agree with me, I do not lose my natural friendships, and I can serve the Lord. There is no need to spend too much time or money, and the accomplishments are great. I can go when I want to go and stop when I want to stop. There is no hindrance whatsoever in the environment.

Is this not God's leading for me?" Little does he realize that he has gone astray from God's will. Truly I say, the ships to Tarshish are numerous, and money for the fare is plentiful! Yet neither the ship nor the money can guarantee that your journey to Tarshish is the right one. God's will is for you to go to Nineveh. Therefore, in seeking after the Lord's will, you must not merely consider the circumstance. Otherwise you will be led into the wrong path. Another great attracting force in the environment is certain needs. Many times, we think that there is a need or a lack, that we are well qualified to meet the need, and that we should go to render help to the situation. "I may be short of training in theology. But there is an opportunity to meet my need. Perhaps this is God's provision for me." A common mistake of most believers today is to take the need in the environment as their indicator. Their slogan is, "We have to do it, because this matter has to be done." Little do they realize that what is needed may not be what God wants them to do.

Consider Paul and his companions: "Having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia...they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them" (Acts 16:6-7). Before verse 6 of this chapter, they did many works in many places. Believers were edified and sinners received salvation. They were going to go to Asia (which is today's Asia Minor). It seemed as if there was a great need there. Many people had not heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus' dying for man's sin and on man's behalf. There were so many needs. It seemed that God was leading them to go to Asia. Yet in reality this was not the case. The Spirit of the Lord did not allow them to go. The same was true when they wanted to go to Bithynia; the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. Therefore, in seeking after God's will, we cannot depend too much on needs, and we cannot be attracted by them to the extent that we lose sight of God's will.

V. NOT CONSIDERING VISIONS AND DREAMS AS GOD'S WILL

Many believers in the church today depend solely on supernatural visions as a guide for their conduct. This happens more frequently among women than men. They speak a great deal about their supernatural experiences. They tell others about their encounters with Jesus and what the Lord has said to them. They dream about heaven on certain days, and they tell others what the Lord has revealed to them concerning their future and what they should do. They claim that they have some visions or interpretations and that they should therefore do

this and do that. There are many things of this nature. I cannot say that all of them are false. But these things can only be an aid in our seeking after God's will. We cannot fully depend on them to show us God's will. Satan can counterfeit many dreams and visions to deceive believers and distract them from God's ordained way. Many supernatural experiences of the believers are only Satan disguised as an angel of light. They catch many of God's children unaware and cause them to do many things that bring dishonor to God. "And a vision appeared to Paul during the night: A certain man, a Macedonian, was standing and entreating him and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, we immediately endeavored to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to announce the gospel to them" (Acts 16:9-10). Did they not become clear about God's will through a vision? No, they did not. If we read carefully, we will find that only Paul saw the vision, but "we" decided to go to Macedonia. It says, "And when he had seen the vision, we immediately endeavored to go forth." They went to Macedonia not because Paul saw a vision. It was incidental that Paul saw the vision first. After he saw it, they were led of the Lord. This is why there was the one accord to go to Macedonia. They did not consider it God's will to go just because of a vision or dream. Moreover, the word concluding in verse 10 has the sense of making a deliberation after investigation. They did not move rashly upon a dream. Rather, they made the decision based on some conclusion. Therefore, in seeking after God's will, we should not depend merely on supernatural experiences. Rather, we should investigate thoroughly to see if something is according to God's will.

VI. NOT PREJUDICED:

PREJUDICE HINDERING ONE

FROM UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WILL

The worst thing for a believer to be in seeking God's will is prejudiced. Once there is prejudice, he cannot hear God's voice. Paul said, "I thought to myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus the Nazarene" (Acts 26:9). This was Paul's thought when he was persecuting the church. He did not know the relationship between Moses and Jesus. He thought that Jesus was the chief culprit against Judaism. He made up his mind to eradicate this new religion even at the expense of killing others, shedding their blood, and chasing down believers. He was willing to stir up these clashes and act according to his conscience. He thought that these acts were proper. He was wrong. He thought he was doing everything according to God's will, but he was actually doing the

opposite. His mistake lay in his prejudice and self-will. He considered that his actions were proper. So he did not see God's will.

It is very easy for us to be prejudiced and biased because of our self-will. Our heart cannot forgive people who hate us and tolerate the things that we do not like. We are not willing to calm down and seek a solution according to God's will. We boast in our own prejudice and self-will, and consider them as God's will. We may find out that we were wrong, but it may be too late when we do find out! Every time we come before God, we have to drop all our prejudice and ask the Father to guide us. Although many times His leading is contrary to our concepts and ideas, we should still willingly yield to it. We must not plan and make decisions, and then pray. If we do this, our prayer is a kind of wasteful ritual.

VII. NOT BEING HASTY, BUT WAITING

Some believers are used to making decisions on their own. Seeking after the Lord's will in everything and acting accordingly is like putting a bridle in the horse's mouth for them; it is not easy for them to be subdued. Sometimes they reluctantly seek after the Lord's will, but before the Lord tells them anything, they charge ahead anyway. Our flesh is too quick to move. We feel that seeking the Lord's will and following Him is too slow. In seeking the Lord's will, we want Him to speak to us immediately so that we can move. Our Lord is happy to reveal His will to us. For our benefit He often cannot show us His will immediately because we are either not ready or the time has not yet come. Under such circumstances we should not be hasty; we should wait in His presence. When the Lord sees fit, He will show us His will. It is unfortunate that we seek after the Lord's will in many things, yet we do not seek after His will in the very matter of waiting for His will. We ought to seek after the Lord's will in everything. Even in the matter of waiting for His will, we should seek after His will. We should wait for His timing to reveal His will to us. If we do not wait on Him or seek according to His timing, our seeking after His will is probably unjustified and vain.

Please consider one incident in the Bible. "And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came....And Saul said...I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept

the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee....But now thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Sam. 13:8-14). Samuel had made an appointment with Saul for seven days. Before the seven days ended, Saul offered the offering while Samuel was still on the way. After he finished offering the offering, Samuel arrived as scheduled. Because Saul did not wait, he went against the Lord's will and was rebuked by the Lord. Although it appeared that Samuel was late, Saul offered the offering on the last day of the appointed time; immediately after the offering was made, Samuel appeared. He did not miss his appointment. Otherwise, how could he have rebuked Saul in the name of the Lord and pronounced judgment? Saul was rebuked because he could not wait; he was too hasty.

Many people are like Saul. They are momentarily touched by something and think that they have to do this or that to worship God; they think that they should go to certain places to do certain works. The feeling can be so strong that they cannot wait any longer; they are desperate to exercise their arms and legs. Have you ever experienced a kind of fire burning in your heart, forcing you to do something? If you do, please go to sleep. Sleep soundly for a night, and you will determine whether the pressing feeling is from God. Rest for a few days! During your rest, God will show you His will. You must practice this. If thoughts are suddenly injected into your mind by Satan, they will quiet down after a night's sleep or a few days' rest. We should never initiate our work based on some feelings. We should be very sure of what we are doing before we proceed with our first step. Otherwise, we will suffer the Lord's rebuke. May the Lord preserve us so that we will not wait for six or more days and give up before the end. May the Lord keep us from doing anything rashly before we are very sure so that we will not offend Him.

VIII. NOT GOING BEFORE THE LORD, NOR FALLING BEHIND HIM

"And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, after that, the sons of Israel set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel encamped. At the word of Jehovah the sons of Israel set out, and at the word of Jehovah they encamped; all the days that the cloud abode over the tabernacle, they remained encamped. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the sons of Israel kept the charge of Jehovah, and did not set out. Sometimes the cloud was a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the word of Jehovah they remained encamped; then according to the word of

Jehovah they set out....or if it continued for a day and a night, when the cloud was taken up they set out. Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, abiding on it, the sons of Israel remained encamped and did not set out; but when it was taken up, they set out" (Num. 9:17-22). Here we see a perfectly submissive life. Both the tarrying and journeying were completely up to Jehovah. Wherever they were, whether by day or night, whether for two days, a month, or a year, they followed God's will. They did not go ahead of the Lord, nor did they fall behind the Lord. They walked absolutely together with the Lord.

Many believers are not like this. Some walk ahead of the Lord, making many proposals ahead of time, prearranging many plans, schemes, and strategies. They first consider and decide on many things and then work out ways to carry them out. After this they kneel down and pray, "Lord! I am planning to do a certain thing. Please help me so that I can succeed." Although they address God as Lord with their mouth, they are really saying, "My Servant! I have decided to do a certain thing. I cannot do it by myself. My Servant, come and help me!" What a pity that many believers have made God their servant without even being conscious of it! Sometimes when we make ourselves the center, we should not ask the Lord for help. Asking the Lord for help then only makes the Lord our servant. May we not make ourselves the center, and may we not go before the Lord and force Him to come after us. Some Christians behave the other way; they fall far behind the Lord. They often shy away from the Lord's commands. The Lord has called them to some work, but they are fearful and give excuses, thinking that this is humility. They do not finish the daily course which the Lord has ordained for them. They are like Moses, who declined again and again even though he was called, and would not take up any responsibility. May the Lord preserve us so that we will not be ahead of Him, nor fall behind Him.

IX. NOT CONSIDERING ANSWERS TO PRAYER AS AN INDICATOR OF GOD'S WILL

Once I asked a Christian, "How do you know that this is the Lord's will?" He answered, "Because I have prayed over it." I responded, "I wish you had done this without praying over it," because his action was absolutely contrary to the Scripture. Many believers think that as long as they have prayed over a certain matter, their actions will be according to God's will. But this is not true! There is no difference between doing something after praying and doing something

without praying. (I am referring to the believers who act without becoming clear through prayer that their activity is according to God's will.) Some people think that the first thought that occurs to them after they pray, or the first voice they hear, is from the Lord. Little do they realize that it is very easy for Satan to come in at this time, exercise his deceptions, and deceive man. Some consider the thoughts and voices they receive during their prayer as being from the Lord. But if this is so, can we say that all the confused and wild thoughts we have in our prayers are also from God? Of course they are not. If we cannot say this, we should not consider everything we hear or think during our prayer time as being from the Lord.

Some people think that if they receive some answer to their prayer, it must be according to God's will. For example, you may pray for the Lord to open a way for you to do something. The way may eventually be opened and everything may be ready so that you can do that certain thing. Under such a circumstance, it is very easy to think that it is God's will for you to do that certain thing. This can be true at times. But this can never be a perfect guide and tell you for certain that you are walking in His will. Consider one example: the Israelites lusted in the wilderness and desired meat. The Bible says, "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106:15). Did not God answer their prayer? Did not God perform a great miracle among them and give them meat? Yet their soul became weak (lean) because they were outside God's will. It is easy to be misled into thinking that since God answered their prayer, the provision of meat must have been according to His will. Yet this was the very reason for the leanness of their soul. When we beseech the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus, He hears us. But we have to be careful to not necessarily think that we are walking in His will because He has answered our prayer. Sometimes we should ask Him not to answer all of our prayers so that we may stand firm in His will.

Therefore, do not think that because we prayed for a certain matter and received some thoughts, voices, or answers, our request was according to God's will. We must discern God's will clearly and not be led astray by the answers. (Please note that I am not saying that answers to prayer are unreliable. I am only saying that we should not rely solely upon them.)

X. NOT BEING STUBBORN AND IGNORANT AND NOT WAITING FOR GOD'S CHASTISEMENT

Many children of God are often not at peace with God. When their wild nature erupts, they follow their own will. To deal with the lawlessness of this group of believers, God, at times, has to use sufferings, pain, and even calamities to show them His will and turn them. They will not stop the advance of their self-will unless they see God's strong hand. When they make up their mind to go to a certain place, they will immediately act without waiting for God's will. They insist on charging forward until they reach the end of the road and all bridges are gone; then they realize that they have not followed God's will. They do not inquire about God's will. When they set their mind to do a certain thing, they will not stop unless God intervenes with a strong hand to make them sick, financially depleted, or faced with unexpected calamity. These are the most pitiful kind of believers.

We can take Balaam and Jonah's cases as examples. Balaam was not clear until the Angel tried to kill him; he thought that his journey was according to God's will and that he could reap both material gain and fame for himself. Jonah had to wait until the storm arose and he was swallowed up in the fish's belly before he repented. If we are willing to be taught and desire to seek after the Lord's will, we will avoid many ill-fated encounters in our daily life. Much of the suffering, pain, and sorrow in our life is unnecessary. Only our stubbornness and ignorance drive these things upon us! Do not think that this is the experience of a special group of believers. We have to admit that many times in our experience, if God had not raised His intervening hands, we would not have stopped doing what we were doing.

"I will instruct you and teach you concerning the way you should go; / I will counsel you; my eye is upon you. / Do not be like a horse or like a mule, without understanding; / Whose trappings consist of bit and bridle to constrain them, / Else they do not come near you" (Psa. 32:8-9). These two verses clearly tell us that God has no intention to guide us with strong hands. He does not want us to be horses and mules, who only obey when they are led with bits and bridles. His intention is that we fellowship with Him, understand His will through intimate fellowship, and walk accordingly. The Lord promises that He will guide us with His eyes. This means that we should look to Him all the time; we should look to Him continuously. He does not have to open His mouth. He can guide us with His eyes. How wonderful this is! In order for the Lord to guide us with His eyes, we should be in fellowship with Him so that as soon as there is the command, we can immediately act according to the command. Please remember that we must

wait on Him, look to Him, and obey Him. If we do, He will not have to deal with us through bits and bridles, and we will not have to learn about His will through the use of bits and bridles.

CONCLUSION

Those who desire to walk according to the Lord's will should pay particular attention to these ten points. Please remember that if we want to walk according to the Lord's will, we should try to understand His will from many aspects. We should not follow one kind of guidance alone. If we do, we will fail. If we make a decision by mistake before we are clear about the Lord's will, we should resolve to stop advancing and give up our opinions as soon as we know it is not the Lord's will. If we are clear that something is according to His will, we should not be discouraged and doubt the Lord's will, even though there appear to be many oppositions and persecutions (which may not actually be real) that may push us down. We should pursue the Lord's will all the way to the end and "press on." Then we will realize that the sufferings and oppositions that come upon us are Satan's strategies, which try to go ahead of God's move; they are but empty threats. When we obey the Lord to take on these challenges, they will become nothing to us! Then we will regret and realize how meaningless were our fears and doubts. After we are clear about the Lord's will, we should proceed on and not hesitate. There may be many threats along the way. But we will know that they are only "paper tigers" put up by the devil; they cannot hurt us. Therefore brothers, "Rise, let us go from here!" (John 14:31).

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW TO KNOW GOD'S WILL

An architect must have a blueprint to lay down the specifications of a building he is about to build. The size, height, and dimensions must first be drawn out in detail. Only then can he carry out his plan according to his design. Most modern buildings are designed in this way before they are built.

The Israelites in the wilderness also had a design for the tabernacle before it was built. They did not build the tabernacle carelessly according to their imagination. Rather, Moses received instructions from Jehovah, who showed him the pattern on the mount and then revealed the items of the tabernacle to him one by one. After this, Moses built accordingly. The building of the tabernacle was according to a plan and carried out according to the plan. Even the smallest detail of the tabernacle was specified by God. An object as small as a needle had to be made

with material specified by the Lord. Moses had no freedom to design even the smallest object of the tabernacle. The entire tabernacle, including its many parts, was designed absolutely by God, and the chosen people were only asked to make them accordingly.

Man's life and daily work are planned by God. God has a plan for the life and daily activities of every believer. He has His good will concerning everyone who is redeemed by the blood. God has a plan concerning every move and act of a regenerated child of His. Since the Father has His plans, He desires that a Christian walk according to these plans.

If an ignorant builder disregards the careful plans of an architect and builds according to his own way, he will surely fail. If the Israelites did not build the tabernacle according to Jehovah's instructions, how could their work be accepted? In the same way, if a Christian does not walk according to God's plan for him, he will surely fail. The reason believers fail is because they disobey God's will. Here a question arises: "How can we know God's will?" Many believers think that they have not rejected God's will because they say that they love God's will. But they do not do God's will because they do not know God's will. We do not need to consider those who have no heart to carry out God's will. But whoever has their heart set on doing God's will must confront a big problem: "How can we know God's will?" Many brothers and sisters in the Lord have this problem. They have consecrated themselves to the Lord and desire to please the Lord. They love to do God's will, but they do not know God's will concerning their life and work. They do not know God's will concerning many matters. They grope in darkness and easily fall into errors. God's children have shed many tears and endured many heartbreaks because of this. Even though this is a painful matter, we should realize the following points:

IT IS GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY TO REVEAL HIS WILL

It is easy to understand God's will. If God wants us to do His will, He will surely make His will known to us. He cannot expect us to walk according to His will if He does not tell us His will. If He does not reveal His will to us, He will have to bear the responsibility of our mistakes when we err. It is God's responsibility to reveal and make known to us His will. Suppose a father wants a son to do a certain thing on a certain day, yet does not tell the son. If the son does what he normally does on the specified day and does not do what his father desires, whose responsibility is this? Is it the son's responsibility? No, it is the father's responsibility. If a father does not tell him his will, and the son fails to do the

father's will through ignorance, the blame should not be on the son. If a father wants his son to do anything, he has to tell him. Our Father surely cares for us. If He desires that we walk in His will, He must first tell us His will. In our beloved Lord's parable of the two sons, the father wanted his sons to work in the vineyard and told them his intention. The son who followed his instructions was obedient, while the one who did not follow his instructions was disobedient. Thank God the Father! He will reveal His secret plans to us.

IT IS OUR FAULT IF WE DO NOT KNOW GOD'S WILL

We know that God will tell us what He requires and make us clear concerning His will. But in our experience, is it not also true that even if we want to know God's will, there are many times when we do not know His will? Why is this? God desires that we know His will. Why do we not know His will? If we do not know His will, there must be something wrong on our side because, on His side, it is necessary for us to know His will. There must be some kind of hindrance on our side if we do not know God's will. Abraham was always obedient before God. When God intended to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the Bible says, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. 18:17). There must be no barrier between God and us so He can reveal His will to us. Otherwise, even if God wants to reveal His will to us, we will not have an open heart to receive it, and we will not be able to see, hear, or understand it. Harmony with God is an important condition for knowing His will.

THE CONDITIONS FOR KNOWING GOD'S WILL

In knowing God's will, the most important thing for us to do is to drop our opinions. Our prejudice often hinders God from revealing His will to us. When a man is prejudiced, God will not reveal His will to him. Our own experience indicates that our self-will keeps us from understanding God's will. Sometimes, our self-will is hidden in the innermost part of our heart. If we do not remove our own will, we will encounter many difficulties in understanding His will. Once it is removed, God will reveal to us His will.

Concerning removing our self-will in order to understand His will, no matter how much we emphasize the matter, we cannot overdo it. This is the most crucial point and deserves the greatest attention.

Our hearts are very wicked. Sometimes even though we are outwardly seeking God's will, we are inwardly full of self-will and self-opinions; our prime motive is to please ourselves. Sometimes when we kneel down to pray, our mouth may say,

"Lord, show us Your will. We are willing to do Your will." But our heart is unwilling to do His will and disagrees with it. Sometimes we say with our mouth, "Father! Your will be done. We only seek after Your will." Our heart seems to agree with our mouth and may even act as if it is very willing to follow God's will. Yet, at the same time, within the deepest part of the heart, there is a desire to walk according to our own will. If we do this, we will probably not be able to find His will. This is a false seeking and will not result in a genuine finding of His will. The promise of "seek and you shall find" is not for insincere ones. Unless we seek after God's will in a sincere way, He will not reveal His will to us. Even if we comfort ourselves by saying, "I have known God's will," it is probably a fabrication of our own mind and a counterfeit of His will!

If we have desires in our heart, and if we have already made up our mind on a matter, we are seeking the Lord's will in vain. If we have our own will and our own desires, all our prayers will be in vain; even if we pray every day to seek for His will, it will be useless. Therefore, every time we seek His will, we have to trust in His strength to examine ourselves. We have to ask if self-will exists in the deepest part of our heart, if we have any inclinations or desires, and if we are seeking the Lord's will out of a clean and undefiled heart. If we do not do this, our seeking will not be effective.

When two ways are set before you, if you would love to take one way and hate to take the other way, you should ask yourself, "If the Lord wants me to take the way I hate, will I take it?" If you are not willing to take the way you hate, what profit would it be to you even if you knew His will?

Every time we come to a crossroad, the best thing for us to do is to hold an unbiased heart. This means that our heart is balanced; we neither prefer nor hate any particular way. We consider all of the ways the same, and we take whatever way the Lord shows us. If we are not biased in our heart, it will be easy for the Lord to show us His will. Bigotry and unwillingness to obey are the greatest hindrances to knowing His will. Being unbiased does not mean being passive. It means being unbiased concerning the ways ahead of us. We have to exercise discernment with our will and choose His will. Being unbiased does not mean that there are no more likes and dislikes within us. It means that even though we are unclear about God's will, we are not biased towards any way; but, at the same time, we have determined that we will do His will. As soon as we know His will, we will do it. Our own will should not dictate our likes and dislikes concerning the ways ahead of us. However, there should be a difference between what we

want and what we do not want with respect to God's will (even though it is not yet known) and our will. We must choose to "want" God's will and choose to "not want" our own will. We should choose His will and remove our own will. Therefore, we are not without a will or choice. We do have a will and choice; our will and choice are to do His will. We are not void of desires. We do have desires; our desire is to want what the Lord wants.

Concerning this point, we can learn from the example of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's will and the Father's will were not one will; they were two wills. When we read the words, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39), we realize that the Lord Jesus' will and the Father's will were two different things. There is clearly a distinction between "My own will" and "the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30). Although the Lord Jesus' desire and the Father's desire were two different wills that issued from two different channels, we see that our dear Lord's will and the Father's will never contradicted each other. Although the Lord Jesus had His own will, He dropped His own will to do the Father's will. He placed His will on God's side. He subjected His preferred will to the Father's will. He did not do God's will in a passive way. Rather, He voluntarily laid down His own will to do the Father's will. He chose to "not want" His self-will and to "want" the Father's will. His only will was to do the Father's will. Originally, His will was different from the Father's will. Yet He resolved to do the Father's will with a will that was different from the Father's will. Thus, His own will was to do the Father's will. This is why the Father was pleased with Him all His life.

Briefly, the first step in seeking God's will is to have neither a love nor a fear for the ways ahead of us (when one is not clear about the Lord's will). At the same time, our hearts should adopt the attitude that we are ready to do God's will. If we are willing to subject our will to God's will, we have accomplished more than half of the work necessary to understand the Lord's will. Most of our failures in knowing God's will come at this point. The Lord reveals His will to those who are willing to do His will. As for those who are not willing to do His will, their seeking is a false seeking. His will can never be found by those who are seeking after Him in a false way. Therefore, if we have inclinations in our hearts, we should not speak of the Lord's will so quickly. Instead, we should first trust in the Lord's strength to deal with the desires of our hearts in a clear way. Then we can expect the Lord to show us His will. Otherwise, it will be useless even if we know and exhaust all the methods.

After our will is made subject to God, there is no barrier on our side to prevent God from showing us His will.

HOW DOES GOD SHOW US HIS WILL?

There are three ways that God shows us His will. We must not consider or follow only one of these three ways. If we only consider one way, it will be easy for us to fall into Satan's snare. We should consider these three ways simultaneously. If we consider the three ways together, we will not fall into error. When the light is complete, we will be able to live in God's will in a complete way. The three ways are: the prompting of the Spirit, the teaching of the Bible, and the provisions in the environment. On his way back to England, while Dr. F.B. Meyer's ship was approaching the mouth of the Thames River, he asked the ship captain, "The sea is so big; how do you know that this is the right place to enter the river?" The captain answered, "I steer my ship until the three lighthouses line up in a straight line. At that point I know that I have arrived at the London harbor." Dr. Meyer said, "When we see the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the environment line up in a straight line, we know that we are walking in God's will." Indeed, when all three things testify that we are standing on the right ground, we know that we are walking according to God's will.

1. The Prompting of the Holy Spirit

There is no one who walks completely according to his own will. Either he walks according to God's will, or he walks according to the devil's will. The evil spirits are "operating in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). With those who obey and believe in God, "it is God who operates" (Phil. 2:13) in them. Within the heart of man, either an evil spirit is operating or God is operating. No one can be independent from these two things. Therefore, the conduct of every person is either the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit in his heart or the result of the operation of evil spirits in his heart. Even believers are no exceptions to this rule. Most people act according to some kind of prompting. Sometimes they are prompted to a greater degree; sometimes they are prompted to a lesser degree. When the heart is motivated by promptings or impulses, a man acts accordingly. It is unfortunate that most believers are ignorant of what it means to live a life in the Holy Spirit, or a life in which the Holy Spirit works. When their souls are stirred up, they think that it is the prompting of the Holy Spirit. They cannot differentiate between the prompting of the Holy Spirit and a stirring in the emotions. But, in reality, it is not that difficult to differentiate between the stirring

in the soul and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. It is difficult for immature Christians to make such a distinction. But for mature saints, the distinction between the two things is like the distinction between the wheat and the tare.

Besides the confusion between a stirring in the soul and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the devil will many times disguise himself as the angel of light. He will say something to entice us and feign the voice of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters who love the Lord, do not think that all of Satan's suggestions are evil, and do not think that all of his schemes and plans are unclean and base. We should realize that the ultimate goal of Satan is to distract us from God's will. Sometimes (in fact, many times) he will lead us to do good things and to think that doing good is God's will. But even though all of God's will is good, not all good things are God's will. The things may be good, but these good things may not be God's will. Satan is not afraid of our doing good things; he is only afraid of our doing God's will. As long as he can stop us from doing God's will, he is satisfied. In trying to understand God's will, we must not be overrun by any impulse and must not think that just because something is good and excellent, it is therefore God's will. We have to realize that this is not always true. A good thing may not be God's will. Even if it is, we still do not know if it is God's will for us.

Therefore, in seeking after God's will, we should distinguish between: (1) the prompting of the Holy Spirit, (2) the stirring in the soul, and (3) the impulses from Satan. The prompting of the Holy Spirit is an operation of God's Spirit within our spirit, which prompts us to know God's will. This kind of operation or prompting is quiet and lasting; it is not sudden or excitable. This kind of operation comes from God. Paul said, "I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem" (Acts 20:22). "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld that the city was full of idols" (17:16). When the Holy Spirit moved Paul, He moved his spirit; he was bound and not free. When the Holy Spirit prompted Paul to preach, He caused his spirit to become provoked and stirred up so that a great power operated within him and compelled him to obey.

It is a pity that believers do not know the human spirit. They do not know that man is tripartite, composed of the spirit, the soul, and the body (1 Thes. 5:23). They only know that man is composed of the soul and body. And although many believers know about the spirit and the soul in letter and know that there is a human spirit in addition to the Holy Spirit, they do not feel this spirit within them. They do not know what activity within them is the move of the spirit and what is

the operation of the soul. Some have painfully mistaken the soul for the spirit! Because of such a handicap, it becomes difficult for them to know God's will. Some believers make the mistake of regarding the mind as the spirit. The mind belongs to the soul; it does not belong to the spirit. Therefore, thoughts in the mind are unreliable. We should not consider these thoughts to be the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

We have covered some conditions related to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Now for the sake of the weakness of God's children, we will say a few more words. Most of the time, the prompting of the Holy Spirit gives us an assurance. This means that when we are about to do something, God will give us the assurance that what we are about to do is according to His will. This kind of assurance comes in a calm way. When He gives us this assurance, He will put a calm peace in our heart and refresh our heart. This kind of assurance should be maintained by faith. If there is faith to maintain it, we will see this assurance always abiding; it will not change through time and place, and we will not doubt if this is God's will. In the initial stage of our Christian life, we should always remember that the prompting of the Holy Spirit is powerful, yet calm; it is gradual, yet never compelling. It always waits for the consent of our own will; it waits for us to act on our own and never oppresses or overrules us by some kind of force. We must also always remember that the prompting of the Holy Spirit operates from within; it works from the center to the circumference. It works within the spirit and then enlightens the mind, so that the mind understands. Only after we have given our consent, will it work itself out through our bodies.

Soulish stirring is a work of the emotion. Sometimes, for no reason at all, we feel very happy and elated. At such times, we may have many plans to do this and that. Furthermore, the power in our emotion seems to be very strong, as if we cannot rest until we finish what we have resolved to do. If we want to distinguish between the stirring of the soul and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we have to remember a few things: the stirring in the soul is mainly caused by the environment. Sometimes when we are alone, we feel like sighing. Soulish stirrings cause us to have sudden feelings. It is as if a power within us is trying to subjugate us and dominate us. It is not calm; there is a kind of burning and confused urge within. If we stop immediately and wait for the emotional stirring to subside, we will find that what we considered as the Spirit's prompting and what we considered as a necessary thing to do was not according to God's will. One

thing we know: what we "feel" to do when we are stirred up is merely an impression we have in our feelings; it does not result in any assurance on our part. God is patient; He is not hasty to accomplish what He wants to do. This is why He spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "He who believes will not hasten away" (Isa. 28:16). Therefore, He takes time to prompt us. Nine times out of ten, sudden feelings are not His will.

Impulses from Satan are in reality very different from the prompting of the Holy Spirit; the two are actually opposite each other. Outwardly, it is difficult for believers to differentiate between the two because Satan will not cause us to completely fall into sin; he will only turn us away from God's will. Sometimes he holds us back so that we fall short; at other times, he urges us on, so that we become too much. He disguises himself as the angel of light and speaks to our ears, confusing the small voice of the Holy Spirit. God's children should be experienced in distinguishing the suggestions of Satan from the revelations of the Holy Spirit. Satan's impulses always come suddenly. His way with Christians is to come in the way of a blitz. The prompting of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, first gives us a revelation and then enlightens our mind. Satan's impulses put many reasons and methods into our mind before asking us to actually perform some tasks. His initial work is to inject seeds of thoughts into the believers' mind. These thoughts are sudden and always come with many reasonings. Many times, we think that this is the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit spreads out from within, while Satan's work breaks in from the outside. Therefore, as God's children, we should never consider sudden thoughts to be His will. We should be careful, steady, and wait until everything is settled before we do anything. As to outward sudden stirrings and promptings, we should be particularly careful, because nine times out of ten they are not promptings of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Teaching of the Bible

After a child of God thinks that something is the prompting of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of safety, he should verify what he is about to do with the biblical teaching. Biblical teaching does not refer to isolated verses in the Bible taken out of their context. Many believers act in a haphazard way; they read one or two verses and consider them to be God's ordained will for them. Sometimes they pray piously and then open the Bible to read a few verses randomly. If they come across a word that fits their circumstances, they consider that as God's will. They

will move, stop, go, or turn based on these verses. If they unfortunately find some contrary indications, or if verses they read have nothing to do with their affairs, they think that God has not said anything to them, or they unnaturally interpret the passage to make it fit into their situation. Then they base their decisions on this method. This is very dangerous. It is difficult to expect a person who does not understand the Bible to be free from error!

What does it mean that a believer has to understand the teaching of the Bible when he does things? The teaching of the Bible refers to the common testimony of the whole Bible. One should consider how the whole Bible deals with the question at hand. Indeed, he should consider how it deals with all the problems that he encounters. One has to understand what the Old and New Testaments say about the matter. He has to understand how the question was dealt with in the age of the patriarchs, the age of the law, and the age of grace. It is by this that we know that we do not follow the judgment of the Old Testament, but the judgment of the New Testament. We do not follow the decision of the patriarchs or the law, but the instructions of grace. But is this not a very difficult thing to do? Who can know these distinctions unless he is a Bible scholar? This is one reason why we have to search the Scriptures. The Bible is a record of God's will for the whole world in all ages. If a believer wants to understand God's will, he must study (not just read) the Bible. The words of the Bible are easy to understand because they are revealed to babes (Matt. 11:25). The Bible is God's complete revelation. It has clear explanations concerning His plan, His ways, His will, and all other kinds of questions. God gave the Bible to His people with the expectation that they would understand all of His will. Therefore, if believers do not study the Bible and instead just complain that they do not understand God's will, they have no excuse.

Sometimes the matter may be great and difficult, and we cannot find the biblical teaching concerning it. At such times, we should consult spiritually matured believers. The Lord can often teach us through these ones. We should not overvalue man's words; we should still "discern" (1 Cor. 14:29) and decide if they are scriptural. If we do not search the Scriptures and do not consult with spiritual believers, it is very likely that we will fall into error if we only grasp one or two verses and consider them to be God's will and act accordingly.

The importance of obedience to the word of the Bible can be seen in a contrast between the temptation in the garden of Eden and the temptation in the wilderness. In those two temptations, one person was defeated while the other

overcame. One factor decided whether or not there was defeat or victory. In the former case, there was disobedience to God's word, while in the latter case, there was obedience to His word. The failure in Eden, which was an insubordination of God's will, became the root of the world's rebellion. Our Lord, on the other hand, overcame the enemy and his temptation three times in the wilderness with the Scriptures. The devil's temptations appeared harmless; in fact they seemed to be very good. But the Lord Jesus cautiously abode by the word of the Scriptures. This is why He overcame completely in the end. Therefore, in our daily life, the most important rule is the Bible. If in everything, we seek the teaching of the Scriptures, we will not walk apart from God's will.

Whenever we sense the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we should ask if the prompting is scriptural. We should ask if what we consider to be the Holy Spirit's prompting is indeed His prompting. If we ask ourselves in this way, we will prove its authenticity. All Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the whole Bible reveals God's will. It is impossible for the Holy Spirit to inspire Scriptures in one way and prompt us in another way. It is impossible for God's will to be revealed in the Bible in one way and for the Holy Spirit to prompt us in another way. This can never happen. The prompting of the Holy Spirit will never contradict the teaching of the Bible. The Bible and the Holy Spirit forever walk and work together; they show us the way we ought to take. They are one in revealing God's will to us, and they never disagree. If we say that we have the prompting of the Holy Spirit concerning a certain matter, and yet the matter contradicts the Scriptures, our so-called prompting of the Holy Spirit must be a wrong one. We should remember this well. Whenever a prompting does not match the Scriptures, we should be quiet and not proceed. The best proof of whether or not a prompting is from the Holy Spirit is to see if the prompting contradicts the Scriptures. Sometimes, however, it seems as if the Scriptures do not say yes or no about a certain matter. For example, you may want to go to a certain place to preach. It is scriptural for you to go because the Bible has clear teaching encouraging this. But it can equally justify you not to go, because sometimes the Lord forbade His apostles from preaching in certain places. At such times, you have to be careful in distinguishing between the prompting of the Holy Spirit and other forces. If there is indeed the leading of the Holy Spirit, you can proceed.

3. The Provisions in the Environment

The environment is often the best instrument for the manifestation of God's will. This does not refer to man's reactions of approval or disapproval. It refers to God's provisions in our personal environment. We may walk in God's will and still encounter misunderstandings and oppositions from men. Human opposition is not a circumstantial indicator for us to stop doing a certain thing. Did not the apostles in the first churches find themselves opposed by many people? Were they not imprisoned often? Their environment indeed was against them. Yet did they not walk according to God's will? They said, "It is necessary to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). They obeyed God and were walking according to His will. This is why we say that the environment manifests God's will; we are not saying that everyone in our environment will always agree with what we do. We are saying that God makes "provisions" in our environment for us. If everyone opposes our work, it is all right, because that may be an instigation from Satan. Beyond men, God abides above all the circumstances and makes personal provisions for us. If God has called us to His work, He will certainly make provision for all our needs, so that we will have the physical strength as well as the financial means to accomplish the work. Sometimes He will even send angels to help us and facilitate our journey.

God's hand is often manifested through the environment. He is always behind the daily events around us. A mature Christian can often see the turning of God's hand in the environment. God is the God behind all causes. He is the source of everything and the destiny of everything. If a believer has learned to seek after God's will in the environment, he is blessed. A believer who has consecrated himself should, on the one hand, oppose everything that is from Satan, and should, on the other hand, accept his environment and consider it to be from God and part of God's provision. If God has not allowed it, we know that nothing can come upon us. We can see this in the book of Job. Although Satan was the source of all woes, God was behind Satan and restraining him. Satan was limited by God in everything. In the Bible we find that God's hand is sovereignly controlling and moving behind many events. This is true not only with big events, but with small events as well. God is the God of the great things, and He is also the God of the small things. If a believer's hairs are numbered, is there anything else that cannot be in God's hand? Blessed are those who know Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Therefore, after a believer has the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Bible, he should still consider God's provisions in his environment. If God wants him to do a certain thing, He will surely give him the opportunity, time, and strength (both physical and spiritual) to do such a thing. If he needs a co-worker, God will provide one. He will fully provide everything that he needs. Jehovah will provide! (Gen. 22:14). If we are truly walking in God's will, we will see many "coincidences" and many "accidental things" coming across our way. Actually, these are not "coincidences" and "accidents," but God's provisions. God puts all these matters together, and He helps and supplies us according to our need. Those who are truly walking according to His will need not struggle for outward things, because God causes all things to be the platform upon which He accomplishes His work for His servants and His maids. Although there may be oppositions, God will provide for all the needs.

God uses the above three things to manifest Himself. Every time God guides His children, He uses these three things. Moreover, these three things give the same testimony as to whether or not our acts are according to God's will. The Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the environment do not contradict one another. If there are contradictions, we can be assured that it is not God's will. In doing anything, we must remember these three things.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Sometimes there are special circumstances. There may be two opposing thoughts in the heart. It seems that doing a certain thing is God's will, and not doing it is also God's will. It is difficult to decide which is right and which is wrong. The teaching of the Bible does not forbid us from doing it or not doing it, and it is hard to decide what to do. The provisions in the environment are conducive both for doing and not doing it. All three factors have an ambivalent weight. Under such circumstances, the best thing to do is to adopt a stand against Satan. If we honestly desire to do God's will, we should resolve at such a time to have a firm attitude, to agree with everything that comes from God, and to oppose everything that is from Satan. Although we may not know as yet what is of God and what is not of God, we can adopt the attitude that we want everything that is from God and refuse everything that is not from Him. We can pray, "God! I want what You want. I do not want what You do not want. Please prove to me what is of You and what is not of You." If we are truly after God's will, He will soon show us what is of Him and what is not of Him. He will make us clear. We cannot emphasize this matter enough because it is very important. Sometimes Satan will try to confuse

us and make us lost. If we continue to oppose Satan, and stand with the Father's will, sooner or later all the confusion will be dispersed.

NOT DOING WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

Before we are clear about God's will, it is best that we not do what we are not clear about. We should absolutely wait before God until we are clear, and then act accordingly. Sometimes God sees that we will profit if He delays revealing His will to us. At such times, we should adopt the attitude that we will not do what we do not know. The psalmist said, "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me" (Psa. 131:1). Therefore, before we are clear, and when things are "too high" for us, we should not do anything lest we regret it later. Many mistakes and regrets come from hasty decisions. Our danger lies in being active and trying to act before we are clear about the Lord's will. The Lord wants us to wait on Him, to advance at His pace, and to move on only after we are clear about God's will. Unfortunately, we are often urged by our environment to do things rashly. When this happens, we do things outside God's will. We can be assured of one thing: when we do things rashly, eight out of ten times, we are not walking according to the Lord's will. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He never did one thing rashly. We should imitate Him. Before we are absolutely clear of the Lord's will, we should not move presumptuously. We have to make up our mind not to initiate anything until we are clear about God's will.

Sometimes when we are stirred up or when we are pressured, we make promises to others. If we find out later that this was not God's will, what should we do? God's Word says, "Should he swear to his harm, / He does not change" (Psa. 15:4). This verse refers to the conduct of a believer. A believer should deal righteously with others. "Let your word be, Yes, yes; No, no" (Matt. 5:37); we should not be "yes and no" (2 Cor. 1:19). Therefore, we cannot break our promise. If we find ourselves in this situation, the only thing we can do is to confess the mistake of our promise before the Lord and pray that the Lord would cause the promise not to come into effect. He will open up the way. Perhaps through such a mistake, the Lord will show us some additional matters to which we should submit. Although it is a curse to make mistakes, the Lord can turn "the curse into a blessing" (Deut. 23:5). At these times we should be particularly patient and wait on the Lord.

SAVING TROUBLE

Many busy activities are vain because what is done is not done according to God's will. If our work is done apart from God's will, the Lord whom we serve will not be happy. We may be busy from morning till evening, but the work we do may not reap spiritual benefit; we will not receive praise or reward from God for these works. If we are willing to work only after we are clear about God's will, we will save ourselves many unnecessary hours of busy work. We will not be busy from morning till evening, and we will have more quiet time before the Lord to fellowship with Him.

SMALL THINGS

In our daily life, we should seek after the Lord's will this way in everything. If we seek after our own will and act carelessly in the small things of our daily life, and do not seek after the Lord's will until we encounter the great things, the Lord will seem very far away from us when we do seek after Him. This will appear to be God's will, and that will appear to be God's will. Every way will appear to be the right way. Then it is difficult to find God's will even though we try. We should seek after God's will in small things as well as in big things. We should familiarize ourselves with God's will every day so that when something suddenly happens to us, it will not be hard for us to know His will. We should be well acquainted with His will so that we build up for ourselves a habit of knowing His will. Then whatever happens, we will find ourselves knowing His will and acting according to His will. Of course, Satan is most crafty. Once he knows that we are seeking God's will in everything, he will raise many small suggestions in our mind and make us think that this or that is God's will. His suggestions are often contrary to common sense. For example, we may be walking down a road, and the proper way may be to take the main street. But he may tell us to take a winding and tortuous path. These things happen frequently. Every day he will try to counterfeit God's will. He will tell us many things. At these times we should take an opposing stand against Satan. We should do as was mentioned above—test to see if what we have encountered is God's will. At times it is possible for extraordinary things to happen; God may instruct us to take the circuitous way in order to protect us. Although God has His will in everything, God does not annul our reasoning in the small things. After our mind has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit leads us through our reasoning in all the small matters. Therefore, we must not be deceived by Satan in the small things. We should exercise our discernment to differentiate. Sometimes Satan will accuse us when we do not follow his counterfeit will, and tell us that we have gone off from God's will. At such times

we have to withstand him. (Please note that this paragraph only applies to the small things.)

SEEKING AND PRACTICING

In seeking to know God's will, we have to be honest and practice what we know. True seeking is always accompanied by practice. It is for the sake of practicing God's will that we seek it. If we have no intention of practicing, what good does it do if we know His will? Knowing God's will without practicing it is offensive to God; it cultivates the flesh and allows it to survive. When the flesh realizes the hardship involved in doing God's will, it shrinks back. If we do not put to death the deeds of the flesh and do not walk according to God's will, our life will suffer a great blow. God wants us to do His will; He is not satisfied with us only knowing His will. He causes us to know His will in order that we will do His will. If we do not do His will, our knowledge is empty knowledge! God has no pleasure in anything other than His will. True knowledge is a matter of practice.

Here I should repeat what I have mentioned before: we should have no inclination, self-will, and cravings in our heart. Only then can we know God's will. If we do not have a heart to obey God willingly, He will not reveal to us His will. First there must be a willingness to do His will; then God will spontaneously show us His will.

NATURAL UNWILLINGNESS IN THE HEART

One frequent problem among us as God's children is that we are naturally unwilling to do God's will. Biases, cravings, and self-will unintentionally appear. It seems that the price of doing God's will is too great, that it contradicts our own will too much, and that it is too much of a hardship for the flesh and too uncomfortable for our own feeling. This does not mean that we do not want to know God's will; we do want to know God's will. But, at the same time, we have our own cravings. Many times we think that if we are willing, we will be finished and our life will be over. The way of deliverance for us is to repeatedly acknowledge God's right over us. We should meditate on the Lord's love, on how He died for us, how He suffered, saved, comforted, forbore, and cared for us. We should obey Him because He has a right over us, and we should be moved to follow Him because of His love. We should meditate on these things until our heart melts and our tears come down. The Lord's love will surely touch us. At the same time, we should ask ourselves, "Is it true that I am not willing to do God's will and that I have my own inclinations? Am I willing to allow God to work on me

until I become willing and until I have no more inclinations?" This means that although we are not willing to do God's will, we are willing to allow God to make us willing to do His will. In other words, in ourselves, we are not willing to do His will in a direct sense. But in an indirect sense, we are willing to allow God to make us willing. To put it in still another way, if it is true that we have no willingness in ourselves to do His will, do we have a willingness to allow God to make us willing? We may not have the first willingness. But do we have the second willingness? If we do not have a willingness to do His will, and if we do not have a willingness to allow Him to make us willing, we will surely not know His will. Even if we know it, it will be useless to us. We will only fall according to our self-will. If we do not have a direct willingness, but have an indirect willingness, God will still work in our hearts or our environment to make us willing. It is amazing that God performs miracles to turn our hearts and make them willing. Sometimes this step takes time. God does not force us to do anything. If we feel that we cannot obey Him and are not willing to allow Him to make us willing, He will surely not work. Philippians 2:13 presents a great truth: "For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." This does not say that God will do the willing for us. Rather, it says that God operates in us until we become willing. Therefore, if we are not willing to do God's will, we should have at least one kind of willingness—we should be willing to allow God to turn our unwillingness into willingness and operate in us until we become willing. If a man does not have even a little amount of willingness, what he does will certainly be outside God's will, and not be pleasing to God. But blessed are those who are attracted by God's love, who look forward to the coming glory, who have no reluctance in their hearts to do God's will, and who are always ready and waiting for His command. Happy are these ones!

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

George Müller was a man experienced in prayer and in fellowship with the Lord. He said that every time he was about to do something, he always asked himself a few questions. The most important questions he asked were, "Is this God's will? Is this God's will for me? Is this God's time? and, Is this God's way?" He had to wait until he was completely clear about the answers to these questions before he would act. We should learn of him in this matter. If we act cautiously, we will not make mistakes.

CONCLUSION

Brothers, if we have indeed fully consecrated ourselves to the Lord, we will see Him restricting us in everything. Many things are excellent and proper in our eyes. We may want to do them, but because they are not God's will, we dare not proceed with them. There may be many works which we deem profitable and precious. We may want to do them, but because they are not God's will, we will not dare to do them. In our thoughts, we should drop everything that is not according to His will. We should do His will and please His heart, rather than please ourselves. Although many things may be precious and desirable to us, for the Lord's sake, we should willingly give them up. What a bondage! Blessed bondage! What restriction! Blessed restriction! What hindrance! Blessed hindrance! Daily we should consider our self-will and self-opinion as gone and shattered. Daily we should suffer the "undesirable" things. The restrictions in the Lord's hand are sweet indeed. Our heart magnifies the Lord. He must increase, and we must decrease. Our heart rejoices at seeing our self stripped and the Lord's will accomplished. May the Lord cause us to always know His will and do it. "Lord, when we suffer through our self being confined, we are truly happy, because You are happy!"

"That you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12).

CHAPTER FIVE

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

FOREWORD

The question covered in this book is a very important one. May the readers not read it with curiosity. This article was written to comfort many pilgrims on the heavenly journey. It shows them that our hope is sure. Although the world has many conjectures, the Word of God will not fail.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE

Heaven is a place and a location. It is not a state of being. The concept that heaven is within man's heart, that it is within man's mind, and that it is the pleasant state of man's being is not scriptural. That is the reasoning of the unbelievers and the curious ones. They base their concept on their imaginations. The heaven mentioned in the Bible is a place. It is in heaven, not within man's heart. The heart of fallen mankind, regardless how good it may be, can never express heaven. Although man may sometimes experience some unspeakable joy, this does not mean that it is heaven. If heaven is merely this, it is rather confined and too ordinary. The heaven mentioned in the Bible is an actual place.

One day those of us who believe in the redemption of the Lord Jesus will enter that place. We will enter into heaven, rather than heaven entering into us.

The Lord Jesus Christ mentions His "Father's house" in John 14. He went to prepare a place for the believers. When it is ready, He will surely come again to receive them there. This passage can settle the problem of whether or not heaven is an actual place. When the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, He ascended with His body. The Bible says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50). After our beloved Lord shed His blood for us on the cross, in His resurrection He spoke of His resurrected body, saying, "For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you behold Me having" (Luke 24:39). After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus' body of "flesh and blood" was changed. Yet He was not only a spirit, but also a person with "flesh and bones." He had a human body. This body was already transformed. It was not like the natural body that was dead (1 Cor. 15:42-44). He was seen by human eyes (Luke 24:34); He was touchable (v. 39); He could eat food (v. 43). The Lord Jesus Christ has now ascended into heaven (v. 51; Acts 1:9-11). If heaven is not a place, how can Jesus Christ physically reside there? If we say that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven with a body, it must mean that heaven is a place. If He has a body, there must also be a place for His body to stay. These two cannot be separated. Without a place, the body cannot possibly exist. Whenever we think of a tangible object, we think of the place it is associated with. The Lord Jesus ascended into heaven with a body. Therefore, heaven must be a place.

[Note: In the original language, the Bible gives a distinction between heaven and the heavens. The expression the kingdom of heaven should be translated as "the kingdom of the heavens." The word heavens is plural in number; it may refer to the heavens above all the stars. (The earth has its heaven, and all the stars have their respective heavens.) It may also refer to the many levels of heaven. (Paul mentions "the third heaven.") The word heaven is used in contrast to the earth; it means the place where God's throne is, the place of bliss.]

Heaven is a place from which the Lord Jesus descended and in which He still is now. The Lord Jesus descended from heaven to fulfill God's purpose. He redeemed sinners by dying for them on the cross. After the Son of God resurrected, He "passed through the heavens" (Heb. 4:14), "sat...in the heavens" (8:1), and He is "become higher than the heavens" (7:26). Our Savior is not only higher than the things on earth and the things in heaven, He is beyond the realm of all the heavens. The Scripture says, "Therefore also God highly exalted Him"

(Phil 2:9), "...seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20-21).

In studying the Bible, we find out that heaven has at least three levels. Paul mentioned that he was once caught away to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). Perhaps the first level is where the atmosphere is, the second where the stars are, and the third where the throne of God is.

Where is heaven? Some people think that heaven is a certain place in this universe. It is round in shape like a ball rotating on its own and revolving around a center. This center is God's throne. Such a saying is man's idea; it is unreliable. How then can this question be answered? If God's Word (the Bible) clearly tells us where heaven is, then it is possible for us to find its whereabouts. But if the Bible is silent concerning this matter, we need not waste much thought on it. "The things that are hidden belong to Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed, to us and our children forever..." (Deut. 29:29). Therefore, we need not seek to know the secret things of God. Yet, we must desire to know the things of God which are revealed. I believe that many Christians would rejoice to know where heaven is. Thank our Father God that in His Word, He is not silent about this matter.

THE LOCATION OF HEAVEN IS ABOVE

The location of heaven mentioned in the Bible is above. When the people built the tower of Babel, God said, "Let us go down" (Gen. 11:7). After God spoke to Abraham, "he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham" (Gen. 17:22). God said to Moses, "And I am come down to deliver them..." (Exo. 3:8). David in praising God said, "He bowed the heavens down, and descended" (Psa. 18:9). Isaiah's prayer said, "Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down..." (Isa. 64:1). The Lord Jesus Himself said, "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven" (John 3:13), "for I have come down from heaven" (6:38, 42). When the Lord Jesus ascended, the Bible says, "A cloud took Him away....And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went..." (Acts 1:9-10). Stephen, when he was about to die, saw the Son of Man standing to welcome the first martyred servant. He "looked up steadfastly into heaven" (7:55 KJV) and saw the Lord Jesus. The apostle John saw a door opened in heaven, and he heard the voice like a trumpet speaking with him, saying, "Come up here" (Rev.

4:1). When the Lord descends from heaven, all those believers who love Him "will be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thes. 4:17). There are many more verses that can be quoted. But these few are enough to prove that heaven, the dwelling place of God, is above.

Above? That is right. Yet where is above? The earth we are now living on is spherical in shape. When we say "above," at which point on earth is it "above"? If we say that heaven is above the earth, there is a big difference between whether it is above Nanking or above Kuangchow. The place above North America and the place above China are in two extremes. Naturally, any point directly above the earth must be at right angles with the horizon of the earth. Otherwise, the different points above the different places on the earth would be pointing toward different directions—east, west, north, or south. If so, heaven would not be a definite place, but would be everywhere. However, as mentioned earlier, heaven is a definite place; it is not everywhere. Therefore, "heaven above" cannot be interpreted this way.

The Bible also says, "The heavens are higher than the earth" (Isa. 55:9). "For as the heaven is high above the earth..." (Psa. 103:11). Heaven is the highest point in the universe. Christ is now in heaven. He is "far above all the heavens" (Eph. 4:10). Therefore, the heaven where He is must be above all heavens. However, "higher than the earth" does not indicate a definite place, because the shape of the earth is round and the earth is in the midst of a void. Any direction can be a place higher than the round earth. Heaven is a definite place; it is not a place that exists in all directions. Therefore, heaven being higher than the earth should be explained differently.

HEAVEN ON THE SIDES OF THE NORTH

Let us consider a passage in the Bible which clearly declares where heaven is. Isaiah 14:12-14 says:

How you have fallen from heaven,
O Daystar, son of the dawn!
How you have been hewn down to earth,
You who made nations fall prostrate!
But you, you said in your heart:
I will ascend to heaven;
Above the stars of God
I will exalt my throne.
And I will sit upon the mount of assembly

On the sides of the north.
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will be like the Most High.

My intention here is not to interpret the meaning of these few verses, but to mention the points related to the question being studied, i.e., where is heaven. This Lucifer, son of the dawn who fell from heaven, is Satan. If we compare this passage with Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:7-12, and 1 Timothy 3:6, we can see that this one is Satan. However, regardless of who he is, in these verses there is a clear and accurate mention of where heaven is. Isaiah 14:13 mentions the reason why this marvelous personified one fell. He was proud, desirous to rob the position of God and to be like the Most High. Therefore he received God's judgment. He fell from heaven. Hence, his original dwelling place was in heaven; therefore, he knows where heaven is. Here the Bible says that heaven is above the stars of God, on the sides of the north, and above the heights of the clouds; it is also upon the mount of assembly. This Lucifer, son of the dawn, thought that if he could reach this position, he could be like the Most High.

We can understand that heaven is above the stars of God and above the heights of the clouds. Yet, what does it really mean for heaven to be on the sides of the north? Let us first look into the meaning of "the mount of assembly" by reading a few passages in the Bible.

"And he [Micaiah] said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so" (1 Kings 22:19-22). This passage clearly points out that the place where the throne of God is (i.e. heaven, cf. Matt. 5:34) is the place of assembly.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6). After verse 6, the book of Job mentions the question and answer which took place between God and Satan. Here, the sons of God no doubt refer to the angels. As the created ones,

they were called the sons of God. Satan also came for the purpose of accusing the righteous (cf. Rev. 12:8-10).

"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; / he judgeth among the gods. / How long will ye judge unjustly....But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" (Psa. 82:1-2, 7). God divided the universe into regions and ordered the created angels to govern them. These angels are "the mighty" and "the gods" referred to in this psalm (cf. John 10:34-35). God commanded them to do justice (Psa. 82:3-4). However, they sinned by walking in darkness (v. 5). Therefore the Lord judged their sins that they would be punished (vv. 6-7).

Daniel 4:17 refers to the "watchers" and the "holy ones." These are the angels under God's authority. They, being in the midst of God's assembly, know God's will and issue the decree.

According to the above quotations, it seems that "the mount of assembly" must refer to the heaven where God meets with the angels. Isaiah 14:13 says He is "on the sides of the north." Our conclusion is that heaven is on the sides of the north.

Previously, we have said that heaven is "above." This posed a problem. But if we say that heaven is in the north, such a problem will not exist anymore. The four directions are east, west, south, and north. East and west differ from north and south logically. For instance, though there is the distinction of east and west on earth, no one can distinguish between the far east and the far west. If one travels towards the east, he will never reach the extreme east; eventually, he will return to his starting point. This is due to the fact that the shape of the earth is round. There is no possibility for one to reach the extreme east or the extreme west. But north and south are different. They are the two poles of the earth with the north being on the top and the south on the underside. We often say "up north" or "down south," never "up south," or "down north." North is above. When we look at a map, we indicate east, west, south, and north by right, left, down, and up, respectively. We also represent the four directions by our two hands, head, and feet. Our head represents the north, which is above. Therefore, the verses quoted from the Scriptures above prove that heaven is above, which implies that heaven is in the north. Isaiah 55:9 also says that the heavens are "higher than the earth."

Except for the north, no other direction can be higher than the earth. The north of any place on earth always points to one direction. This direction is above all other directions. Therefore, north is the highest point. If heaven is in any direction, then

nothing more can be deduced. But if heaven is in a certain direction and at the same time "higher than the earth," then heaven cannot be anywhere else but in the north.

Psalms 48:2 also mentions "in the uttermost parts of the north" (according to the original text). "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, / is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, / the city of the great King." It seems this Mount Zion, the city of the great King, refers to the earthly Jerusalem because it is "the joy of the whole earth." But it also implies the heavenly Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem is not in the uttermost parts of the north. Therefore, this mount should at least imply "Mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). This is heaven.

Psalms 75:1 says, "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, / unto thee do we give thanks: / for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare." This is the praise by the psalmist. Verse 2 continues: "When I shall find the set time, I will judge uprightly" [ASV]. This is spoken by God. "When I shall find the set time" is also translated as "when I shall receive the congregation" [KJV]. This is related to the "mount of assembly" (heaven) in Isaiah 14. Psalms 75:3-7 says, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: / I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. / I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: / and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: / lift not up your horn on high: / speak not with a stiff neck. / For promotion cometh neither from the east, / nor from the west, nor from the south. / But God is the judge: / he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Here, God warns the people not to seek help from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. It is very meaningful that He does not include north as a direction not to call for help! When we read the expression "For promotion cometh neither from the east, / Nor from the west, nor from the south," naturally we would think that promotion comes from the north. Following the words "neither from the east, / nor from the west, nor from the south," it says, "But God is the judge." We can see that the unmentioned north is intimately related to God's dwelling. Although God did not ask the people to seek help from the north, it is evident that the heaven where God dwells is in that direction. Where God receives the assembly and executes His justice and judgment is in the north.

When the prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of God, he beheld a whirlwind that "came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the

fire" (Ezek. 1:4). The "cloud," "brightness," and "amber" all represent God's glory, which is from the north. In the book of Ezekiel, this word "north" is mentioned over forty times, and it is quite often amazingly related to God's administration and God's glory.

Zechariah 6:6-8 says, "The black horses went forth to the land of the north, and the white horses went forth after them, and the speckled horses went forth to the land of the south. And the strong horses went forth and sought to proceed to go to and fro on the earth. And He said, Proceed to go to and fro on the earth; and they went to and fro on the earth. Then He called out to me and spoke to me, saying, See, these who are going forth to the land of the north have given My Spirit rest in the land of the north." Here the use of the word "north" is also very significant.

The earth's geographic and magnetic poles both point toward the north. How wonderful it is! Who can know the reason why the compass always points towards the north? In the Constellation of the Swan in the north, there is a place where the surroundings are all stars, yet this space is without any star. This empty space is known by some astronomers as the "dark nebula" or by others as the "rift of the sky." Job 26:7 says, "He [God] stretcheth out the north over the empty place." Can this "empty place" not be the same as the "rift"? If the uttermost part of the north is in the midst of this, then should heaven not also be in it? We will certainly find out one day!

Job 26:7 is another good proof of heaven being in the uttermost part of the north. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, / and hangeth the earth upon nothing." Here, "the earth" and "the north" are in opposition. "Nothing" refers to the atmospheric air enveloping the earth. If "nothing" means the atmosphere, then the empty place over which the north is placed cannot be the same atmosphere. It must be where heaven is. Heaven is therefore in the north.

Astronomers tell us that the entire solar system—the sun, the planets, and the earth—are all traveling toward this "rift" at a velocity of more than twenty miles a second! That is equivalent to almost 72,000 miles per hour! Why would our Lord allow the inhabited earth to travel toward the north? Who can say there is no purpose in this phenomenon?

Today the theory of heaven being a definite place has been under numerous attacks and mockings. What we have studied in this book is not of utmost importance. The important thing is to believe that there is a place called heaven.

Heaven is a place prepared for those who are prepared. Do you desire this? Are you prepared for it?

CHAPTER SIX

UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD: A FALLACY

FOREWORD

The teaching of a universal fatherhood, that is, the teaching that says everyone in the world is a child of God, is one of the many important questions in these days. If all the people in the world are God's children, then they do not have to repent, they do not have to confess their sins, and there is no need to receive the Lord Jesus as Savior. Since all are already children of God, there is no need to have any new relationship with God. However, if this is not the case, then the gracious gospel revealed in the Bible becomes necessary. God is willing to save the world which is at enmity with Him. This is the gospel. Hence, we are willing to look into what God in His Bible has taught us concerning this matter. May God open our eyes that we will not be deceived by the philosophy of this world.

At present, there is a very popular and modernistic teaching which says that God is the Father of all mankind and that all people in the world are brothers and children of God. Some reason that at the time the Lord Jesus was born, the Jews had a very narrow concept of God. For this reason, Christ purposely made known the matter of the universal fatherhood in order to make people understand that He was not a mighty and terrifying God, but a very kind and loving Father. That was why He taught the disciples to pray, saying, "Our Father who is in the heavens" (Matt. 6:9).

This kind of saying is very appealing to people, but it is a sugar-coated, poisonous pill. This pleases the unregenerated, fleshly people, because they do not have to worry about their sins. God is their Father, and no father would send his son to hell as a punishment. They do not have to be born again, they do not need to repent, they do not need to abstain from sin, nor do they have to bear fruit. Since God is their Father, He loves them. They do not have to believe or rely on the Lord Jesus, nor do they have to receive Him as their Savior because they are already the children of God. They think that God only loves, so He will not punish the wicked by eternal damnation.

This kind of teaching is extremely dangerous. It is the enemy of the gospel and the destroyer of man's faith. It deceives people, leads people into eternal suffering, and makes them hopeless cases. When Christ came, although He

called God His Father, He did not preach that God was the Father of everyone. Rather, He told the people that they should have a change of father in order to be saved. The Lord Jesus only referred to God as the Father of His disciples, not as the universal Father. We must pay attention to this point.

Thank God that He has given us the Bible to be our tutor. God's Word is infallible. God's Word is our supreme court, and it answers all our questions. All human reasonings have no standing before God's Word. Our God does not leave His people in the dark. He will give discernment to those who are humble; He will teach the meek His way. If we are truly humble, meek, and willing to be taught, God will surely teach us. "If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching" (John 7:17). May the Holy Spirit of God lead us in this study that we may understand the teachings of the Bible.

THE GOD REVEALED BY THE LORD JESUS

There are many times in the Old Testament when God is called the Father. Isaiah 63:16 says, "For You are our Father." Jeremiah 31:9 says, "I am a Father to Israel." However, the way to enter into the Holy of Holies had not yet been opened; therefore, the beloved Israelites still could not have an intimate fellowship with God like that of a father and son. When the Lord Jesus came, He revealed the fatherhood of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, seventeen times the Lord Jesus referred to God as the Father. Except for the last time (Matt. 7:21), when He called God His own Father, all the other times He said, "your heavenly Father," "your Father," or "our Father who is in the heavens." In Matthew there are altogether forty-three references to God as the Father, and of these, twenty-one refer to Him as the Father of His disciples. There are five references in Mark, twice as the Father of the Lord Jesus, once as the Father only, and the remaining two times as the Father of the disciples. Luke mentions God as the Father two times, God as the Father of the disciples three times, and God as the Father of the Lord Jesus eight times. John, the gospel of the Son of God, refers to God as the Father one hundred fourteen times. With the exception of the last section, the whole book refers to God as the Father of the Lord Jesus. In chapters fourteen to seventeen alone, in His last discourse and prayer, our Lord called God the Father about fifty times. Without a doubt the Lord Jesus intended to reveal God as the Father. At the end of His prayer, He said, "And I have made Your name known to them" (John 17:26). This name is the Father. The God whom the Lord Jesus revealed is the Father. This is right. However, even though the Lord Jesus revealed God's fatherhood, we must determine if

this fatherhood is particular or general. Is God the Father of certain people or the Father of the whole world? Are only a part of the world God's sons, or are all His sons? We need to answer these questions very carefully because if everyone is a son of God, as some have preached, then the relationship of all people with God is the same; there is no distinction among them. Since all people are created by God, it follows that all are born of God. We should therefore love one another, for we all came from one loving Father, and someday we will all go to the same place. If one is saved, then all are saved. There is really no difference. There is no judgment because God is our Father, and there is no hell because God is a loving Father. There is no Savior because we have no need of Him! On the other hand, if not everyone is a son of God, then we have to seek to know how we can become children of God, so that we will not be punished by God later. First we will look at:

FOUR KINDS OF SONSHIP WHICH THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE

The Bible has shown us four aspects of sonship in which the people of the world have no part. Just by looking at these four aspects of the doctrine of sonship, we can see that the people of the world are different and that not all people are sons of God.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ Is the Son of God

His being the Son of God is very special and unique; He has something different from the other sons of God. This is why the Bible says, "the only begotten Son" (John 1:18). He is so holy, pure, and special that no one but He can be called the only begotten Son of God. Here the phrase "only begotten" excludes all other people of the world.

2. The Angels Are Also Called the Sons of God (Job 38:7; Gen. 6:2-4)

The angels are those who directly inherit the word of God (John 10:35). Of course, it is evident that we are not angels. Obviously, we have no part in this aspect of sonship.

3. The Israelites

The Israelites are also called the sons of God. Moses said to the children of Israel, "You are the children of Jehovah your God" (Deut. 14:1). Since we are not Israelites, we cannot claim to be children of God in this position.

The first time in the Bible that God is referred to as the Father is in Exodus. When God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites, He said, "And thou shalt say unto

Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exo. 4:22-23a). God is not the Father of the whole world. He only called out the Israelites and called them His sons; the people of the world are not included. The fatherhood of God mentioned by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets only refers to the Israelites. The people of the world are not allowed to participate in this sonship. Although Malachi said, "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (2:10), the word "we" does not refer to all the people in the world. This is made clear by looking at what follows: "Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" God's covenanted people were the Israelites, not any other people. God made a covenant on Mount Sinai only with their forefathers, not with the forefathers of the people of the world. Therefore, besides the Israelites, no others are considered sons of God. Furthermore, the prophet said, "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi" (1:1). Malachi's prophecy is directed only to the Israelites. When our Lord was on earth, two of the parables He gave were based on the fact that the chosen Israelites are the sons of God. "A man had two children. And he came to his first son and said, Child, go today and work in the vineyard....And he came to the other and said likewise" (Matt. 21:28, 30a). Does this parable prove that God is the Father of everyone in the world? No. This parable was spoken by our Lord to warn the priests and the elders because they did not receive the preaching of John and because they loathed and rejected Christ. The younger son here refers to the repentant tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes; though they were unclean, they were willing to repent and obey the gracious call. Therefore, they were the obedient sons. The parable of the prodigal son has the same meaning. It was spoken to reproach the Pharisees and the scribes because they murmured against the Lord Jesus for receiving the sinners and eating with them. The older son refers to the Pharisees and the scribes, whereas the younger son refers to the repentant sinners.

Since we are not Israelites in the flesh, the rights bestowed on the Israelites as the sons of God do not involve us. We cannot be the children of God in this regard.

4. Adam

Adam was directly created by God and was also called the son of God: "The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). Besides Adam, nobody was directly created by God; hence, the people in the world

cannot be called the sons of God as Adam was. In the genealogy in Luke 3, there are seventy-five people including Adam (in verse 36 Cainan is not counted). These seventy-five people were all created by God, but only Adam was created directly. The other seventy-four people were called the sons of men; only Adam, God's direct creation, was called the son of God. So, this genealogy is sufficient to prove that the people in the world are not the sons of God simply because they were created. "...Adam, the son of God"; but "...Seth, the son [not of God] of Adam."

Men are created by God and are also born of Adam. Even though the Bible does not call them the sons of God, they are nevertheless referred to as God's kind. When Paul was preaching in Athens, he said that God "made from one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, determining beforehand their appointed seasons and the boundaries of their dwelling, that they might seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, even though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and are, as even some poets among you have said, For we are also His race. Being then the race of God, we ought not to suppose that what is divine is like gold or silver or stone, like an engraving of art and thought of man" (Acts 17:26-29).

The original Greek word for "race" is *yevos*. This word is also translated in the Bible as kind, tribe, and nation. Only here is it translated "race." This word is very different from "son"; the only thing it has in common with "son" is that it is also a noun. Thus, this verse only refers to men as God's kind, not to men as the spiritual sons of God. When looking at the context, we further realize the point Paul was making is that man was created by God. Since God is so great and full of lovingkindness, man should not worship idols as God. This verse does not prove that all people are sons of God.

Man should never claim God's creation to be the basis of sonship. If creation can prove sonship, then are cows, sheep, dogs, and horses, which were also created by God, the sons of God?

Since the people of the world are neither (1) Jesus Christ, nor (2) angels, nor (3) Israelites, nor (4) Adam, they can never claim to be the sons of God as those in the four categories mentioned above. Since the people of the world cannot find a basis among these four kinds of sonship through which they can be called the sons of God, they should therefore seek a way outside of these four that they might become children of God. However, the Bible does not give us any other way to call a person a son of God except to believe in the Lord. Since the Bible

does not give any basis for the people of the world to be considered children of God, they are therefore not children of God.

Among these four kinds of sonship, we find that only the Israelites are still existing on the earth. However, the Israelites have lost their rights according to the flesh since the New Testament age began (John 8). It is because "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are accounted as the seed" (Rom. 9:8). If the Israelites, who were originally called children of God, have been deprived of their rights, then do the other people of the world who are not called children of God have the right to call themselves children of God? In this age God does not differentiate between Israelites and Gentiles; they are all the same to Him. The people of the world, whether Israelites or Gentiles, are not the sons of God.

WHOSE SONS ARE THE MEN OF THE WORLD (ISRAELITES AND GENTILES)?

We can read the Word of God again and consider at the present time whose sons the men of the world are. The Israelites said to Christ, "We have one Father, God" (John 8:41). Our Lord's answer to this was quite clear. "If God were your Father you would love Me....You are of your father the devil,...for he is a liar and the father of it" (vv. 42-44). Our Lord clearly referred to the Israelites as the sons of the devil because they followed the desires of the devil (v. 44). If the chosen Israelites are not sons of God but rather sons of the devil, then the rest of the world, even more, are sons of the devil. How solemn this is! Our Lord not only referred to the Israelites as the sons of the devil, He went even further. The Lord said that the devil is the father of liars. By saying this, He included all unregenerated people (Psa. 116:11; 12:1-2; 5:9) under the name and the sonship of the devil. Is not this kind of testimony clear? They are not the sons of God.

When we come to the Epistles of John, the boundary is clearly enlarged to include all the people of the world. "He who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. ...Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest" (1 John 3:8-10). Dear friends, do not be deceived. Everyone in the world belongs to one of two fathers. They are children of either father. If one is not a child of God, then he is a child of the devil. There is

no neutral ground. The presumption that God is the Father of all men and that all men are His children cannot stand before these few verses in the Scripture. “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest” (v. 10). The children of the devil are not only those who are opposed to Christ. All those who are not manifested as the children of God are also included. These two families have their own natures and characteristics. By these characteristics they are manifested as to which family they belong. People who belong to the devil are dead in offenses and sins; people who belong to God are born of God and have eternal life. Generally speaking, it is not so difficult to differentiate between the dead and the living. Therefore, the children of God should be very careful to manifest themselves to be of God. When we read Matthew 13, again we see the differences between the children of God and the children of the devil. The good seed are the sons of the kingdom of the heavens, the children of God; the tares are the sons of the evil one, the children of the devil. The tares and the wheat look similar when they first start growing, but the difference is shown at harvest time. In these days, many people look quite good outwardly, but when the fruit is born, the difference will be seen. The children of God and the children of the devil are sure to be manifested. Paul told the Ephesian believers, “We... were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:3). Here it makes a clear separation between the “we,” those who now believe in the Lord Jesus and are the children of God, and “the rest,” the children of wrath. Those who are not saved by grace are children of wrath and are of Satan’s kind.

Thus, the Bible, through its many references, reveals this important truth—God is not the Father of all men in the world. Not all the people in the world are children of God. Since Genesis 3, the Bible shows us that the people in the world are of two families, the seed of the woman (of Christ) and the seed of the serpent (of the devil). Since God has separated the people in the world, we who believe in Him should humbly accept this fact.

NOT ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

In the Bible, there are also many secondary proofs. Here we will take a brief look at a few of them. The presumption of a universal fatherhood is based on the Sermon on the Mount, in which the Lord Jesus addressed God as the Father. This presumption, therefore, says that God is the Father of all men in the world. However, we should take note who the Lord was talking to on the mount. If the Lord was talking to the general public, then the presumption is logical. If this is

not so, and if the Lord was talking to a special group of people, then the theory fails to prove itself. Matthew 5:1-2 says, "And when He saw the crowds, [the Lord Jesus did not teach these people, but] He went up to the mountain. And after He sat down, His disciples came to Him [His disciples also went into the mountain]. And opening His mouth, He taught them." Who? The disciples, not the multitudes. The Sermon on the Mount was addressed by our Lord Jesus to His disciples, that is, the Christians (Acts 11:26). It was not addressed to the multitudes. Therefore, sixteen times in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus referred to God as the Father of the disciples, not as the Father of the multitudes. All of the references to "your" and "our" were directed to the disciples. From this, we can see that the presumption of universal brotherhood does not have any basis.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus said that God "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). This is referring to how God treats all men equally. Yet our Lord was very careful. He did not confuse this point with God's fatherhood. He did not say that the good, the bad, the righteous, and the unrighteous people are all sons of God. He specifically differentiated the fatherhood. He said, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good" (vv. 44-45). It is clear that the evil as well as the good are being differentiated from the sons of God. Moreover, to be a son of God, one should have such a love. Such a word is not for the common people of the world.

"And if you greet only your brothers, what better thing are you doing?...You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (vv. 47-48). "You" are sons of God, because God is "your Father who is in the heavens" (v. 45). Here again it is very clear that "you," the sons of God, are separated from the others. Is this not plain to see? Not all men are sons of God. This verse also has a further meaning: "There are people in this world who are not yet your brothers, and God is not their Father; God is 'your Father who is in the heavens'; although they are not the sons of God, God is perfect, and He gives the sun and the rain to them." This is more than clear. The children of God should love their enemies, those who are not the children of God, because the heavenly Father is such a loving One.

The Lord Jesus in answering the Jews said, "If God were your Father you would love Me" (John 8:42). The children of God should be like God their Father in

nature in the same way that our physical body should bear the characteristics of our father in the flesh. Since God is well pleased with the Lord Jesus, the children of God should also love Him. God is not a Father to him who does not love the Lord Jesus. If this were not so, then would not 1 Corinthians 16:22 be a little too strong? The Bible purposely records this word to be our guide. The word of Christ totally excludes the unregenerated ones and does not recognize them as sons of God. This word "if" gets down to the very root of the question. If the "if" of Christ stands, then the presumption of a universal fatherhood is a total failure. "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in the heavens, he is My brother" (Matt. 12:50). Only those who do the will of God are the sons of God. The people in the world have not received salvation, they are not regenerated, they cannot know the will of God. Consequently, how can they do the will of God? This testimony of our Lord firmly rejects the theory that all men in the world are the sons of God.

The word in 1 John 3:1 is also very firm. "Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." For men to become the sons of God is the special kindness of God. The world does not share a part in this. Here "we" and "the world" are clearly separated. "We should be called children of God; and we are." What about the world? The world does not know us. If all men in the world were children of God, then the Holy Spirit would not separate the believers from the world and would not say, "The world does not know us." If all men in the world are children of God, then what the Holy Spirit has said is meaningless! Please consider this. If everyone in the world is a child of God, should not the world know the children of God? What kind of talk is this? The theory that all men in the world are sons of God has no basis in the Bible. It is refuted by the Bible, and it is totally contrary to the clear teaching of the Bible.

Peter called the believers "your brotherhood in the world" (1 Pet. 5:9). This does not mean that the people of the world are the brothers of the believers. It means that the brothers of the believers are in the world. The people of the world are not the believers' brothers, although among them, there are some who are their brothers. This verse tells us how their brothers were afflicted with sufferings from the devil because they did not belong to the world. "The whole world lies in the evil one" (1 John 5:19). Naturally, there is no need for the devil to bother those who belong to the world. There is a big difference between the people of the

world and “the brothers.” “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood” (1 Pet. 2:17). The brothers are set apart from all men, that is, the people of the world. What God has separated, let no one yoke them together. The people in the world are not all brothers because they are not all sons of God.

Therefore, in the Epistles, the phrase “grace to you and peace from God our Father” is frequently spoken to a group of special people. Likewise, the phrase “our brothers” is specifically directed toward the believers.

Although not all the people in the world are children of God, there are those in the world who are the children of God. Since the Lord Jesus testified of God as a Father, God must then be the Father of a certain class of people. The fact that the Bible sets the children of God apart from the people of the world is a proof to this truth. But who are the children of God? Concerning this matter, the Bible is not silent. It has a clear and definite testimony. The Bible makes it clear that the children of God have their (1) position, (2) spirit, (3) nature, and (4) conduct. These four characteristics manifest who are the children of God and who are not. Those without these four characteristics are the children of Satan and are not of God. Although there are times when the children of God are weak and fallen, and although they may at times seem unable to live up to these four characteristics, such a condition is temporary and not permanent. Once they are revived and have arisen, they will be recovered to their normal condition. (Please note here: the children of God have these characteristics; however, this does not mean that because they have these characteristics they become the children of God. In the following paragraphs we will see how to become the children of God.)

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD’S CHILDREN

1. The Position of the Children of God

God and the world are separate. “Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” Those who are at enmity with God are not the children of God; therefore, the children of God are those who come out of the world. “Do not become dissimilarly yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? And what concord does Christ have with Belial [the other name of Satan]? Or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, even as God said, ‘I will dwell among them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.’ Therefore ‘come out from

their midst and be separated, says the Lord, and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you'; 'and I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty'" (2 Cor. 6:14-18). The concept that all men are the sons of God cannot hold true in view of these few verses. The children of God are not defiled by the world; they are those who come out of the world. In the presence of God, the separating line between those who belong to Him and those who belong to Satan is very distinct. God is not willing that His children mix with the world. From God's viewpoint, there is a deep gulf that separates righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, believers and unbelievers, the temple of God (believers) and idols. God sees the world as two big families of people who are opposite to, and at enmity with, each other. His children are not those who remain with the worldly people, nor those who still touch unclean things, but they are those who are separate and holy. The position of the children of God is altogether incompatible with, and different from, that of the people of the world.

If a believer is separate from the world, he will, of course, not receive praises and sympathy from the world. If he is separated, he is either being proud, or he is genuinely spiritual. Either he is so proud that he would not associate himself with others and is haughtily preoccupied with himself, or he must be having such a good manner of life that he becomes compatible with his separated position. If the children of God are mixed with the world, they will lose the power of their testimony. The world will think that this kind of Christian is not any different from them! But once a child of God is separated from them, the worldly people will consider such a person to be too proud! If the children of God are not proud at heart, they should not be afraid of public criticism. Nevertheless, in the present age, if a believer truly lives out the holy, heavenly, righteous, and loving life of the Lord Jesus, the world will surely not want to mingle with him. But if we who belong to the Lord cannot show our separated position in the Lord, the world will surely tend to believe that they also are the children of God, because we are the same as they are! Therefore, the believers should all the more manifest that they are separate from the world.

2. The Spirit of the Children of God

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16). The sons of

God are those who have the Holy Spirit in their spirits, witnessing in them that they are of God. The Holy Spirit is He “whom the world cannot receive” (John 14:17). Therefore, the people of the world are not the children of God. Our being led by the Holy Spirit confirms and shows that we are the sons of God, for He will not lead those who are not the sons of God. Not only the Holy Spirit, but our spirit also, bears witness that we are the sons of God. Those who are not the children of God are afraid of God. Whenever they think of majesty and the coming judgment of God, they are afraid, because they do not have a heart that loves God. Fear is the first issue of sin, which comes from the devil. Their conscience is still filthy because they have not received the cleansing of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. That is why there is still much fear. But we who belong to the Lord and are the children of God have not received the spirit of fear, but the spirit of sonship. We are no longer afraid of God. Through the accomplishment of the cross of the Lord Jesus, God has forgiven our offenses, justified us, and made us His children. Now we have an intimate father-son relationship with God. He loves us and we love Him. How He loves us, cares for us, cherishes us, and looks after us are all manifested in the one word “Father.” How we obey Him, adore Him, and freely pour out ourselves to Him are all reflected in the word “children.” The various relationships between a father and a son in the world cannot compare to the depth and intimacy of the relationship between our spiritual Father and His sons. How dear and fitting is the expression “Abba, Father!” The people of the world do not have such a spirit. There is one thing which we need to remember: this spirit of sonship is received; it is not something we have by nature. This means that we, like the rest of the world, did not have this spirit. It is only through receiving this spirit that we are able to take God as our Father. If you remember this fact, you will understand the error in assuming that God is the Father of all the people of the world.

Galatians 4:4-6 says, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, that He might redeem those under law that we might receive the sonship. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!” Here we need to remember that God had two sending forths: (1) He sent forth His Son, the Lord Jesus, to redeem man and to accomplish the sonship. Originally under the law, man was guilty. In order to deliver us from the condemnation of the law, the Lord Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross and received the punishment of the law in our stead. He condemned sin in His flesh. Once the problem of sin was taken

care of, those who received His redemption were able to receive the sonship. Originally, they were not sons, but based on the death of the Lord Jesus, they became sons. (2) Since those who have been redeemed have become sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son (the Lord Jesus) to enter their spirit in order that they could call God, "Abba, Father" and have an intimate relationship with God. The Holy Spirit here is referred to as "the Spirit of His Son." This Son is God's unique Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the verse does not say the Spirit of Christ nor the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Spirit of His Son. This shows that this Spirit is intimately related to all the sons. Through the unique Son, man can become one of God's sons. Because they have the Spirit of the unique Son, the children of God can have the joy and love of calling God their Father. Because of the Spirit of His Son, we now enjoy the intimacy of the fellowship which the Son (the Lord Jesus) has with the Father. As the Lord is, so are we. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables us to call God "Abba, Father." Unless there is the moving of the Holy Spirit, to call God Father is to blaspheme Him, and even if we do cry "Abba, Father," there is no feeling of intimacy to it. From this, is it not too superficial to say that all the people in the world are the sons of God? Do these ones realize the significance of the phrase "the sons of God"? One must realize that the characteristic of the sons of Satan is a heart of fear and alienation. Only those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their heart and who have the Spirit of sonship are the children of God. The Bible only acknowledges these as the sons of God; to include others would be man's idea and counterfeit.

3. The Nature of the Children of God

"That you may be blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as luminaries in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15-16). The only begotten Son of God, the Lord Jesus, is without blemish. Hence, all the children of God should be like Him. Although there is a generation that is crooked and perverted outwardly, we are the children of God without blemish inwardly. Those who are children should be like their fathers; likewise, the children of God must also be the same in nature as their heavenly Father. The crooked and perverted generation does not refer to the children of God. Wherever we see God's nature, we see the children of God. The "children of God" is not only a title, a privilege, or a relationship, but a life from heaven, because "the Father...brought us forth by

the word of truth" (James 1:17-18) in order that we might "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Only those who have the life of God and the nature of God are the children of God. The children of God are born of God. As such, they possess the nature of their heavenly Father. Whoever cannot reach this standard cannot be the child of God. The life from the throne flows only through His children who are living on earth.

4. The Conduct of the Children of God

A. They Are Holy and Pure and Righteous

"Everyone who practices righteousness also has been begotten of Him" (1 John 2:29). "Everyone who has been begotten of God does not practice sin" (3:9). In the original, the phrase "does not practice sin" can be rendered "does not live in sin habitually." "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest" (v. 10). Those who live in sin habitually and do not have the power of deliverance are not born of God but belong to the devil. A holy, pure, and righteous conduct demonstrates a heavenly relationship. The life that overcomes sin and the world is a life that is born of God (5:4). On the negative side, the children of God sometimes fail and continue to sin. Yet, on the positive side, they practice righteousness and overcome the world.

B. Their Hearts Have a Deep and Intimate Love toward the Lord Jesus

"If God were your Father you would love Me" (John 8:42). Since they were born of God, they love the only begotten Son of God. Love is in the heart. The likes, dislikes, love, and hatred within one's heart reveal whether one belongs to God or to the devil. You can sometimes deceive man with your outward conduct, but you cannot deceive God or yourself with the inward condition of your heart. Those who know that they do not love God also know that God is not their Father. If you have already received the life of God, you will constantly long to love the Lord more than anything else. This is a very good test. You must also take the Lord Jesus as Lord; you must crown Him and acknowledge Him as the Master. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God" (1 John 5:1). Only those who are born of God can believe that Jesus is the Christ. He is the Christ, so He is Lord. This verse does not say to believe Him in a vain way, but to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ and to offer to Him what He deserves as the suffering and glorified Messiah. Because of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus, the children of God are brought to a realization of the preciousness of the Lord. As a result, before the Savior they willingly pour the oil upon His head and on His feet, acknowledging Him as Lord.

C. They Are Full of Love toward Others

“Everyone who loves has been begotten of God” (1 John 4:7). God is love. They who are born of God, like God, have a heart of love. A loving heart is a characteristic of a child of God. The world knows that we are the Lord’s disciples because it sees that we love one another. We are those who always make peace with others: “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). A harmonious atmosphere indicates that one’s origin is from the heavens. We are commanded to love even our enemies. “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust” (vv. 44-45). Such magnanimity and lovingkindness can only come from the heavenly regeneration which causes men to have a change in life and which makes men like God. The children of God must manifest that they are different from the world in this respect. A heart that loves one’s enemies and prays for the persecutors simply does not exist in the world. But since the heavenly Father shows no partiality and since the believers are the children of God, they must be as the Father is. This is not something manufactured but something spontaneous. The believers can be like this because God’s life is within them. The removal of hatred is the very first manifestation of the regenerated life.

From these four testimonies, we can see how holy, pure, and loving are the children of God! The argument that all the people in the world are the sons of God cannot stand under this examination. Nevertheless, the pitiful thing is that many regenerated children of God are still weak; they frequently stumble to the extent that they cannot uphold the standard of the children of God before the world. Therefore, the worldly people cannot see the difference between themselves and the children of God. This is why some venture to think that all the people in the whole world are the children of God! If the children of God would constantly manifest their position, spirit, nature, and conduct, how could the world come to such a conclusion? Now let us consider another question.

HOW TO BECOME THE CHILDREN OF GOD

Since not all who are in the world are the children of God, and since the children of God are as described above, the most important question is how can one become a child of God? In other words, what is the way to change the children of Satan into the children of God?

Before we can become sons, we must first be born. You cannot be a son without being born. The first step to become a son is by birth. Before we become the sons of God, we must be born of God. Although not all the people in the world are the sons of God, yet all the people in the world can become the sons of God. It all depends on their desire and willingness. The birth in the flesh is beyond man's own control. One's parents, relatives, and the place, time, and circumstance of birth are not up to one's choice. Yet the marvelous grace of God is that if a man decides to choose to become a son of God, he can attain it. Although he cannot regenerate himself, yet he can believe. Because of his believing, God regenerates him, and he becomes a son of God.

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). God's way is very simple. Whoever sees the danger of being a child of Satan and the calamities that are to come, and desires to become a son of God, does not need to do anything; all he needs to do is believe in the testimony of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, to trust in Him wholeheartedly, to obey Him, to accept Him as Savior by faith, to believe in the effectiveness of the salvation which He accomplished on the cross, and by faith to offer Jesus Christ up as the sinner's sin offering. God will instantly forgive his sins, justify him, put a new life in him, and cause him to become a new creature in Christ Jesus. He will immediately become a son of God. To believe in Christ Jesus is nothing more than to accept the Lord Jesus as Savior. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Now the door of grace is open wide. To be a child of God is not a matter of self-mortification, of trusting in one's own righteous deeds, nor of gradual evolution into a child of God. Rather, it is in that split second of time when one receives the Lord Jesus as Savior and trusts in His accomplished salvation that one has the authority to become the child of God. Those who are to be the children of God must have the authority; they cannot freely proclaim themselves His sons, as others who think that all those in the world are the sons of God. This is not a self-given authority, but something given by Christ at the time man receives Him as Savior. The reason Christ can give man such authority is that He died on the cross for man and has already solved all the problems of sin. Because Christ has taken away the sins of the world, those who believe in Him are forgiven of their sins and are delivered from the punishment of sin. Once the problem of sin is solved, nothing can hinder those who believe in Him from

receiving grace and truth. Once the past sins have been dealt with, the Holy Spirit of God will put God's life and nature into the hearts of those who believe in Him. Once they have the life of God within, they will instantly become the sons of God. Regeneration happens at the moment when the life of God enters into their hearts. The work of regeneration is altogether the work of God: "Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (v 13).

In John 3, our Lord spoke clearly to Nicodemus concerning the truth of regeneration. He used the cross as the foundation of regeneration, the Holy Spirit as the Mediator of regeneration, and faith as the way of regeneration. When man receives regeneration, there may not be a particular feeling, but in his daily life spontaneously there will be a change in his conduct and a renewing of his mind. This is the work of God, not the ability of man. Those who do not have the birth of God from above will continue to be earthly as the children of the devil.

The word in John 20:17 puts our relationship with God as the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ: "My Father and your Father." God becomes our Father in the Lord Jesus; those who are not in the Lord Jesus by faith can never be the children of God. "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:12). If you do not accept the only begotten Son of God, you cannot become the child of God. All the children are accepted by God in His only begotten Son. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will become a child of God in Him. We have received the sonship through Him (Eph. 1:5). Outside of Christ, God is not man's Father, but man's Judge. In Christ, God is man's Father, because on the cross Christ has already been judged by God on behalf of those who are in Him. This is the gospel of grace, the way by which all men are saved.

The salvation of the Lord Jesus is now accomplished. Whoever is willing to believe in His name, that is, whoever is willing to accept Him, will become a child of God; those who are not willing are "the tares [which] are the sons of the evil one;...[which at] the consummation of the age...are collected and burned up with fire" (Matt. 13:38-40). Eternal life or eternal death fully depends on whether or not man will accept God's salvation! There is only one condition for becoming the sons of God, and that is to believe, to receive the Lord Jesus as Savior. Only by trusting in the Lord Jesus on the cross can one become a son of God. It is not of works, not of conduct, not of oneself, but of faith.

After becoming a son of God, the regenerated life of God within a believer will cause him to grow in grace daily. In this way, his manner of life will become more like God's. He will bear more of the likeness of God's children. He will manifest the standard of God's children in all things. Physically, a child cannot become full-grown overnight; likewise, the children of God cannot arrive at the full stature of Christ immediately after their regeneration. Instead, growth comes gradually. We who have received grace and have become the children of God should be "perfect as [our] heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). God requires that His children be perfect even as He is perfect. It will be difficult for people to believe us if we say that we are the children of God the Father and yet are not like Him. We will lose our testimony. Since God the Father treats good and evil men alike, how can we who are His children hate our enemies and not forgive others their sins? If we are born of Him and partake of His nature, we will surely have His compassion. If we are God's children, yet do not love the Lord Jesus whom He loves, we are wayward sons, and do not sympathize with the Father's heart. And how can we be His children, if we do not receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit step by step every day?

If we claim to have this heavenly relationship, we must bear the heavenly taste in all things. If we are the children of God and are born from above, everything about us must differ greatly from those who have not been born again. If we claim that we are heavenly, yet we are not much different from the worldly people, we are indeed degrading the Bible's teachings. No matter what kind of life or environment they are in, the children of God must bear the taste of the heavenly family. This is because a heavenly life cannot be without a heavenly manifestation. It is most pitiful that the children of God have now largely lost their characteristics and have compromised with the world in all things. The reason for a lack in power is that the boundary between the saints and the world has become unclear.

Therefore, "as children of obedience, do not be fashioned according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but according to the Holy One who called you, you yourselves also be holy in all your manner of life....And if you call as Father the One who without respect of persons judges according to each one's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (1 Pet. 1:14-15, 17).

Since we have such a Father, we must not only manifest the nature of our heavenly Father in our living, but we must also live in this world as those who have a Father, not anxious as orphans. Concerning our clothing, food, and other

necessities, we must fully trust in the Lord, because the Father has a tender loving care toward us. The Lord Jesus comforts us with the words, “your Father knows” (Matt. 6:8). How wonderful it is to be the children of God!

THE FUTURE OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is” (1 John 3:2). Oh how great is this revelation! Although the future has not yet been manifested, nevertheless, do not the two words “like Him” include everything? Should this not cause our hearts to rejoice? Although there is a great deal of opposition in the world today, yet all will be well when the Lord comes back. Although we were very lowly and mean, the Lord wants us to be like Him. What a glory! This is the original intention of the Lord Jesus. He came down to the world to die so that He could lead “many sons into glory” (Heb. 2:10).

“For the anxious watching of the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God....into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:19, 21). Because the creation was subjected to vanity and put under the bondage of corruption, it now groans and travails in pain. But once the children of God receive the glory and the millennium appears, the time of “the restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21) will be here.

This glory, however, is in the future. At the present time, the children of God, along with God’s only begotten Son, still suffer the rejection of man. The cross is our portion for today; the crown is for tomorrow. Although the present way is narrow, when the millennium begins, “then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43). Reigning with the Lord in the millennium depends on suffering with Him today. Nevertheless, when we think of the future of those who are not the children of God, we have to take warning from them. Ours is the glory; theirs is eternal perdition in the lake of fire, the everlasting fire of hell, which is “prepared for the devil and his angels” (25:41). Eternal punishment is what the “children of wrath” deserve. Because of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus, we have been saved fully. Hallelujah!

A CONCLUDING WORD

Now we have seen the Bible’s opinion regarding the concept that all in the world are the sons of God. The Bible altogether denies this untrue concept. Dear reader, do not be deceived. Do not think that because all men are the sons of

God, there is no need for regeneration, that it is enough just to improve oneself. You need to know: if God demands man to improve, what will happen to those who have so deeply fallen into sin that they are beyond any hope of improvement? To those people, this kind of “gospel” is indeed not much of a gospel!

At the present time, God’s door of grace is open wide. Whosoever is willing to enter will be saved. God will accept all sinners because of the Lord Jesus. Whosoever believes and trusts in the Lord Jesus can become a child of God.

Take heed! Which side are you actually on—on God’s side or on the devil’s side? Are you God’s children or the devil’s children? Is it salvation or perdition, eternal life or eternal death for you? There is no neutral ground between them. Which side are you on?

If you have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior and have not become a child of God through Him, you are still of Adam and of the devil. Adam sinned, begetting children in his own sinful image (Gen. 5:1-3). You are the direct descendant of Adam; apart from regeneration, there is no other way for you to become a child of God.

Do not think that because you are better than others that you are not a child of the devil. You must know that God has only one kind of children: those who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus through believing in Him. Only they are the children of God. God does not care for anyone else. Please do not wait until it is too late to believe in Him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A PREFACE TO

MODERN SCIENCE AND

THE LONG DAY IN JOSHUA

In this age of modern science, it seems that everything must be questioned before it can be believed. Of course, this is very meaningless because the condition for obtaining truth is not skepticism, but impartiality and the lack of prejudice. Skepticism is a form of prejudice. Hence, skepticism does not lead men to the way of truth.

Today, modernistic Christians think that one should not accept the biblical record blindly, but should first question it. This theory falls into the same trap. Before a person becomes a Christian, he has, of course, the right to choose. But after he

has believed in Christ, his position is such that it no longer allows him to doubt the Bible which Christ has uplifted.

Dr. Rimmer is a modern-day renowned American scientist. His position as the president of Research Science Bureau speaks for his knowledge in science. He is also a Christian. To him the so-called "outmoded" Christian beliefs are not contradictory to science. He often lectures in universities and has opened the eyes of countless young people. He has shed much new light on the problems of the Bible. This message on the long day of Joshua is one of his lectures.

Realizing that this message will render help to those who are uncertain and who have been shaken by the words of the modernists, I have asked Mr. Chow to translate it into Chinese. Our belief does not need scientific proof. But this may serve to remind those who believe blindly in their own version of science.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IS THE HIGHER CRITICISM OF MODERN THEOLOGY BELIEVABLE?

The higher criticism is formulated by those who do not believe in the revelation of God. Since its founders hold this view, can a Christian follow these teachings?

Christianity has only one book that reveals the Christian concept concerning God. This book is the Bible. The Bible is God's revelation. Saying that the Bible is fabricated and not the Word of God is equivalent to saying that God has never revealed Himself. If God has not revealed Himself, how can we know that there is a God and know the way to approach Him? When we were sinners, how did we know that believing in the Lord Jesus' vicarious death on the cross for us would result in our salvation? The Bible is God's revelation. When the higher critics say that the Bible is unreliable and deny the authenticity of its record, they deny the fact that God has revealed Himself to man. But if God has not revealed Himself, how can the higher critics know God and serve Him?

The higher critics try to determine how much of the Bible is divinely inspired and how much is not. But they cannot come to a conclusive determination on the proportion of divine inspiration in the Bible. There are almost as many different conclusions about the Bible as there are critics! If the critics themselves cannot arrive at a common belief and judgment, how can they ask others to believe what they believe?

They do not believe that the Bible is inerrant. They set up their own standard of measurement and consider that standard to be inerrant! The inerrancy of the

Bible is changed to the inerrancy of their own standard. They say that certain passages are not authentic based on their own philosophy and standard of measurement. This clearly puts their philosophy and standard of measurement as the unique and inerrant guide. Are their philosophies reliable? Are their standards of measurement inerrant? Are Christ and the testimony of the Bible more reliable, or are human philosophies more reliable?

The critics think that because they live in the twentieth century they know more than the Jewish historians who lived a few thousand years ago! The critics belong to the twentieth century, yet they think that they know the thoughts of men who lived a few thousand years ago and that they know the way God revealed Himself to these ancient men! They also think that the ancient writers have the same mentality as the critics, and that language itself has never changed! Is it true that ancient men were the same in their mentality? Is it true that there has never been a change in language?

A professor at Trinity College in Foochow once said, "Someone conducted an examination of Napoleon according to the method of the higher critics, and they arrived at the conclusion that Napoleon never existed!" The minds of these critics are diametrically opposed to the declarations of the Lord Jesus. In order to build up their philosophy, these critics must first attack the Lord Jesus. There really are no facts to substantiate their theories; there are only suppositions! All the evidences in archeology stand as a testimony against their philosophy. Many of their suppositions have been proven to be false. For example, they say that written language was not widely used in Moses' time, but this has been proven to be false.

Modern theologians try to remove the "obstacles" in the Bible that prevent men from believing according to their intellect. In so doing, they leave men without a Bible to believe in! If one portion of the Bible can be removed, all portions of the Bible can be removed. They reject the record of creation as recorded by Moses because the story of creation contradicts the theory of evolution. They reject the record of Jonah in the belly of the fish because it is too supernatural. They reject the record of the birth of the Lord Jesus through a virgin because it is too mysterious and hard to believe. As a result they conclude that He was merely the son of Joseph. Since resurrection is impossible, according to man, they have no other recourse but to keep Christ buried in the grave forever! If these "obstacles" are removed, will the Bible still be the Bible? But when the "obstacles" are removed this way, they create more obstacles. The obstacles which they create,

that is, the problems they cannot solve, are often more numerous than the things they have tried to remove! Strictly speaking, modern theology is an offspring of evolution. It has never been proven and never can be proven. Darwinism is its father.

The higher critics cannot help men to be saved, and they cannot help men to advance spiritually. "By their fruits you will recognize them" (Matt. 7:20). Other than being an enemy of God and blaspheming the God who authored the Bible, what achievements have the higher critics made in the world and the church? They do not lead people to Christ. On the contrary, they corrupt men's faith. This is the result of the work of the higher critics.

Some men with equal or higher intelligence than these critics have pointed out the unreliability of their arguments. Modern scholarship has gradually overturned the authority of higher criticism. Many of the higher critics are unable to answer the challenges of books written by their opponents. A recently published book *Is Higher Criticism Reasonable?* was written by Dr. Wilson who came to China two years ago (1923). The higher critics have not been able to answer the challenges made in his book. The knowledge of one critic or the knowledge of all the critics combined are not enough to overturn the authenticity of the Bible! Dr. Wilson said, "We now acknowledge that the authenticity of the Old Testament cannot be overturned by any human knowledge that has been thus far acquired."

The higher critics are only a disguised form of the devil who said, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1) All the facts of archeology disprove the theories of these critics. Dr. A. H. Sayce, a famous archaeologist once said,

Archaeological finds based on scientific methods have removed the suppositions and judgments of the dogmatic critics. Without exaggeration, the discoveries of the archaeologists during the last thirty years have, with no exception, overturned the most trusted judgments of the literary critics, and they have also confirmed the reliability of our record, the Bible. The early use of the written language in the Near East for literature, the high standard of education at the time of Abraham and Moses, and the fine and detailed record of the Bible, have all been proven.

If the Bible is a book fabricated by men, all the mistakes made by the copiers of the manuscripts should have been eliminated. There is no need to wait for the critics to find them out. If the Bible is not inspired by God, on what can we base

our faith? Without the Bible as the basis of our faith, there is no ground to believe in the divine teaching as revealed in the Bible. The higher critics are purely materialistic because they have assigned all supernatural things to the category of the unbelievable.

The history of the higher critics proves that they are the very ones that the Lord Jesus referred to in one of His stories: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). The critics try to prove their own theories by quoting the Pentateuch. Then they begin to question the word of the prophets, suspecting that Isaiah was not written by one man, that Daniel was not written by Daniel, and that the story of Jonah is just an allegory. Finally, they doubt the words of the Gospels. They have not heard the words of Moses and the prophets, and they are not persuaded by Christ who rose from the dead!

The critics say that they consider the writers of the Bible to be great human philosophers. Actually, they consider the writers to be the greatest liars and hypocrites! All the writers of the Bible have claimed that they were divinely inspired. If they were not inspired, as the critics claim, would not their lofty moral and spiritual standards condemn them to the deepest hell? Therefore, the Bible must either be God's Word or the devil's word. Does the devil disguise himself as an angel of light and teach others to worship God, hate the devil, know about regeneration, justification, and sanctification? Does the devil preach these words?

The critics think that they are Christians and God's servants. Yet according to their philosophy, there is no revelation and no gospel. Does this not make the Bible a strange fairy tale? Is this what a Christian and a servant of God preaches?

Since this is a present condition, we should "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Concerning those who are in doubt, we should "have mercy" on them (Jude 23), and should correct them in meekness, "if perhaps God may give them repentance unto the full knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25). Concerning unbelieving preachers, the Scripture has a clear teaching concerning how to deal with them: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice!" (2 John 10). The danger facing the church today is that the truth is sacrificed in the effort to unite the different denominations. We believe in the fundamental truths and have no fellowship with those who believe in modern

theology and higher criticism. The time has come for the Levites to be separated from the other twelve tribes. The time has come for preachers in China and Christians to rise up for God and declare their faith.

It hurts my heart the most to see that so many leaders in the church are unclear about their faith. They think that modern theology and traditional theology are the same. They do not realize that they either belong to the modern camp or the traditional camp and that there is no middle ground between the two camps. It is, of course, bad to divide the church into denominations, but it is better for the denominations to remain than to sacrifice the truth for ecumenicity! The Lord Jesus is now being rejected by the ones who call themselves Christians and servants of God. Who is willing to stand with the Lord Jesus and be rejected? We would rather write books that no one reads than to oppose God's truth in an attempt to please the religious, social mentality. We would rather publish magazines that no one reads than to publish magazines that are an offense in God's eyes, which have thousands of subscribers. We would rather speak sermons that no one hears than to whitewash sinners, only to see them becoming sons of hell! "Whoever...does not doubt in his heart, but believes" (Mark 11:23). "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29).

CHAPTER NINE

BIBLE STUDIES FOR BEGINNERS

(TWENTY-SIX LESSONS)

Lesson 1	Excuses for Not Receiving Christ
Lesson 2	The Truth of Christ's Salvation
Lesson 3	God's Messages
Lesson 4	A Great Comparison
Lesson 5	What to Say to Lost Ones
Lesson 6	What Shall I Do to Be Saved?
Lesson 7	The Precious Blood of Christ
Lesson 8	The Problem of Sin
Lesson 9	Freedom
Lesson 10	The Love of God
Lesson 11	The Assurance of Salvation
Lesson 12	The Two Natures

Lesson 13	The Difference between Law and Grace
Lesson 14	Faith and Work
Lesson 15	Salvation and Reward
Lesson 16	Justification
Lesson 17	Sanctification
Lesson 18	The Church
Lesson 19	Judgment
Lesson 20	The Second Coming of Christ
Lesson 21	Preparing for the Work
Lesson 22	Offering
Lesson 23	The Power of the Holy Spirit
Lesson 24	The Devil
Lesson 25	Why Prayers Are Not Answered by God
Lesson 26	Salvation

PREFACE

This book is edited for believers who love the holy Word. It is suitable for individual or group Bible study. Any brother or sister who loves the Lord, wants to know the crucial and basic truths in the Bible, and wants to receive spiritual help can understand this book's teachings by looking up the verses in the order listed in each lesson. If this book is used for Bible study meetings, one person with the gift of the Holy Spirit and who understands the teachings in this book should be in charge, according to the Lord's leading. He must spend time striving in prayer so that the Holy Spirit would open the minds of the readers to understand the teachings.

The purpose of this book is not to receive man's opinion but to receive God's teaching. Therefore, other than the titles and outlines, very few words of man are added. When there are some words, they are only conclusions which issue from the reading of the related Bible verses. Every title is followed by many verses which prove or explain the title and outline. Most importantly, the readers must look up and read each verse and pray to the Lord to reveal the true meaning of the verses. Only then will they be able to understand them.

The teachings in this book progress from simple to profound. At the beginning, verses are used to answer the excuses for not receiving Christ as one's Savior. Then gradually, the lessons go deeper until Lesson 26, which explains the

beginning and end of full salvation. The first few lessons deal with the general way to be saved. Being saved is the starting point of the Christian life. Therefore, if one is not clear about this foundation, it is hard to expect him to go much further.

This book emphasizes both spiritual life and spiritual knowledge because a perfected Christian should not lack either of these. Even a study for knowledge should be related very much to spiritual life. Therefore, we hope the readers will pay close attention to this emphasis on both.

The first part of this book, as mentioned previously, mainly concerns the preaching of salvation. Therefore, it is quite suitable to read this part with unbelievers. It is not necessary to argue with them about difficult questions in the Bible. Simply follow the lesson outline and read each verse listed in the lesson to them, or let them find and read the verses for themselves. Let the Word of God do its own work. God has already delighted in using this method to save many sinners on various occasions. God may do this again on many other occasions. Therefore, you need to be faithful.

This book is also very suitable for group Bible study. If a joint Bible study is held once a week, twenty-six lessons can extend for half a year. For a one month conference, excluding the Lord's Days, there are enough lessons for each day. If the conference lasts only two weeks, then two lessons each day may be studied. This book is flexible and can be divided according to the length of time available. The original writing of this book (except Lessons 11 and 18 which the Lord was pleased to have me write) came from famous books written by servants who were greatly used by the Lord in Europe and America. Some were translated directly from original texts, and some were edited by me, containing one-third to one-half of the original text. My helpers in translation include: Faithful Luk, Wai-San Wang, Peter Chang, and Wu-Chou Hsu. May the Lord bless their work that it may not be in vain.

I hope and desire that many brothers and sisters, who love the Lord, will set up group Bible studies and, for the sake of the Lord, use this book as lesson notes to bring many sinners to the Lord and build up the saints to grow in life. My work on editing this book is finished. I do not know how much more work I can do for the Lord on this earth. But I long for that glorious day to come quickly so that the world may see the King of Peace reign. I know I am useless, but I commit this little book into the hand of the loving Lord. If He will bless and cause people to be

saved and built up, then all the glory goes to Him. I now humbly pray before the Lord that He may work in the heart of every reader.

Watchman Nee

January 11, 1927

At night in Nanking, China

LESSON ONE

EXCUSES FOR NOT RECEIVING CHRIST

- I. Not being able to understand:
 - A. "But a soulless man does not receive" (1 Cor. 2:14)
 - B. "Perishing...blinded the thoughts" (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
 - C. "To do His will" (John 7:17)
 - D. First believe then understand (Rom. 3:11; Prov. 3:5; Hosea 6:3; Psa. 25:14)
- II. Fear of not being able to stand firm unto the end:
 - A. "I will help you" (Isa. 41:10, 13)
 - B. "Able to guard you" (Jude 24)
 - C. "By no means perish" (John 10:28)
 - D. "Guarded by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5)
 - E. See also Heb. 13:5; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 1:6
- III. The conduct of many believers is very corrupt:
 - A. "Will give an account concerning himself to God" (Rom. 14:10, 12)
 - B. "Do not judge" (Matt. 7:1-2)
 - C. "Who are you"? (James 4:12)
 - D. "For you who judge practice the same things" (Rom. 2:1)
- IV. Hindered by business affairs:
 - A. "They are requiring your soul from you" (Luke 12:20-21)
 - B. "The love of money" (1 Tim. 6:9-10)
 - C. "Forfeit his soul-life" (Mark 8:36)
 - D. "Treasures on the earth" (Matt. 6:19; Eccl. 5:10; Prov. 22:1; 16:8)
- V. Hindered by pleasures:
 - A. "Reap corruption" (Gal. 6:7-8)
 - B. "Render an account" (Matt. 12:36)
 - C. "Passing away" (1 John 2:15-17)
 - D. "Enmity with God" (James 4:4)
- VI. The foolishness of the unbeliever:

- A. "The fool" (Psa. 53:1)
 - B. "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - C. "Men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
 - D. "In Him we live" (Acts 17:28)
- VII. The end of the man who rejects God:
- A. "But the wrath of God abides upon him" (John 3:36)
 - B. "We are to give our account" (Heb. 4:13)
 - C. "Be destroyed...without remedy" (Prov. 29:1)
 - D. "How much...worse punishment" (Heb. 10:28-29)

LESSON TWO

THE TRUTH OF CHRIST'S SALVATION

- I. The state of man without Christ:
 - A. "Lost" (Luke 19:10)
 - B. "Perish" (John 3:16)
 - C. "Condemned already" (John 3:18)
 - D. "Their works were evil" (John 3:19)
 - E. "Hates the light" (John 3:20)
 - F. "The wrath of God" (John 3:36)
 - G. "Your father the devil" (John 8:44)
 - H. "From within...proceed evil" (Mark 7:21-23)
- II. The death of Christ is needed to save man:
 - A. "My blood...poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:27-28)
 - B. "To give His life as a ransom" (Matt. 20:28)
 - C. "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 15)
 - D. "Lifted up" (John 3:14-15). Please read John 12:24, 32, 33.
- III. The perfect redemption of Christ:
 - A. "It is finished!" (John 19:30)
 - B. "One sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:12)
 - C. "Bore up our sins in His body" (1 Pet. 2:24)
- IV. The condition to be saved by Christ:
 - A. "Your faith" (Luke 7:50)
 - B. "Your faith" (Luke 8:48)
 - C. "Believes" (Mark 9:23)

- D. "Every one who believes" (John 3:16)
 - E. "Believes...disobeys" (John 3:36)
 - F. "Believes" (John 5:24)
- V. The perfectness of the promises of Christ:
 - A. "By no means perish forever" (John 10:28)
 - B. "Able to guard" (2 Tim. 1:12)
 - C. "Complete it" (Phil. 1:6)
- VI. The perfect work of Christ's intercession:
 - A. "Holy Father, keep" (John 17:11)
 - B. "To save to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25)
 - C. "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate" (1 John 2:1)
- VII. Man receives the nature of God through regeneration:
 - A. "Begotten of God" (John 1:12-13)
 - B. "Christ our life" (Col. 3:4)
 - C. "Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20)
 - D. "I live, you also shall live" (John 14:19)

LESSON THREE

GOD'S MESSAGES

- I. You are a sinner:
 - A. "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46)
 - B. "There is none who does good" (Psa. 14:1)
 - C. "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23)
- II. Your nature is corrupt:
 - A. "In sin...conceive" (Psa. 51:5)
 - B. "The heart is deceitful" (Jer. 17:9)
 - C. "In me...nothing good dwells" (Rom. 7:18)
 - D. "Enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7)
- III. God loves you:
 - A. "God so loved the world that..." (John 3:16)
 - B. "While we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:8)
 - C. "The love of God was manifested among us" (1 John 4:9)
 - D. "He loved us..." (1 John 4:10)
- IV. Christ died for your sins:
 - A. "Takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)
 - B. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3)

- C. "Bore up our sins" (1 Pet. 2:24)
- V. You who believe in Christ shall be saved:
 - A. "Has eternal life" (John 3:36)
 - B. "Has eternal life" (John 6:47)
 - C. "Everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13:39)
 - D. "Shall be saved" (Acts 16:31)
- VI. Christ gives you great promises:
 - A. "Receive you to Myself" (John 14:3)
 - B. "He may be with you forever" (John 14:16)
 - C. "Ask and you shall receive" (John 16:24)
 - D. "Neither by any means shall I abandon you" (Heb. 13:5)
 - E. "Confess his name" (Rev. 3:5)
- VII. Unbelievers shall be condemned:
 - A. "Shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16)
 - B. "Condemned already" (John 3:18)
 - C. "Die in your sins" (John 8:24)
 - D. "Wrath and fury. Tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:8-9)
 - E. "Their part will be in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8)

LESSON FOUR

A GREAT COMPARISON

(Acts 28:24)

- I. Some were persuaded (Acts 28:24a)
 - A. Those who believe are born again:
 - 1. "Regenerated" (1 Pet. 1:23)
 - 2. "Begotten...of God" (John 1:13)
 - B. Those who believe have redemption:
 - 1. "Redeemed us out" (Gal. 3:13)
 - 2. "We have redemption" (Eph. 1:7)
 - C. Those who believe have become near to God:
 - 1. "Become near" (Eph. 2:13)
 - 2. "Before Him" (Eph. 1:4)
 - D. Those who believe are made sons of God:
 - 1. "Sons of God" (Gal. 3:26)
 - 2. "Children of God" (1 John 3:2)

- E. Those who believe have the love of God:
 - 1. "God commends His own love to us" (Rom. 5:8)
 - 2. "He loved us" (1 John 4:10)
- F. Those who believe wait for Christ and glory:
 - 1. "Christ...will appear...to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb. 9:28)
 - 2. "You will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4)
- G. Those who believe are guaranteed to go to heaven:
 - 1. "An inheritance...kept in the heavens" (1 Pet. 1:4)
 - 2. "Into His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18)
- H. Those who believe have passed out of death into life:
 - 1. "Has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24)
- II. Some did not believe (Acts 28:24b)
 - A. Those who do not believe are born in sin:
 - 1. "Shapen in iniquity" (Psa. 51:5)
 - 2. "Born of the flesh" (John 3:6)
 - B. Those who do not believe are cursed:
 - 1. "Under a curse" (Gal. 3:10)
 - 2. "Fall under the judgment of God" (Rom. 3:19)
 - C. Those who do not believe are far from God:
 - 1. "Far off" (Eph. 2:12-13)
 - 2. "Separation between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2)
 - D. Those who do not believe are the children of Satan:
 - 1. "Of your father the devil" (John 8:44)
 - 2. "Children of the devil" (1 John 3:10)
 - E. Those who do not believe have the wrath of God:
 - 1. "Wrath of God abides upon him" (John 3:36)
 - 2. "The coming wrath" (Matt. 3:7)
 - F. Those who do not believe wait for death and judgment:
 - 1. "Die once, and after this comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27)
 - 2. "In the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36)
 - G. Those who do not believe are guaranteed to go to the lake of fire:
 - 1. "Their part will be in the lake which burns with fire" (Rev. 21:8)
 - 2. "Cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:41-42)

- H. Those who do not believe have "been condemned already" (John 3:18).

LESSON FIVE

WHAT TO SAY TO LOST ONES

- I. All have sinned:
 - A. "There is none righteous" (Rom. 3:10, 23)
 - B. "Stumbles in one point" (James 2:10)
 - C. "Like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6)
 - D. "Incurable" (Jer. 17:9)
 - E. See also Gal. 3:10; Ezek. 7:23; Rom. 3:9-20; Isa. 1:6; John 15:22
- II. The punishment for sin:
 - A. "Death" (Rom. 6:23)
 - B. "It shall die" (Ezek. 18:4)
 - C. "Eternal fire" and "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:41, 46)
 - D. "Being in torment" (Luke 16:23)
 - E. See also Psa. 9:17; 11:6; Rev. 20:15; 21:8; 14:11
- III. Christ died for our sins:
 - A. "Bore up our sins" (1 Pet. 2:24)
 - B. "Suffered once for sins" (1 Pet. 3:18)
 - C. "Died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6)
 - D. "Propitiation" (1 John 4:10; Rom. 5:8; Isa. 53:5; Gal. 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 1:3)
- IV. Salvation is prepared for all men:
 - A. "Every one" (John 3:16)
 - B. "That which is lost" (Luke 19:10)
 - C. "Not intending that any perish" (2 Pet. 3:9)
 - D. "Him who comes to Me" (John 6:37; 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:4; Rev. 22:17; Isa. 1:18; Mark 2:17)
- V. Saved through faith:
 - A. "Believes" (John 3:16)
 - B. "Received...believe" (John 1:12)
 - C. "Believes" (John 3:18)
 - D. "Believes" (Acts 13:39)
 - E. See also John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31; Acts 10:43
- VI. There is only one way to be saved—by grace:

- A. "For neither is there another name under heaven given" (Acts 4:12)
 - B. "Not out of works in righteousness" (Titus 3:5)
 - C. "For the grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, has appeared" (Titus 2:11)
 - D. "The gift of God" (Eph. 2:5, 8)
 - E. See also Rom. 4:4-5; 11:6; Gal. 2:21; 2 Tim. 1:9
- VII. Confessing Christ before men is joyous:
- A. "Saved" (Rom. 10:9-10)
 - B. "I also will confess in him before My Father" (Matt. 10:32)
 - C. "Sing unto the Lord" (Psa. 96:2)

LESSON SIX

WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE SAVED?

The position of man and his end before God depends upon whether he receives or rejects the works which His Son, Jesus Christ, accomplished on the cross. If he lives in unbelief until his death, he is hopeless and eternal condemnation is guaranteed. There is no need to ask if he will perish when he dies. He will certainly perish. If a man has not received the blood shed by God's Son, Jesus Christ, for the covering of his sins, he is "condemned already" (John 3:18).

- I. An unbeliever is under the wrath of God:
 - A. "The wrath of God abides upon him" (John 3:36)
 - B. "Having no hope" (Eph. 2:12)
 - C. "Blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers" (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
 - D. "Will die in your sins" (John 8:24)
 - E. "Shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16)
 - F. "In flaming fire...vengeance" (2 Thes. 1:7-8)
 - G. "Lake which burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8)
- II. Saved by believing in the heart:

Believing merely in a historical Christ is neither having the faith which saves by believing in the heart, nor the receiving of Christ, the believing of the testimony that God gave concerning His Son.

 - A. "Believed...the testimony which God has testified" (1 John 5:10-12)
 - B. "Believe in your heart" (Rom. 10:9-11)
 - C. "Believed God" according to His Word (Rom. 4:3, 20-21)
- III. What to believe:
 - A. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3)

- B. "Buried" (1 Cor. 15:4)
 - C. "Raised" (1 Cor. 15:4)
 - D. "Was delivered for our offenses" (Rom. 4:25)
 - E. "Was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25)
 - F. "Bore up our sins" (1 Pet. 2:24)
 - G. "The iniquity of us all...on Him" (Isa. 53:6)
 - H. "Made sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - I. "Having become a curse" (Gal. 3:13)
 - J. "Believes...has eternal life" (John 3:36)
 - K. "Believes...has" (John 5:24)
 - L. "Believes...justified" (Acts 13:39)
- IV. Salvation is absolutely free:
- Salvation is not by man's ways, nor by self-discipline, self-effort, or self-strength.
- A. "Without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1)
 - B. "I give to them eternal life" (John 10:28)
 - C. "The gift of God" (Rom. 6:23)
 - D. "Believe" (1 John 5:13)

LESSON SEVEN

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST

"Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). The only passport to salvation is the blood of the Lamb of God. Only this blood can protect man from the wrath which is to come. In God's Word, the "blood" is mentioned over four hundred times. From this we can see that the blood is important. Whosoever receives the blood of Jesus Christ for the covering of sins is undoubtedly saved already. This salvation is absolutely complete and eternal. The true knowledge of the value of the blood of the Lord is most effective in keeping man away from sin.

- I. The blood of Christ is the price of the believer's redemption:
 - A. "Obtained through His own blood" (Acts 20:28)
 - B. "Have redemption through His blood" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14)
 - C. "With precious blood...the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19)
 - D. "Have purchased...by Your blood" (Rev. 5:9)
- II. The blood of Christ is the foundation of the believer's forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is instantaneous and complete:

- A. "Through His blood" (Eph. 1:7)
 - B. "Redemption through His blood" (Col. 1:14 [KJV])
 - C. "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22)
 - D. "All our offenses" (Col. 2:13)
- III. The blood of Christ is the foundation of the believer's justification (Rom. 5:8-9):
 - A. The blood is the base (Rom. 5:9)
 - B. To believe is the way (Rom. 3:28)
 - C. The resurrection of Christ is the proof (Rom. 4:25)

Justification, redemption, forgiveness are all gifts in this age.
- IV. The blood of Christ is the foundation of the believer's peace:
We cannot reconcile ourselves to God. Peace has been made; we only need to receive it.
 - A. "Having made peace through the blood" (Col. 1:20)
 - B. "Have peace" (Rom. 5:1)
- V. The blood of Christ is the foundation of the believer's cleansing:
 - A. "Cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7)
 - B. "Released" (Rev. 1:5)
- VI. The blood of Christ is the way for believers to come to God:
 - A. "Become near" (Eph. 2:13)
 - B. "Entering the Holy of Holies" (Heb. 10:19)
- VII. The blood of Christ is the means for the fellowship of the believers: (1 Cor. 10:16-17)

LESSON EIGHT

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

- I. What is sin?
Sin is—A transgression, an offense against God, a serious shortcoming, a violation—Webster's Dictionary.
 - A. "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4)
 - B. "Not out of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23)
- II. Who is the originator of sin?
A. "The anointed cherub" (Ezek. 28:14-16)
- III. When was sin committed?
"From the beginning" (1 John 3:8)
- IV. Are all men sinners?

- A. "All under sin" (Rom. 3:9)
 - B. "All have turned aside" (Rom. 3:12)
 - C. "All...fall under the judgment of God" (Rom. 3:19)
 - D. "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23)
- V. What are the results of sin?
 - A. "Sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4)
 - B. "Destroyeth much good" (Eccl. 9:18)
 - C. "Sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15)
 - D. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23)
- VI. The sin of the unbelievers:
 - A. "Will render an account...in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36)
 - B. "Thou...canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13)
 - C. "After this comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27)
 - D. "Die in your sins" (John 8:24)
 - E. "Sins...follow after" (1 Tim. 5:24)
 - F. "Him to whom we are to give our account" (Heb. 4:13)
- VII. The sins of the believers:
 - A. Where were they?
 - 1. "The iniquity of us all...on Him" (Isa. 53:6)
 - 2. "He made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - 3. "Bore up our sins in His body" (1 Pet. 2:24)
 - 4. "Having made purification of sins" (Heb. 1:3)
 - B. Where are they now?
 - 1. "Wipes away...will not remember" (Isa. 43:25)
 - 2. "I have wiped away...your transgressions" (Isa. 44:22)
 - 3. "As far as the east is from the west...removed" (Psa. 103:12)
 - 4. "Cast behind Your back all my sins" (Isa. 38:17)
 - 5. "Cast...into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19)
 - 6. "He...having forgiven us all our offenses" (Col. 2:13)
 - 7. "By no means remember anymore" (Heb. 10:17)

LESSON NINE

FREEDOM

Unbelievers have two errors: They think that (1) Christians are bound, and (2) unbelievers are free. But God says that unbelievers are under bondage and that believers are free!

- I. The bondage of the unbelievers:
 - A. By sin
 - 1. "A slave of sin" (John 8:34)
 - 2. "Sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14)
 - B. By self
 - 1. "A captive to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23)
 - 2. "Doing the desires of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3)
 - C. By Satan
 - 1. "The snare of the devil" (2 Tim. 2:26)
 - 2. "The desires of your father" (John 8:44)
- II. The freedom of the believers:
 - A. "Free indeed" (John 8:36)
 - 1. "Has set us free" (Gal. 5:1)
 - B. Concerning the condemnation in this age (Rom. 8:1):
 - 1. "Is not condemned" (John 3:18)
 - C. Concerning the judgment in the future:
 - 1. "Does not come into judgment" (John 5:24)
 - 2. "Delivers us from the wrath which is coming" (1 Thes. 1:10)
 - 3. "Redeemed us out of the curse" (Gal. 3:13)
 - D. Concerning the bondage of sin:
 - 1. "Sin will not lord it over you" (Rom. 6:14)
 - 2. "Having been freed from sin" (Rom. 6:18, 22)
 - 3. "Freed me...from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2)
 - E. Concerning the law:
 - 1. "The end of the law" (Rom. 10:4)
 - 2. "Have died to law" (Gal. 2:19)
 - 3. "Redeem those under law" (Gal. 4:5)
 - 4. "Discharged from the law" (Rom. 7:6)
 - 5. "Not under the law" (Rom. 6:14)
 - F. Concerning fear:
 - 1. To release from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15; 2 Tim. 1:7)
 - 2. Completely no fear (Rom. 8:15; 1 John 4:18)
 - G. Concerning anxiety:
 - 1. "All your anxiety" (1 Pet. 5:7)
 - 2. "In nothing be anxious" (Phil. 4:6)

3. "Do not be anxious" (Matt. 6:25)

LESSON TEN

THE LOVE OF GOD

(Romans 5:8)

The love of God not only cuts off and purges the root and stem of sins in the hearts of evil men, it also changes sinners from being cursed to being blessed, from being morally corrupted to being capable of every good deed, from being servants of Satan to being messengers of God, from being people of darkness to being children of light, and from being those who indulge in their lusts to being servants who obey Christ.

- I. How much does God love?
 - A. "As You have loved Me" (John 17:23)
 - B. Breadth—"every one who" (John 3:15-16)
 - C. Length—"eternal" (Jer. 31:3)
 - D. Depth—"for me" (Gal. 2:20)
 - E. Height—"in the heavenlies" (Eph. 2:4, 6)
- II. Whom does God love?
 - A. "The world" (John 3:16)
 - B. "We were dead in offenses" (Eph. 2:4-5)
 - C. "Me" (Gal. 2:20)
- III. How does God love?
 - A. "Freely" (Hosea 14:4)
 - B. As the Father (John 16:27)
 - C. "To the uttermost" (John 13:1)
- IV. What did God's love do for us?
 - A. "A propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10)
 - B. "Has released us from our sins" (Rev. 1:5)
 - C. "Saved us" (Titus 3:4-5)
 - D. "Would not perish, but would have eternal life" (John 3:16)
 - E. "Raised...seated us together" (Eph. 2:4-6)
 - F. "Eternal comfort and good hope" (2 Thes. 2:16)
- V. What will God's love do for us?
 - A. "Not having spot" (Eph. 5:25-27)
 - B. "Without blemish" (Jude 24)
 - C. "More than conquer" (Rom. 8:37)
 - D. Keeping us forevermore (Rom. 8:38-39)

- E. "Disciplines...scourges" (Heb. 12:6)

LESSON ELEVEN

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

- I. How are we saved?
 - A. "Grace...faith" (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - B. "Believe on the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31)
 - C. "Not out of works in righteousness" (Titus 3:5)
- II. When are we saved?
 - A. "Believes...may have" (John 3:15)
 - B. "Believes...would not...would have" (John 3:16)
 - C. "Believes...has" (John 3:36)
 - D. "Has...does not...has passed" (John 5:24)
 - E. "Believes has" (John 6:47)
 - F. "Believes...will receive" (Acts 10:43)
 - G. "Believes is justified" (Acts 13:39)
 - H. "Have" (Rom. 5:1)
 - I. "Having now" (Rom. 5:9)
 - J. "Now then no" (Rom. 8:1)
 - K. "Have" (Eph. 1:7)
 - L. "Have been forgiven" (1 John 2:12)
 - M. "Has" (1 John 5:12)

The Bible teaches us that being saved is a present matter. When we believe, we receive eternal life. Once we believe, we receive. There is no need to wait or to hope. Salvation is not something that happens after death, but is a present matter. Since believers are already saved (John 5:24), unbelievers are already condemned (John 3:18).

- III. Can man know that he is saved?
 - A. "May know" (1 John 5:13)
 - B. "Let it be known" (Acts 13:38-39)
 - C. "For we know" (2 Cor. 5:1)
 - D. "Knowing" (2 Cor. 5:6-8)
 - E. "Know" (2 Tim. 1:12)
 - F. "Know" (1 John 3:14)

Every believer can know whether or not he has eternal life. Men

often think, "We can only hope that we are saved, and we can only know if we are saved after we die or at the time of judgment." This is not the teaching of the Bible. The Bible teaches that a man can know whether or not he has eternal life in this age.

IV. How can a man know that he is saved?

- A. "These things" (1 John 5:13)
- B. "The testimony of God" (1 John 5:9-11)
- C. "My word" (John 5:24)

We may not have known that we are already saved, but the Word of God, the Bible, says that we are already saved; therefore we are saved. The Bible also tells us that he who believes has eternal life, is justified, has peace, and is saved. We only need to ask ourselves whether or not we have believed into the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. If we have not believed, we will perish. If we believe, we spontaneously are a person who has eternal life. "He who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). When we believe, we have eternal life. We know that we have eternal life not because we think or we feel that we do, but because God tells us so. Since we are saved and have received God's grace, we should not continue in sin (Rom. 6:1-2).

LESSON TWELVE

THE TWO NATURES

Every Christian feels that he has two natures, but not every Christian knows the reason why. Because he does not know how to deal with this kind of experience, much sorrow and discouragement may fill his heart. The nature that is born of the flesh has no goodness at all; but the nature that is born of God does not commit sins. The source and nature of the new man and the old man are opposites. But both natures are within the Christian. From the first man, we inherited sin, rebellion, and death. From the second man, we inherited righteousness, obedience, and life (Rom. 5:17-19).

I. The old man:

- A. "The flesh" (John 3:6)
- B. "Your father the devil" (John 8:44)
- C. "The heart is deceitful" (Jer. 17:9)

D. "Cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8)

The best moralists, the most devoted religionists, and the most compassionate, charitable people are far away from God and from eternal life unless they are born again. They are the same as the tax collectors and harlots. Without being born again, one cannot please God, because his heart is deceitful and his father is the devil.

II. The new man:

- A. "Born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-6)
- B. "New man" (Eph. 4:24)
- C. "A new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17)
- D. "Begotten...of God" (John 1:11-13)

III. The new man is Christ living within you:

- A. "Christ in you" (Col. 1:27)
- B. "Christ our life" (Col. 3:3-4)
- C. "Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20)

IV. The battle:

The new nature and the old nature are archenemies. Both of them want to dominate completely. The old nature has its power and its will. The battle between these two natures is very severe. Therefore, many young believers doubt their regeneration to the point that they are completely disappointed (Rom. 7:14-25). How should we deal with our old nature? "Cast out" (Gal. 4:22-31).

V. The victory—three ways:

- A. On the negative side:
 - 1. "Crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20; 5:24)
 - 2. "Reckon...to be dead" (Rom. 6:11)
- B. On the positive side:
 - 1. "Walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16)
 - 2. "Walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25)
- C. On the negative and positive side:
 - 1. "Put to death...you will live" (Rom. 8:13)

The way to overcome is not by self-discipline or self-imposition. The way to overcome the old nature is (1) by the cross of the Lord, acknowledging that the self is dead already, (2) by following the leading of the Holy Spirit in all our endeavors, and (3) by allowing

the Holy Spirit and the cross to work together to put the old man to death.

LESSON THIRTEEN

THE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN LAW AND GRACE

(Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Luke 15:21-32)

I. Law:

A. What is the law?

1. "Holy" (Rom. 7:12)
2. "Perfect...faithful" (Psa. 19:7)
3. "Right...clear" (Psa. 19:8)

B. What does the law say?

1. "Keep...do" (Lev. 18:5)
2. "Does" (Rom. 10:5)

C. What does the law do?

1. The law is just God's righteous requirement. From the law, man cannot receive any help at all:
 - a. "Guilty of all" (James 2:10)
 - b. "Fall under the judgment of God" (Rom. 3:19)
2. The law cannot accomplish anything:
 - a. "Not able to be justified" (Acts 13:39)
 - b. "Perfected nothing" (Heb. 7:18-19)

D. Why did God give the law?

1. "Transgressions" (Gal. 3:19)
2. "To bring us unto Christ" (Gal 3:24, KJV)

E. How did God give the law?

"Through Moses" (John 1:17; Exo. 20:18-19; Heb. 12:18)

II. Grace:

A. What is grace?

1. "Love...of our Savior God" (Titus 3:4-5)

Grace is goodness bestowed on those who have sinned and those who do not deserve it.

2. "Kindness toward us" (Eph. 2:7)

B. What does grace say?

1. "Believes" (John 5:24)

- 2. "By no means perish" (John 10:28-29)
- C. What does grace perform?
 - 1. "You have been saved" (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - 2. "Grace...has appeared" (Titus 2:11)
- D. Why did God give grace?
 - 1. "God so loved" (John 3:16)
- E. How did God give grace?
 - 1. "Through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17)
- III. The believers:
 - A. Who is a believer?
 - 1. Anyone who believes that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).
 - B. Are believers under the law?
 - 1. "Not under the law" (Rom. 6:14)
 - C. What is the standard of their conduct?
 - 1. "Ought himself also to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6)
- IV. Christianity:
 - A. What is it?
 - 1. "Christ died for our sins...was buried...has been raised" (1 Cor. 15:3-4)
 - B. Is it a mixture of the law and grace?
 - 1. "To the one who works...not accounted according to grace...to the one who does not work, but believes" (Rom. 4:4-5)

LESSON FOURTEEN

FAITH AND WORK

A person can be very polite, moral, strict, and conscientious and yet be very far away from the holiness of God. He can endeavor to work, with sweat on his face, and can offer offerings to God like Cain. He can read the Bible, pray, and listen to sermons and yet, at the same time, be waiting for death and judgment!

- I. Can work save a person?
 - A. "Were not able to be justified by the law" (Acts 13:39)
 - B. "Out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Rom. 3:20)
 - C. "Where then is boasting?...No" (Rom. 3:27)
 - D. "Not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9)

- II. What is the faith of salvation?
 - A. Believe in the testimony which God has testified concerning His Son (1 John 5:10-12)
 - B. "Believe in your heart" (Rom. 10:9-10)
 - C. Abraham believed in God's word (Gen. 15:6)
 - D. Abraham believed God's speaking (Gal. 3:5-6)
 - E. "Having heard the word...believing" (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 10:13, 17)
- III. What can faith do?
 - A. "Your faith has healed you" (Luke 8:48)
 - B. "Believes...has eternal life" (John 5:24)
 - C. "Cleansing...hearts" (Acts 15:9)
 - D. "Operating through love" (Gal. 5:6)
 - E. "Saved" (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - F. "To the gaining of the soul" (Heb. 10:39)
- IV. Does faith allow man to be unrestrained?
 - A. "Denying ungodliness" (Titus 2:11-13)
 - B. "Put to death the practices" (Rom. 8:13)
 - C. "Has overcome the world" (1 John 5:4)
- V. Are good works profitable?

He who believes has eternal life. If one performs good works after he believes, he will, in addition to having eternal life, receive a reward.

 - A. "Repay each man according to his doings" (Matt. 16:27)
 - B. "Receive the inheritance as recompense" (Col. 3:22-24)
 - C. "My reward is with Me to render to each one as his work is" (Rev. 22:12)
- VI. Works that are without faith:
 - A. Fleshly and worldly
 - B. Of the self
 - C. Inward and downward
 - D. Leading to darkness and hardship
 - E. According to man's wavering condition
- VII. Faith:
 - A. Of God and of heaven
 - B. Based on Christ's accomplished work
 - C. Outward and upward
 - D. Leading to light and peace

- E. According to God's unchanging truth

LESSON FIFTEEN

SALVATION AND REWARD

When a lost person receives Jesus, he freely obtains an eternal and perfect salvation. His sins are forgiven, righteousness is imputed to him, and the records of his sins are forever erased.

God calls sinners to receive salvation and calls saints to receive the reward. Salvation is given through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The reward is given through the work of the Christians. A man cannot be saved through good works, neither can he be rewarded through faith. Salvation comes from believing in the Lord Jesus as the Savior, and the reward comes from the good works which one performs after he is saved.

I. Salvation:

A. Salvation is a free gift:

1. "The gift of God" (John 4:10)
2. "Take...freely" (Rev. 22:17)
3. "The gift of God" (Rom. 6:23)

B. Salvation is a present inheritance:

1. "Gave" (1 John 5:11)
2. "Has saved us" (2 Tim. 1:9)
3. "Has eternal life" (John 6:47)

If a saved person works faithfully for the Lord, he will receive a reward. Such a promise may cause a believer to free himself from the pleasures of the world, keep him from falling, and grant him victory in an hour of persecution or temptation.

II. Reward:

A. What is the reward?

1. "Crown" (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:2-4; Rev. 2:10)
2. "Throne" (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21)
3. "Reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6)

B. The requirements for the reward:

1. "Labor" (1 Cor. 3:8)
2. "Work" (Rev. 22:12)
3. "A cup of cold water" (Matt. 10:42)

4. "Do" (Col. 3:23-24)
 5. "Do good" (Luke 6:35)
 6. "Pray...in secret" (Matt. 6:6)
- C. The basis of reward:
1. Motive (Matt. 6:1)
 2. "Hidden things...counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5)
 3. "In the name of a disciple" (Matt. 10:42)

In summary, "For by grace you have been saved...not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9). "But if by grace, it is no longer out of works" (Rom. 11:6). The reward depends on whether or not we have worked for the Lord after being saved.

LESSON SIXTEEN

JUSTIFICATION

The meaning of justification is deeper than the meaning of forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins means that even though we have sinned, God has forgiven our sins. Justification means that God not only forgives our sins, but also justifies us. Forgiveness of sins is like the general amnesty in ancient China, when all the criminals were pardoned. Justification is like a declaration of "not guilty" by the court and is more than just forgiveness. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus is justified by God. We should not only believe that each one of us has been justified by God, but we should also always have the boldness of justification to stand before God. Sometimes we may be weak and we may stumble, fail, or sin, yet we are still justified by God; our justification will not change because of our sins. After justification, we cannot be more justified through good works or less justified through evil works. Since justification is not obtained through works, it will not be lost through works. No matter what our condition is, we have the right to believe that every day we are justified by God through the Lord Jesus' merit. God accepts those who believe in Christ, just as He accepts Christ.

- I. Believers are justified by the Lord of the heavens and the earth:
 - A. "It is God who justifies" (Rom. 8:33)
- II. Grace is the source of justification:
 - A. "By His grace" (Rom. 3:24)
 - B. "By grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:8)
 - C. "Having been justified by His grace" (Titus 3:7)
- III. Justification is based upon the obedience of Christ:
 - A. "Through the obedience of the One" (Rom. 5:19)

- B. "Becoming obedient even unto death" (Phil. 2:8)
- IV. The price of justification is the precious blood of Christ:
 - A. "In His blood" (Rom. 5:9)
 - B. "Through His blood" (Eph. 1:7)
- V. Justification is gained by faith:
 - A. "Out of faith" (Rom. 5:1)
 - B. "Through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16)
 - C. "Everyone who believes" (Acts 13:39)
- VI. The proof of justification is the resurrection of Christ:
 - A. "Was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25)
 - B. "Having been raised from the dead" (Rom. 6:6-9)
 - C. "Raised us up together" (Eph. 2:6)
- VII. The result of justification is good works:
 - A. "Faith without its works is useless" (James 2:20-26)
 - B. "Let your light shine before men" (Matt. 5:16)
 - C. "Zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14)
 - D. "Be careful to maintain respectable works" (Titus 3:8)
 - E. "For good works...that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10)

LESSON SEVENTEEN

SANCTIFICATION

Many doctrines in the Bible have three aspects, including the doctrine of sanctification. The believer, upon receiving the blood of Jesus Christ to cover his sins, is sanctified positionally before God (Heb. 10:10). The believer, being sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit, is experientially delivered from the evil and bondage of sin by the word of God daily (John 17:17-19). At the coming of Christ, the spirit, soul, and body of the believers will be wholly sanctified (1 Thes. 5:23).

- I. We are sanctified by God the Father:
 - A. "In God the Father" (Jude 1)
 - B. "Without blemish" (Eph. 1:1-4)
 - C. "You shall be holy" (1 Pet. 1:15-16)
- II. We are sanctified in Christ Jesus:
 - A. "In Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2, 30)
 - B. "Are all of One" (Heb. 2:11)
 - C. "For by one offering" (Heb. 10:10, 14)

- III. We are sanctified in the Holy Spirit:
 - A. "In the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16)
 - B. "In the Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:11)
 - C. "In sanctification of the Spirit" (2 Thes. 2:13)
- IV. We are sanctified through the blood of Jesus Christ:
 - A. "Through His own blood" (Heb. 13:12)
 - B. "The blood of Christ" (Heb. 9:14)
 - C. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us" (1 John 1:7)
- V. We are sanctified by faith:
 - A. "By faith" (Acts 26:18)
 - B. "Cleansing their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9)
 - C. "Has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4)
- VI. We are sanctified in the truth:
 - A. "In the truth" (John 17:17-19)
 - B. "Through the word of God" (1 Tim. 4:5)
 - C. "By your obedience to the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22)
- VII. The believers must be sanctified in everything:
 - A. "Sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body" (1 Thes. 5:23)
 - B. "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts" (1 Pet. 3:15)
 - C. "Pursue...sanctification" (Heb. 12:14)

LESSON EIGHTEEN

THE CHURCH

In the Greek language, the word "church" is ekklesia. This word is very hard to translate, and "church" can hardly express the meaning of the word. Its original meaning is the called-out congregation or the called-out ones gathered together. Hence, "church" is the name given to those who are called out of the world by the grace of God to meet together. Therefore, those who are not called out of the world do not belong in the church.

- I. Who belongs in the church?
 - A. "All those who believed" (Acts 2:44)
 - B. "Those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47)
 - C. "Those who had believed" (Acts 4:32)
 - D. "The church...apostles" (Acts 8:1)
 - E. "The church...disciples" (Acts 11:26)

- F. "Those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints" (1 Cor. 1:2)
- G. "The saints" (2 Cor. 1:1)
- H. "His Body" (Eph. 1:23)
- I. "His Body" (Col. 1:24)

Both the tares and the wheat grow together in the world, but they do not co-exist in the church. According to the Bible, there are no other kinds of people in the church except the regenerated ones. Even the saved believers who commit sins should be removed (1 Cor. 5:5, 11-13).

II. Who establishes the church?

- A. "I [the Lord]" (Matt. 16:18)
- B. "The Lord" (Acts 2:47)
- C. "Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11)
- D. "The Head, Christ" (Eph. 4:15)
- E. "Being built up [by God]" (1 Pet. 2:5)

According to the verses mentioned above, man cannot establish the church.

III. Can the church be divided into denominations?

- A. "Be one" (John 17:11, 21-23)
- B. "Were together" (Acts 2:43-47)
- C. "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13)
- D. "One Body" (Eph. 4:4)
- E. "Factions, divisions, sects" (Gal. 5:20)

IV. The meeting of the church:

- A. Place: "One place" (1 Cor. 14:23)
- B. Name: "My name" (Matt. 18:20)
- C. Presiding One: "The...Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:11)
- D. Leading one: "Each one has" (1 Cor. 14:26)

Sometimes there are exceptions, when some special teachers come to teach the Bible, such as in the case of Paul and Barnabas.

- E. Congregation: "The others discern" (1 Cor. 14:29)
- F. Principle: "Of peace...in order" (1 Cor. 14:33, 40)
- G. Women: "Be silent" (1 Cor. 14:34-36, only in meetings with men present)
- H. Goal: "Building up [those within]" (1 Cor. 14:26);
"Convicted [those without]" (1 Cor. 14:24-25)

- V. The work of the church:
 - A. Evangelizing (Matt. 28:19)
 - B. Witnessing (Luke 24:47-48)
 - C. Announcing the word (Acts 8:1, 4)
 - D. Praying (Acts 12:5)
 - E. Suffering (Rom. 8:17)
 - F. Living to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:15)
 - G. Glorifying God (Eph. 3:21)
 - H. Making known to the enemies the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10)
 - I. Presented to Christ (Eph. 5:27)
 - J. Satisfying Christ (Isa. 53:11)
 - K. Awaiting the return of the Savior (1 Thes. 1:10; Phil. 3:20)

LESSON NINETEEN

JUDGMENT

Some think that when the last day comes there will only be a general judgment for all. They assume that whether they are Jews, Gentiles, believers, sinners, sheep, or goats, they will all come before God the Father to be set on the left or right. But there is no such doctrine in God's Word! The Bible records several judgments, not just one. The persons judged, the place and time of judgment, and the basis of judgment are all different in these judgments.

- I. The sins of the believers have been judged:
 - A. Time: A.D. 33
 - B. Place: The cross (John 19:17-18)
 - C. Basis: The death of Christ (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3)
 - D. Result: The believers made righteous (1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21)
- II. The work of the believers will be judged:
 - A. Time: 1 Cor. 4:5; Luke 14:14; 2 Tim. 4:8
 - B. Place: "In the air" (1 Thes. 4:16-17)
 - C. Basis: "Each one's work" (1 Cor. 3:13)
 - D. Result: "Reward" or "loss," but "he himself will be saved" (1 Cor. 3:14-15)
- III. The nations will be judged:
 - A. Time: "When the Son of Man comes" (Matt. 25:31-32)
 - B. Place: "The valley of Jehoshaphat" (Joel 3:2, 12, 14)
 - C. Basis: "My brothers" (Matt. 25:40)

- D. Result: (Matt. 25:46)
- IV. The dead will be judged:
 - A. Time: "He has set a day" (Acts 17:31)
 - 1. One thousand years after the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5, 7)
 - B. Place: "A great white throne" (Rev. 20:11)
 - C. Basis: "The things which were written in the scrolls" (Rev. 20:12)
 - D. Result: (Rev. 20:15)

The Judgment of the Nations	The Judgment of the Dead
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- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.No resurrection 2.The living nations judged 3.On earth 4.No scrolls 5.Three kinds of people: sheep, goats, and the dead brothers 6.At the time of Christ's appearing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.One resurrection 2.The dead being judged 3.The heavens and the earth passed away 4.Scrolls opened 5.Only one kind of people: 6.One thousand years after Christ begins to reign |
|---|---|

Remarks

The Word of God teaches us that the works of the believers are judged by disciplining (1 Cor. 11:31-32), as a father deals with sons (Heb. 12:6-7). Compare 2 Samuel 7:14-15 with 12:13-14.

The Bible also teaches us concerning the judgment of the angels (1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Gen 6:2-4; cf. Jude 6).

LESSON TWENTY

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

(John 14:3; Hebrews 9:28)

The Bible does not tell Christians to prepare to die, but asks them to watch, wait, and expect Christ to come again.

- I. He will come again at any time:

- A. "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes" (Matt. 24:42)
 - B. "Watch therefore" (Matt. 25:13)
 - C. "Eagerly awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7)
 - D. "Eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20)
 - E. "And await His Son from the heavens" (1 Thes. 1:10)
 - F. "Awaiting the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13)
- II. The Lord will come again to the earth with a body:
- A. "I go...I am coming again" (John 14:2-3)
 - B. "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way" (Acts 1:9-11)
 - C. "Will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb. 9:28)
 - D. "Because the Lord Himself...will descend from heaven" (1 Thes. 4:16)
- III. The relationship to the church:
- A. "Will be caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord" (1 Thes. 4:16-17)
 - B. "We will be like Him" (1 John 3:2)
 - C. "Will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil 3:21)
 - D. "Will reign with Him" (Rev. 20:6)
 - E. "And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Rev. 1:6)
 - F. "And death will be no more, nor will there be sorrow or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4)
 - G. "Not having spot or wrinkle...and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27)
- IV. The relationship to the world:
- A. "Every knee should bow...on earth" (Phil 2:10)
 - B. "And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:11)
 - C. "They will render an account concerning it" (Matt. 12:36)
 - D. "God judges the secrets of men" (Rom. 2:16)
 - E. "Go away from Me" (Matt. 25:41)
 - F. "Learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9)
 - G. "Neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3)

- V. The relationship to Israel:
 - A. "All Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25-26)
 - B. "Settles them in their land" (Isa. 14:1-3)
 - C. "The ransomed of Jehovah will return...with a ringing shout and eternal joy" (Isa. 35:8-10)
 - D. "I will exult in Jerusalem" (Isa. 65:19-20)
 - E. "As a meal offering to Jehovah" (Isa. 66:20)
 - F. "Will dwell securely" (Jer. 23:6)
 - G. "He will reign over the house of Jacob" (Luke 1:32-33)

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

PREPARING FOR THE WORK

The conditions for a fruitful work in the Lord:

- I. Abiding in the Lord:
 - A. "Abide in Me" (John 15:4-5)
 - B. "Bear much fruit" (John 15:8)
- II. Obedience:
 - A. "Obey God" (Acts 5:29)
 - B. "Rose up and went" (Acts 8:26-27)
 - C. "Becoming obedient" (Phil. 2:8)
- III. Be filled with the Holy Spirit:
 - A. "Were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31)
 - B. "Full of the Spirit" (Acts 6:3)
- IV. Being cleansed by the word:
 - A. "Cleansing her...in the word" (Eph. 5:26)
 - B. "Able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12)
- V. Prayer:
 - A. "With one accord in prayer" (Acts 1:14)
 - B. "Had so besought" (Acts 4:31)
 - C. "Help in this by petition" (2 Cor. 1:11)

Whoever abides in Jesus must obey Him, be filled with the Holy Spirit, be cleansed by the word, and pray with one accord in one spirit.
- VI. Preaching the word of God:
 - A. "Speak the word of God" (Acts 4:31)

- B. "The sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17)
- C. "The word of God...two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12-13)
- D. "Holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:16)
- E. "Proclaim the word" (2 Tim. 4:2)
- F. "Your word is truth" (John 17:17)
- G. "Through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23)
- H. "Restoring the soul" (Psa. 19:7)
- I. "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;...it will prosper" (Isa. 55:11)

This lesson concerns how Christians should work. When we read the Bible, we should carefully meditate on the words and should consider the type of people to whom they refer. We should learn to apply the verses in order to deal with different kinds of sinners. We should know which verses deal with those who do not believe the Bible, those who do not believe in God, those who do not believe in the existence of the spirit and soul, those who do not know they have sins, those who know they have sins, those who are indifferent, those who are eager for their salvation, those who are self-righteous, those who believe but do not have the assurance of salvation, those who have turned away, those who are disappointed, those who love the world, and those who refuse without a reason. We do not need to argue with them. We only need to read to them the words of the Bible in a prayerful way. The Bible is the medicine. We cannot examine and dispense medicine to a person carelessly. We must dispense the right medicine for the right sickness. For this reason, we must memorize the important verses and put marks in the Bible. In this way, we will be "always ready for a defense to everyone" (1 Pet. 3:15).

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

OFFERING

- I. To whom should we offer?
 - A. "An offering unto the Lord" (Exo. 35:5)
 - B. "Well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18)
- II. How to offer:
 - A. According to set principles:
 - 1. "On the first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16:2)
 - B. According to oneself:
 - 1. "A willing mind" (2 Cor. 8:12-13, KJV)

2. "Each one of you" (1 Cor. 16:2)
- C. According to proportion:
 1. "Whatever he may have been prospered" (1 Cor. 16:2)
 2. "Every tithe of the land" (Lev. 27:30)
 3. "The tithes" (Mal. 3:8, 10)
- D. The pleasing offering:
 1. "A cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7)
 2. "Of their own accord" (2 Cor. 8:3)
- E. The limitation of offering:
 1. "All the living that she had" (Luke 21:3-4)
 2. "The depth of their poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2)
- F. What kind of offering?
 1. "Not out of sorrow" (2 Cor. 9:7)
- G. Based upon what Christ gives:
 1. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 8:9)
- III. The reward for the offering:
 - A. "More blessed" (Acts 20:35)
 - B. "Treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20)
 - C. "God loves" (2 Cor. 9:7)
 - D. "God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16)
 - E. "Pour you out a blessing" (Mal. 3:10)
 - F. "In everything always having all sufficiency" (2 Cor. 9:6, 8)
- IV. The manifestation of the offering:
 - A. "Gave themselves first to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5)
 - B. "Abundance of their joy" (2 Cor. 8:2)
 - C. No entreaty is needed (2 Cor. 8:4)
 - D. "Completing out of what you have" (2 Cor. 8:11)

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- I. He is the power of life:
 - A. "Born of...the Spirit" (John 3:5)
 - B. "It is the Spirit who gives life" (John 6:63)
 - C. "The Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor. 3:3, 6)
- II. He regenerates men with the word of truth:
 - A. "The word of truth" (James 1:18)

- B. "Through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23)
- III. He is the power of testimony:
 - A. "Power" (Acts 1:8)
 - B. "As the Spirit gave to them" (Acts 2:4)
 - C. "He will testify concerning Me" (John 15:26)
- IV. He is the power of prayer:
 - A. "The Spirit...intercedes" (Rom. 8:26)
 - B. "Praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20)
- V. He is the power of knowledge:
 - A. "Teach you all things" (John 14:26)
 - B. "Teaches you concerning all things" (1 John 2:27)
- VI. He is the power of guidance:
 - A. "Was led by the Spirit" (Luke 4:1, 14)
 - B. "Having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 16:6-7)
 - C. "Walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25)
 - D. "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thes. 5:19)
- VII. He is the power for distributing ministries:
 - A. "The same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:4-11)
- VIII. He is the One who operates all things within the believer's spirit:
 - A. "May be with you forever" (John 14:16-17)
 - B. "You were sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30; see also 2 Cor. 5:5)
 - C. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19)

As we study the Bible, we will know the Spirit. The believers must understand the position and work of the Spirit. The Spirit is commissioned by God. All of God's will is accomplished by the Spirit.

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

THE DEVIL

The devil is full of sin, decadence, and unrighteousness (Isa. 14:12-14). He has kingship and power. He was created with beauty, wisdom, fullness, and power. He was the ruler of the first world. Desiring to be equal with God, he fell. He envied man who was created to take his place and damaged man by tempting him to try to be equal with God. He tempted man to conspire and to join his party to recover his title as king and his position and power.

- I. His nature:
 - A. "Steal"; "snatches away" (John 10:10; Matt. 13:19)
 - B. "Craftiness" (2 Cor. 11:3)
 - C. "He was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44)
- II. He has ten names:
 - A. "The great dragon [typifying cruelty]" (Rev. 12:9)
 - B. "Serpent [typifying the liar]" (Rev. 12:9)
 - C. "The Devil [typifying the tempter]" (Rev. 12:9)
 - D. "Satan [typifying the enemy]" (Rev. 12:9)
 - E. "The ruler of the world" (John 14:30)
 - F. "The ruler of the authority of the air" (Eph. 2:2)
 - G. "The angel of the abyss" (Rev. 9:11)
 - H. "The authority of darkness" (Col. 1:13)
 - I. "A roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8)
 - J. "An angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:13-15)
- III. His works:
 - A. "Seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8)
 - B. "Sowed tares"; "leaven" (Matt. 13:25-29, 33)
 - C. "Blinded the thoughts" (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - D. "Hindered" (1 Thes. 2:18)
 - E. "Accuses...day and night" (Rev. 12:10)
 - F. "Destruction of...flesh" (1 Cor. 5:5)
 - G. "Buffet" (2 Cor. 12:7)
- IV. His subordinates:
 - A. When the last days come, he will be reborn into man and become flesh and be called Antichrist (1 John 2:22).
 - B. Inducing men to worship him, being hypocritical in doing good, and uplifting personality (2 Thes. 2:1-12)
 - C. His nature (Matt. 25:41)
 - D. "Rulers...authorities...world-rulers of this darkness...spiritual forces of evil" (Eph. 6:12)
- V. His destiny:
 - A. "Cast down...to the earth" (Rev. 12:7-9)
 - B. "Has only a short time" (Rev. 12:12)
 - C. Bound by an angel (Rev. 20:1-3)

- D. After Christ's reign for one thousand years, Satan will be temporarily released. He will gather his warriors to battle with God once again. Eventually, he will be cast into the lake of fire and shall be tormented day and night (Rev. 20:7-10).
- VI. How the saints should deal with the devil:
 - A. "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27)
 - B. "Withstand" (James 4:7)
 - C. "Be sober; watch...firm in your faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9)
 - D. "Put on the whole armor of God [to battle]" (Eph. 6:11-18)

LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

WHY PRAYERS

ARE NOT ANSWERED BY GOD

- I. Knowing clearly that one has sinned, yet not judging oneself:
 - A. "I regard iniquity in my heart" (Psa. 66:18)
 - B. "The Lord is far from the wicked" (Prov. 15:29)
 - C. "Your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:15)
 - D. "Your sins have hidden His face from you" (Isa. 59:1-2)
 - E. Therefore, you should examine yourself whether you have indulged in sins. If so, confess immediately to God and forsake them (Prov. 28:13).
- II. The heart of unbelief stops the blessing:
 - A. "Doubting nothing" (James 1:6-7)
 - B. "If you believe" (Matt. 21:22)
 - C. "Must believe that He is" (Heb. 11:6)
 - D. Thanks be to God, for His gift is real. Therefore, we can come before Him and apply the apostles' prayer, saying, "Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).
- III. One who loves pleasure loses the heart to fellowship with God. Therefore, there is no grace for him from the throne:
 - A. "Spend...on...pleasures" (James 4:3)
 - B. "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4)
 - C. "Gives...to pleasure is dead while living" (1 Tim. 5:6)
- IV. Pride impedes the mercy of God:
 - A. "None giveth answer, because of the pride" (Job 35:12)
 - B. "The proud he knoweth afar off" (Psa. 138:6)

- C. "He is able to abase those who walk in pride" (Dan. 4:37)
 - D. "God resists the proud" (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5)
- V. A cold heart stops the ascending of prayers:
 - A. "Smote thrice, and stayed" (2 Kings 13:18)
 - B. "Because of his...persistence" (Luke 11:5-9)
- VI. An unforgiving heart kills prayers:

"Neither will your Father...forgive" (Mark 11:25-26)
- VII. The prayers of those who despise or ignore the word of God are worthless and loathsome:
 - A. "Turneth away his ear from hearing" (Prov. 28:9)
 - B. "Great wrath came" (Zech. 7:11-12)
 - C. "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16)

God will not accept the prayer of those who do not believe that all Scripture is inspired by God.

LESSON TWENTY-SIX

SALVATION

Salvation manifests that Christ Jesus is the wisdom of God. The following verses compare the wisdom of men to the wisdom of God. Since the world comes short of God's wisdom concerning salvation (1 Cor. 1:21), salvation must be preached through God's wisdom, Christ. What is salvation? Salvation has three stages:

- I. "Righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30)

The first stage of salvation is to save people from the punishment of their sins. This was done in the past:

 - A. Freed from the punishment of sins:
 - 1. "Save...from their sins" (Matt. 1:21)
 - 2. "Forgiveness of their sins" (Luke 1:77)
 - 3. "Forgiveness of offenses" (Eph. 1:7)
 - 4. "Gave Himself for our sins" (Gal. 1:4)
 - 5. "Being justified freely" (Rom. 3:24)
 - 6. "Was accounted to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:22-25)
 - B. This righteousness is gained by the sinner by believing in Christ:
 - 1. "Through faith in Christ" (Phil. 3:9)
 - 2. "Through His name" (Acts 10:43)
 - 3. "Through Him" (Rom. 5:9)

4. "Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-25)

5. "Accounted to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:22-25)

C. Such faith renders three results:

1. Forgiveness of sins

2. Imputation of righteousness

3. Freedom from the punishment of sins forever.

A sinner is reconciled to God through faith. "Have peace toward God" (Rom. 5:1)

II. "Sanctification" (1 Cor. 1:30)

The second stage of salvation is to be freed from the power of sin. This is for the present. Sanctification is a definite experience for the believers. It is gained through three things:

A. New birth, the beginning of victory over sin:

1. "Were begotten...of God" (John 1:12-13)

2. "Born anew" (John 3:3)

3. "Begotten of God" (1 John 5:1)

4. "Having been regenerated...through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23)

5. "Through the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5)

Through this same Spirit, we can resist unrighteousness and all the fleshly lusts.

B. Dying with Him, the accomplishment of victory over the power of sins:

1. "Into His death" (Rom. 6:3)

2. "Grown together with Him in...His death" (Rom. 6:5)

3. "Has been crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6-7)

4. "Have crucified" (Gal. 5:24)

5. "Reckon" (Rom. 6:11)

6. "Put to death" (Rom. 8:13)

Sin has its power. This power often operates within man. It cannot be washed, repaired, improved or cultured. The only way is to put it to death, for if it dies, there will be no more power. Those who are willing to apply faith to "reckon" themselves crucified with the Lord (Rom. 6:11) will have the experience of victory over sins.

C. The Holy Spirit, the practice of overcoming sins:

1. "The Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom. 8:9-10, 13)
2. "The Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us" (Titus 3:5-6)
3. "Led by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16-18)
4. "God who operates in you" (Phil. 2:12-13)
5. "I in him" (John 15:5)
6. "He who is in you" (1 John 4:4)

On the negative side, the believers have died with the Lord Jesus. On the positive side, they should submit to the indwelling Spirit in order to be saved from the power of sin. Sin has various temptations and traps. The Holy Spirit will apply to the believers what the cross has accomplished and will make them overcome.

III. Redemption (1 Cor. 1:30)

This is the third stage of salvation. The redemption, which frees us from the presence of sin, will be the future experience of the believers. There are three elements in redemption:

- A. The complete sanctification of the Spirit:
 1. "Spirit" (1 Thes. 5:23)
 2. "For now is our salvation nearer" (Rom. 13:11)
- B. The glorification of the body:
 1. "The day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30)
 2. "Will transfigure" (Phil. 3:20-21)
 3. "We will be like Him" (1 John 3:1-3)
- C. Partaking of the glory of Christ:
 1. "Obtaining of the glory" (2 Thes. 2:14)
 2. "Glory...I have given to them" (John 17:22)
 3. The "glory" obtained through sufferings (Rom. 8:17-18)

In brief, by the blood of Christ, we are saved from the punishment of sins; by the Spirit of Christ we are freed from the power of sin; and by the glory of Christ we are delivered from the presence of sin:

- a. Righteousness, by His first coming.
- b. Sanctification, by His present interceding.
- c. Redemption, by His coming again.
- d. Faith is related to the cross and the things in the past.
- e. Love is granted by the Holy Spirit in the present.

- f. The hope of glory will be obtained in the future.
Please notice that the word "appear" occurs three times in Heb. 9:24-28, KJV. Only the Word of God can give us wisdom to know the three stages of salvation (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

CHAPTER TEN

ONCE A YEAR THROUGH THE BIBLE

EXPLANATION

(1)The purpose of this book is to help the believers in their daily study of the Bible. If the reader goes through the daily assigned portions of the Old and the New Testament, he will read through the entire Bible in one year.

(2)As a special feature, this book allows the reader to understand the main significance of each book of the Bible as well as the meaning in each book's sections.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

ITS MAIN THOUGHT—INTRODUCTION TO CHRIST

I. History

1. The creation	chs. 1—2	God's Purpose
Jan. 1	chs. 1—2	God's image
2. From Adam to Noah	chs. 3—5	Man's Failure
Jan. 2	chs. 3—5	Judgment and promise
3. The history of Noah	6:1—11:9	Salvation and Judgment
Jan. 3	chs. 6—8	The ark and the flood
Jan. 4	9:1—11:9	The ark and the flood
4. The history of Abraham	11:10—23:20	The Reward of Faith
Jan. 5	11:10—13:18	Obedience and blessing
Jan. 6	chs. 14—16	God's promises
Jan. 7	ch. 17	God's promises
	ch. 18	God's friend
Jan. 8	chs. 19—20	God's friend
Jan. 9	chs. 21—23	Offering up the best

5. The history of Isaac	chs. 24—26	Inheriting the Blessing
Jan. 10	ch. 24	The bride and the groom
Jan. 11	chs. 25—26	Multiplication
6. The history of Jacob	chs. 27—36	Instructions in Life
Jan. 12	chs. 27—28	Sinful nature and repentance
Jan. 13	chs. 29—30	Discipline
Jan. 14	31:1—32:12	Deliverance
Jan. 15	32:13—34:31	Deliverance
Jan. 16	chs. 35—36	Revival
7. The history of Joseph	chs. 37—50	The Sent Savior
Jan. 17	chs. 37—38	Humiliation
Jan. 18	39:1—41:24	Exaltation
Jan. 19	41:25-57	Exaltation
	ch. 42	Reconciliation
Jan. 20	chs. 43—44	Reconciliation
Jan. 21	ch. 45	Reconciliation
	ch. 46	Satisfaction
Jan. 22	chs. 47—48	Satisfaction
Jan. 23	chs. 49—50	Blessing

1. Israelites in Egypt	1:1—15:21	Slavery
Jan. 24	chs. 1—3	The Savior's preparation
Jan. 25	ch. 4	The Savior's preparation
	5:1—6:13	Demands and results
Jan. 26	6:14-27	Demands and results
	6:28—8:19	The ten plagues
Jan. 27	8:20—9:35	The ten plagues
Jan. 28	chs. 10—11	The ten plagues
Jan. 29	12:1—13:16	The Passover
Jan. 30	13:17—15:21	Deliverance
2. Red Sea to Sinai	15:22—18:27	The Journey
Jan. 31	15:22—18:27	Manna and water
3. Israelites at Sinai	chs. 19—40	Covenant and Tabernacle

Feb. 1	chs. 19—20	God's covenant
	21:1-25	God's judgment
Feb. 2	21:26—23:33	God's judgment
Feb. 3	24:1-11	Authorization of covenant
	24:12—26:25	The tabernacle
Feb. 4	26:26—27:21	The tabernacle
	28:1-35	The priesthood
Feb. 5	28:36—29:46	The priesthood
Feb. 6	chs. 30—31	Worship
Feb. 7	chs. 32—33	Intercession
Feb. 8	ch. 34	Intercession
	35:1—36:7	Offering the gifts
Feb. 9	36:8—38:20	Completion
Feb. 10	38:21—39:32	Completion
	39:33—40:38	Dedication

1. Laws of the offerings	chs. 1—7	Perfection
Feb. 11	chs. 1—3	Without blemish
Feb. 12	4:1—6:7	Without blemish
Feb. 13	6:8—7:38	Unto Jehovah
2. The priests' offering	chs. 8—10	Sanctification
Feb. 14	chs. 8—10	Consecration
3. Cleansing, redemption	chs. 11—16	Redemption
Feb. 15	chs. 11—12	Sanctification
Feb. 16	ch. 13	Cleansing
Feb. 17	ch. 14	Cleansing
Feb. 18	chs. 15—16	Redemption
4. The holy covenant	chs. 17—24	The Holy Living
Feb. 19	17:1—19:14	Family relationships
Feb. 20	19:15—20:27	Family relationships
Feb. 21	chs. 21—22	The priests
Feb. 22	chs. 23—24	The festivals
5. Laws of the land	chs. 25—27	The Holy Land
Feb. 23	ch. 25	The Jubilee

	26:1-13	Condition for blessing
Feb. 24	26:14-46	Condition for blessing
	ch. 27	Things consecrated

1. The census

1:1—10:10

Feb. 25	chs. 1—2	Warfare
Feb. 26	chs. 3—4	Offices
Feb. 27	chs. 5—6	Separation
Feb. 28	ch. 7	Consecration
	ch. 8	The Levites
Feb. 29	9:1-14	The Passover
	9:15—10:10	Guidance

2. Sinai to Kadesh-barnea

10:11—12:16

Mar. 1	10:11-36	Forward journey
	chs. 11—12	Complaints

3. Back to the wilderness

chs. 13—19

Mar. 2	chs. 13—14	Regression
Mar. 3	chs. 15—16	Rebellion
Mar. 4	chs. 17—19	Election

4. After wandering in the wilderness

chs. 20—32

Mar. 5	chs. 20—21	Temptation
Mar. 6	chs. 22—23	Balaam
Mar. 7	chs. 24—25	Balaam
	26:1-14	Successor
Mar. 8	26:15—27:23	Successor
Mar. 9	chs. 28—29	Festivals
Mar. 10	ch. 30	Vows
	ch. 31	Midianites
Mar. 11	ch. 32	East of Jordan

5. Reminder and final charges

chs. 33—36

	33:1-49	Thirty-eight years
Mar. 12	33:50—36:13	The allotted lands

1. The census	1:1—10:10	
Feb. 25	chs. 1—2	Warfare
Feb. 26	chs. 3—4	Offices
Feb. 27	chs. 5—6	Separation
Feb. 28	ch. 7	Consecration
	ch. 8	The Levites
Feb. 29	9:1-14	The Passover
	9:15—10:10	Guidance
2. Sinai to Kadesh-barnea	10:11—12:16	
Mar. 1	10:11-36	Forward journey
	chs. 11—12	Complaints
3. Back to the wilderness	chs. 13—19	
Mar. 2	chs. 13—14	Regression
Mar. 3	chs. 15—16	Rebellion
Mar. 4	chs. 17—19	Election
4. After wandering in the wilderness	chs. 20—32	
Mar. 5	chs. 20—21	Temptation
Mar. 6	chs. 22—23	Balaam
Mar. 7	chs. 24—25	Balaam
	26:1-14	Successor
Mar. 8	26:15—27:23	Successor
Mar. 9	chs. 28—29	Festivals
Mar. 10	ch. 30	Vows
	ch. 31	Midianites
Mar. 11	ch. 32	East of Jordan
5. Reminder and final charges	chs. 33—36	
	33:1-49	Thirty-eight years
Mar. 12	33:50—36:13	The allotted lands

Deuteronomy

Key Word—Reminder

1. The speech (1)	1:1—4:43	Moses' Departure
Mar. 13	chs. 1—2	God's blessing
Mar. 14	3—4:43	God's blessing
2. The speech (2)	4:44—11:32	Giving the Covenant
Mar. 15	4:44—6:25	Fearing Jehovah
Mar. 16	ch. 7	Fearing Jehovah
	8:1—9:21	Loving Jehovah
Mar. 17	9:22—11:32	Loving Jehovah
3. Book of the covenant	chs. 12—26	
Mar. 18	chs. 12—13	Warning
Mar. 19	chs. 14—16	Festivals of joy
Mar. 20	chs. 17—20	Worship, law, and warfare
Mar. 21	chs. 21—23	A charge to be holy
Mar. 22	chs. 24—26	Witness before God
4. The speech (3)	chs. 27—28	Blessing and Curse
Mar. 23	chs. 27—28	Blessing and curse
5. The speech (4)	29:1—31:13	A Speech on Life
Mar. 24	29:1—31:13	Choose life
6. The song of Moses	31:14—32:47	Old Age
Mar. 25	31:14—32:47	Commit to memory
7. Moses' final words	32:48—34:12	The Coming Days
Mar. 26	32:48—34:12	The everlasting arm

1. Victory	chs. 1—12	
Mar. 27	chs. 1—2	Crossing the river
Mar. 28	chs. 3—4	Crossing the river
Mar. 29	5:1—7:9	Successes and failures
Mar. 30	7:10-26	Successes and failures
	ch. 8	Victories
Mar. 31	chs. 9—10	Victories
Apr. 1	chs. 11—12	Rest
2. Dividing the land	chs. 13—22	
Apr. 3	chs. 15—17	Casting lots for the land
Apr. 4	chs. 18—19	Not slacking off

Apr. 5	chs. 20—21	The Levites
Apr. 6	ch. 22	Misunderstanding
3. Joshua's will	chs. 23—24	
Apr. 7	chs. 23—24	Selection

◀ PREVIOUS SECTION

NEXT SECTION ▶

1. Retrospect	1:1—3:6	Apostasy
Apr. 8	1:1—3:6	Apostasy
2. Thirteen judges	3:7—16:31	Deliverance
Apr. 9	3:7-11	Othniel
	3:12-30	Ehud
	3:31	Shamgar
	ch. 4	Deborah and Barak
Apr. 10	ch. 5	Deborah and Barak
	ch. 6	Gideon
Apr. 11	chs. 7—8	Gideon
Apr. 12	ch. 9	Abimelech
	10:1-2	Tola
	10:3-5	Jair
Apr. 13	10:6—12:7	Jephthah
	12:8-10	Ibzan
	12:11-12	Elon
	12:13-15	Abdon
Apr. 14	13:1—15:8	Samson
Apr. 15	15:9—16:31	Samson
3. Having no kings	chs. 17—21	Lawlessness
Apr. 16	chs. 17—18	Dan
Apr. 17	19:1—20:18	Benjamin
Apr. 18	20:19—21:25	Benjamin

1. The return of the apostate chs. 1—4

Apr. 19	1:1-5	In Moab
	1:6-22	Return
	ch. 2	The kinsman
Apr. 20	3:1—4:12	The kinsman
	4:13-22	Recovery

1. Eli as judge	chs. 1—4	God's Judgment
Apr. 21	1:1—2:26	Unfaithfulness
Apr. 22	2:27—4:22	Unfaithfulness
2. Samuel as judge	chs. 5—7	Deliverance
Apr. 23	chs. 5—7	Prayer
3. Saul's reign	chs. 8—15	The Loss of the Throne
Apr. 24	chs. 8—10	Anointing
Apr. 25	chs. 11—12	Authorization
	ch. 13	Rejection
Apr. 26	chs. 14—15	Rejection
4. David's youth	chs. 16—31	Preparation for Kingship
Apr. 27	chs. 16—17	Chosen by God
Apr. 28	chs. 18—20	Friendship
Apr. 29	chs. 21—23	Exile
Apr. 30	chs. 24—26	Magnanimity
May 1	chs. 27—31	Disappointment

1. David's reign	chs. 1—24	Victory
May 2	chs. 1—2	David and Ish-bosheth
May 3	chs. 3—4	David and Ish-bosheth
May 4	chs. 5—7	David in Jerusalem
May 5	chs. 8—10	David's victory
May 6	chs. 11—12	David's fall
May 7	13:1—14:20	David being disciplined
May 8	14:21—16:14	David being disciplined
May 9	16:15—17:29	Death of Absalom
May 10	18:1—19:8	Death of Absalom

May 11	19:9—20:10	David's revival
May 12	20:11—21:22	David's revival
May 13	22:1—23:8	David's praise to God
May 14	23:9—24:25	David's praise to God

1. Solomon's reign

chs. 1—11

Peace

May 15	ch. 1	Anointed
May 16	ch. 2	Anointed
May 17	chs. 3—4	Provisions
May 18	chs. 5—6	Lifetime achievements
May 19	ch. 7	Lifetime achievements
May 20	ch. 8	Consecration
May 21	ch. 9	Consecration
	ch. 10	Fall
May 22	11:1-8	Lustful
	11:9-43	Discipline

2. Dividing the kingdom

chs. 12—22

Backsliding

May 23	12:1—13:19	Rehoboam, king of Judah Jeroboam I, king of Israel
May 24	13:20—14:31	Rehoboam, king of Judah Jeroboam I, king of Israel
May 25	15:1-8	Abijam, king of Judah
	15:9-24	Asa, king of Judah
	15:25-32	Nadab, king of Israel
	15:33—16:7	Baasha, king of Israel
	16:8-14	Elah, king of Israel
	16:15-20	Zimri, king of Israel
	16:21-28	Omri, king of Israel
	16:29-34	Ahab, king of Israel
May 26	17:1—18:24	The testimony of Elijah
May 27	18:25—19:21	The testimony of Elijah
May 28	chs. 20—21	Ahab, king of Israel
May 29	ch. 22	Jehoshaphat, king of Judah Ahaziah, king of Israel

1. Elijah and Elisha	1:1—2:18	
May 30	1:1—2:18	Ahaziah, king of Israel
2. The history of Elisha	2:19—8:29	
May 31	2:19—4:25	Jehoram, king of Israel
June 1	4:26—6:13	Jehoram, king of Israel
June 2	6:14—8:24	Jehoram, king of Israel
	8:25-29	Ahaziah, king of Judah
3. Last ten kings of Israel	chs. 9—17	
June 3	chs. 9—10	Jehu, king of Israel
June 4	11:1-3	Athaliah, king of Judah
	11:4—12:21	Jehoash, king of Judah
June 5	13:1-9	Jehoahaz, king of Israel
	13:10—14:22	Jehoash, king of Israel Amaziah, king of Judah
	14:23-29	Jeroboam II, king of Israel
	15:1-12	Azariah, king of Judah Zachariah, king of Israel
June 6	15:13-15	Shallum, king of Israel
	15:16-22	Menahem, king of Israel
	15:23-26	Pekahiah, king of Israel
	15:27-38	Pekah, king of Israel Jotham, king of Judah
	16:1—17:6	Ahaz, king of Judah Hoshea, king of Israel
	17:7-41	The fall of Israel
4. Last eight kings of Judah	chs. 18—25	
June 7	18:1—19:7	Hezekiah
June 8	19:8—20:21	Hezekiah
June 9	21:1-18	Manasseh
	21:19-26	Amon
	22:1—23:30	Josiah
June 10	23:31-35	Jehoahaz

23:36—24:7	Jehoiakim
24:8-17	Jehoiachin
24:18—25:21	Zedekiah
25:22-26	Gedaliah
25:27-30	Jehoiachin in Babylon

1. Genealogy of the officers chs. 1—9

June 11	1:1—2:17	Adam to Zerubbabel
June 12	2:18—3:24	Adam to Zerubbabel
June 13	chs. 4—5	Division of land, descendants
June 14	ch. 6	Division of land, descendants
June 15	chs. 7—8	Division of land, descendants
June 16	9:1-34	Census after the return
	9:35-44	Saul's family

2. David's reign chs. 10—29

June 17	chs. 10—12	In Hebron
June 18	chs. 13—15	The ark
June 19	chs. 16—17	The ark
June 20	chs. 18—21	Victory
June 21	chs. 22—24	Preparation for the temple
June 22	chs. 25—27	List of officers
June 23	chs. 28—29	Commission of Solomon

1. Solomon's reign chs. 1—9

June 24	1:1—5:1	The building of the temple
June 25	5:2—7:22	Consecration of the temple
June 26	chs. 8—9	The splendor of Solomon

2. Division of the kingdom chs. 10—28

June 27	chs. 10—12	Rehoboam, king of Judah Jeroboam, king of Israel
June 28	ch. 13	Abijah, king of Judah
	chs. 14—16	Asa, king of Judah Baasha, king of Israel
June 29	chs. 17—19	Jehoshaphat, king of Judah
June 30	ch. 20	Jehoshaphat, king of Judah
	ch. 21	Jehoram, king of Judah
July 1	22:1-9	Ahaziah, king of Judah Jehoram, king of Israel
	22:10-12	Athaliah, king of Judah
	ch. 23	Joash, king of Judah
July 2	ch. 24	Joash, king of Judah
	ch. 25	Amaziah, king of Judah Joash, king of Israel
July 3	ch. 26	Uzziah, king of Judah
	ch. 27	Jotham, king of Judah
	ch. 28	Ahaz, king of Judah
3. Last eight kings of Judah		
	chs. 29—36	
July 4	chs. 29—30	Hezekiah
July 5	chs. 31—32	Hezekiah
July 6	33:1-20	Manasseh
	33:21-25	Amon
	ch. 34	Josiah
July 7	ch. 35	Josiah
	36:1-3	Jehoahaz
	36:4-8	Jehoiakim
	36:9-10	Jehoiachin
	36:11-19	Zedekiah
	36:20-21	Captivity
	36:22-23	Decree of Cyrus

1. The command of Cyrus	chs. 1—6	Rebuilding of the Temple
July 8	chs. 1—2	Stirred up in the spirit
July 9	chs. 3—4	Commencement and completion
July 10	chs. 5—6	Commencement and completion
2. Ezra's observation	chs. 7—10	Revival
July 11	chs. 7—8	God's hand
July 12	chs. 9—10	Covenant

1. Nehemiah's commission	chs. 1—6	Devoting to Work
July 13	chs. 1—3	Rebuilding the city walls
July 14	chs. 4—6	Overcoming the opposition
2. The covenant under Ezra	chs. 7—10	Proclaiming the Book of Law
July 15	ch. 7	Rechecking genealogy
	ch. 8	Feast of tabernacles
July 16	chs. 9—10	Covenant
3. Nehemiah's work	chs. 11—13	Reform
July 17	ch. 11	Distributing the land
	12:1-26	The priests and the Levites
July 18	12:27-47	The priests and the Levites
	13:1-14	Cleansing the temple
	13:15-22	Restoring the Sabbath
	13:23-31	Separating the people

1. Danger	chs. 1—5	The Conspiracy of Haman
July 19	chs. 1—2	Sacrifice
July 20	chs. 3—5	Sacrifice
2. Deliverance	chs. 6—10	The Way to Escape

July 21

chs. 6—10 Joy

II. Experience

1. Story

chs. 1—2

July 22

chs. 1—2

Introduction: "That man was perfect and upright"

2. Job grieves

ch. 3

ch. 3

Job: "Why"

3. Debating

chs. 4—31

July 23

chs. 4—5

Eliphaz: "The chastening of the Almighty"

chs. 6—7

Job: "Let me alone"

July 24

ch. 8

Bildad: "If thou wert pure"

chs. 9—10

Job: "Show me wherefore thou"

July 25

ch. 11

Zophar: "Less than thine iniquity deserveth"

chs. 12—
14

Job: "But I will maintain"

July 26

ch. 15

Eliphaz: "The wicked man"

chs. 16—
17

Job: "My witness is in heaven"

July 27

ch. 18

Bildad: "This is the place of him that knoweth not God"

ch. 19

Job: "My Redeemer liveth"

ch. 20

Zophar: "The hypocrite"

July 28

ch. 21

Job: "In your answers there remaineth falsehood"

ch. 22

Eliphaz: "Return to the Almighty"

chs. 23—
24

Job: "He knoweth"

July 29

ch. 25

Bildad: "How can he be clean"

chs. 26—
29

Job: "My righteousness I hold fast"

July 30

chs. 30—

Job: "My righteousness I hold fast"

	31	
4.	Elihu's chs. 32—	
participation	37	
July 31	chs. 32— 34	Elihu: "Mine opinion"
Aug. 1	chs. 35— 37	Elihu: "Return from iniquity"
5. Jehovah's word	chs. 38— 41	
Aug. 2	chs. 38— 40	The Lord rules over all, confide in Him
Aug. 3	ch. 41	The Lord rules over all, confide in Him
6. Job's confession	42:1-6	
	42:1-6	Job: "I abhor myself, and repent"
7. Story	42:7-17	
	42:7-17	Conclusion: "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job"
Aug. 4	Psa. 1	The blessed man
	Psa. 2	The exalted King
	Psa. 3	Morning and evening
	Psa. 4	Evening prayer
	Psa. 5	Morning prayer
	Psa. 6	Prayer of the infirm
Aug. 5	Psa. 7	Song of the defamed
	Psa. 8	The honored man
	Psa. 9	The King's throne of judgment
	Psa. 10	The wicked plotter
Aug. 6	Psa. 11	The song of trust
	Psa. 12	Lying words and truthful words
	Psa. 13	Comforting the sorrowful

Aug. 7	Psa. 14	The fool and God	
	Psa. 15	The holy man	
	Psa. 16	The psalm on resurrection	
	Psa. 17	The likeness of the revived	
	Psa. 18	The perfect word of God	
Aug. 8	Psa. 19	Nature and grace	
	Psa. 20	God saving the king	
	Psa. 21	The king being saved	
	Psa. 22	Suffering and deliverance	
	Psa. 23	The good Shepherd	
Aug. 9	Psa. 24	King of glory	
	Psa. 25	Penitent sinner	
	Psa. 26	The man of integrity	
	Psa. 27	During affliction	
	Psa. 28	The trusting heart	
Aug. 10	Psa. 29	Thundering rain	
	Psa. 30	Lauding the Lord's deliverance	
	Psa. 31	Into Thine hand	
	Psa. 32	The forgiven man	
	Psa. 33	Jehovah's word	
Aug. 11	Psa. 34	Children's initial psalm	
	Psa. 35	False witnesses	
	Psa. 36	Abundantly satisfied	
Aug. 12	Psa. 37	The initial trust	
	Psa. 38	Suffering from affliction	
Aug. 13	Psa. 39	Lesson from affliction	
	Psa. 40	Song from affliction	
	Psa. 41	Consolation from affliction	
Aug. 14	Psa. 42	The panting soul	
	Psa. 43	Hope of the disquiet	
	Psa. 44	The past and the present	
	Psa. 45	The king's wedding	

Aug. 15	Psa. 46	The God of Jacob
	Psa. 47	The praise of our King
	Psa. 48	The city of God
	Psa. 49	The valley of the shadow of death

(The Psalms above are by the sons of Korah)

Aug. 16	Psa. 50	Offerings (Psalm of Asaph)
	Psa. 51	Sinner's prayer
	Psa. 52	Man's boast
Aug. 17	Psa. 53	The fool and God
	Psa. 54	God is my help
	Psa. 55	Severance of friendship
	Psa. 56	God for me
	Psa. 57	God be exalted
	Psa. 58	God is the Judge
Aug. 18	Psa. 59	God my strength
	Psa. 60	Overcoming by God
	Psa. 61	Rock of ages
	Psa. 62	Waiting on God
	Psa. 63	The thirsty gaining satisfaction
	Psa. 64	Gladness and trust
Aug. 19	Psa. 65	Thanksgiving at harvest
	Psa. 66	Thanksgiving by an individual
	Psa. 67	Psalm of preaching
	Psa. 68	Acts of God
Aug. 20	Psa. 69	Deep mire
	Psa. 70	Making haste
	Psa. 71	In the time of old age

(The Psalms above are by David)

Psa. 72 The king's son

(The Psalm above is by Solomon)

Aug. 21	Psa. 73	Faith strengthened
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	Psa. 74	The King works salvation
	Psa. 75	Lifting up
	Psa. 76	Sennacherib's armies
	Psa. 77	Worship in the night
Aug. 22	Psa. 78	Judah's national anthem
	Psa. 79	Scorn and derision
Aug. 23	Psa. 80	Turn us again
	Psa. 81	Our solemn feast
	Psa. 82	The judging being judged
	Psa. 83	Thine enemies
	(The Psalms above are by Asaph)	
	Psa. 84	God's house
	Psa. 85	Psalm of revival
	(The Psalms above are by the sons of Korah)	
Aug. 24	Psa. 86	Poor and needy
	(The Psalm above is by David)	
	Psa. 87	Birth Psalm
	(The Psalm above is by the sons of Korah)	
	Psa. 88	Place of darkness
	(The Psalm above is by Heman)	
	Psa. 89	My covenant
	(The Psalm above is by Ethan)	
Aug. 25	Psa. 90	God is our dwelling place
	Psa. 91	The secret place
	(The Psalms above are by Moses)	
	Psa. 92—	Jehovah reigneth
	97	
	(The Song above is for the Sabbath day)	
Aug. 26	Psa. 98	New song
	Psa. 99	He is holy
	Psa. 100	Praise from all lands
	Psa. 101	Godliness in the house

(The Psalm above is by David)

Psa. 102 The afflicted restored

(The Psalm above is a prayer)

Aug. 27

Psa. 103 The praise within

Psa. 104 The praise without

Psa. 105 National anthem concerning the Promised Land

Psa. 106 National anthem concerning the captives

(The above are the Psalms of David)

Aug. 28

Psa. 107 His goodness

(The Psalm above is by David)

Psa. 108 Overcoming

Psa. 109 Man prays—God works

Psa. 110 King and priest

Aug. 29

Psa. 111—118 Selected Psalms after the Exodus

Aug. 30

Psa. 119:1-88 The heart-reviving word

Aug. 31

Psa. 119:89-176 The lovable law

(The following Songs are by Hezekiah, Isa. 38:20, except as noted)

A total of fifteen Songs of degrees

Sept. 1

Psa. 120 Assyrians' invasion

Psa. 121 Hezekiah's Keeper

Psa. 122 The Lord's house (David)

Psa. 123 Trust in Jehovah

Psa. 124 Wondrous escape

Psa. 125 God's keeping

Psa. 126 Joy of being saved

Psa. 127 Being kept and blest (Solomon)

Psa. 128 The happy family

Psa. 129 Judging the wicked

Psa. 130 Out of the depths

Psa. 131 The humble man (David)

Sept. 2	Psa. 132	Jehovah's habitation
	Psa. 133	The blessed anointed one (David)
	Psa. 134	Keeping vigil
Sept. 3	Psa. 135	Song concerning the Promised Land
	Psa. 136	His ever-enduring mercy
	Psa. 137	Song of the captives
(The following eight Psalms are by David)		
Sept. 4	Psa. 138	The lowly being revived
	Psa. 139	Being searched and known
	Psa. 140	Praying for deliverance
	Psa. 141	Evening prayer
	Psa. 142	Prisoner's prayer
	Psa. 143	The desolate heart
Sept. 5	Psa. 144	The happy people
	Psa. 145	David's meditation
	Psa. 146—150	Harmonious praise

1. The wise man's words chs. 1—9

Sept. 6	1:1-6	Introduction
	1:7-19	Greedy of gain
	1:20-33	Forfeiting the opportunity
	ch. 2	Wisdom is the savior
	3:1-10	Wisdom's reward
	3:11-20	The best award
	3:21-26	Wisdom and peace
	3:27-30	Loving the neighbor
Sept. 7	3:31-35	The wicked and the righteous
	4:1-9	Father's exhortation
	4:10-19	Two paths
	4:20-27	Medicine for the entire man
	ch. 5	The strange woman
	6:1-5	Being surety for another

	6:6-11	Sluggard
	6:12-19	Sower of discord
	6:20-35	Parental admonition
Sept. 8	ch. 7	Real love and false love
	ch. 8	Wisdom's proclamation statement
	ch. 9	House of the wise and house of the foolish

**2. Solomon's proverbs
(375) 10:1—22:16**

Sept. 9	chs. 10—12	Ninety-one Proverbs
Sept. 10	chs. 13—15	Ninety-three Proverbs
Sept. 11	chs. 16—18	Eighty-five Proverbs
Sept. 12	19:1—22:16	One hundred six Proverbs

**3. The wise man's
words 22:17—24:34**

Sept. 13	22:17—24:34	Words of warning
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**4. Hezekiah's
collection (119) chs. 25—31**

Sept. 14	chs. 25—29	One hundred nineteen Proverbs
Sept. 15	ch. 30	Words of Agur
	31:1-9	Words of Lemuel
	31:10-31	Virtuous woman's words

Sept. 16	1:1-11	Introduction: All is vanity
	1:12—2:26	Seeking wisdom (1st discourse)
	3:1—5:9	A season and a time (2nd discourse)
Sept. 17	5:10—7:22	Vanity of lusting (3rd discourse)
Sept. 18	7:23—11:8	Wisdom found (4th discourse)
	11:9—12:8	Living under the judgment

light
(5th discourse)
12:9-14 Conclusion: Fear God

The Song of Solomon
Key Word—Love

Sept. 19	1:1—3:5	The Song of Songs
	1:1—2:7	Joy (1st stanza)
	1:1-4	Shulamite's words to the king
	1:5-6	Shulamite's words to the daughters of Jerusalem
	1:7	Shulamite's words to Solomon
	1:8-11	Solomon's words to Shulamite
	1:12-14	Her joy in the king
	1:15	The king's joy in her
	1:16—2:1	Shulamite's words to Solomon
	2:2	His reply
	2:3-6	Her praise and delight in his love
	2:7	His command
	2:8—3:5	Desire (2nd stanza)
	2:8-9	He comes to take her
	2:10-15	He wants her as a companion
	2:16-17	She remains until the next day
	3:1-4	Her dream in the night
	3:5	His command
	3:6—8:14	The Song of Songs
	3:6—5:1	Appreciation (3rd stanza)
	3:6-10	Guards and apparatus in the king's coronation
	3:11	Calling the daughters of Jerusalem
	4:1-5	His describing of her beauty
	4:6	She wants to leave him
	4:7-11	He asks her to be his companion

Sept. 20	4:12-15	Likening her to a garden
	4:16	Her reply
	5:1	The joy of his coming
	5:2—8:4	Satisfaction (4th stanza)
	5:2-8	Shulamite relates her dream
	5:9	Daughters of Jerusalem ask about Solomon
	5:10-16	She describes him
	6:1	They want to look for him
	6:2-3	They go to the garden where he is
	6:4-9	He sees her and rejoices
	6:10	Daughters of Jerusalem ask about Shulamite
	6:11-12	She finds him and rejoices
	6:13	The calling of the daughters of Jerusalem for her return
	7:1-9	He describes her bearing
	7:10—8:3	Her joy in his love
	8:4	His command
	8:5-14	Fellowship (5th stanza)
	8:5	They have come
	8:6-7	Their talk of love
	8:8-9	Consideration for their little sister
	8:10-14	Shulamite's depending on Solomon

III. Prophecy

1. Introduction	ch. 1	
Sept. 21	1:1	Title and date of the prophecy
	1:2-31	Judgment of the last day
2. Isaiah's prophecy during the earlier years	chs. 2—6	
Sept. 22	chs. 2—3	The present disgrace
	ch. 4	The coming glory

5:1-7	Parable of the vineyard
5:8-30	Explanation of this parable
ch. 6	Isaiah's being called

3. Isaiah's ministry during King Ahaz's reign

7:1—14:27

Sept. 23	ch. 7	Refusing a sign
	8:1—9:7	Giving a sign
Sept. 24	9:8—10:4	Woe to Israel
	10:5-34	Assyria is God's rod
Sept. 25	chs. 11—12	The coming King
	13:1—14:27	Assyria and Babylon

4. Isaiah's ministry during King Hezekiah's reign

14:28—66:24

	14:28-32	Hezekiah's reply to the Philistines
	chs. 15—16	Moab
Sept. 26	ch. 17	Damascus, Syria, Israel
	chs. 18—20	Ethiopia and Egypt
Sept. 27	ch. 21	Wilderness, Dumah, Arabia
	22:1-14	Jerusalem
	22:15-25	Shebna, Eliakim
	ch. 23	Tyre
Sept. 28	chs. 24—26	Scattering and gathering
Sept. 29	ch. 27	Scattering and gathering
	chs. 28—29	Ephraim and Ariel
Sept. 30	chs. 30—31	Ephraim and Ariel
Oct. 1	ch. 32	The king's administration
	33:1-12	Invasion by the Assyrians
	33:13-24	Jehovah's deliverance
Oct. 2	ch. 34	Edom being judged
	ch. 35	Judah being blessed
	ch. 36	Hezekiah's desperation
Oct. 3	chs. 37—38	Hezekiah's desperation
Oct. 4	ch. 39	Hezekiah's desperation
	ch. 40	Isaiah's encouragement
Oct. 5	ch. 41	Isaiah's encouragement

	ch. 42	The Servant of Jehovah
Oct. 6	chs. 43—44	The Servant of Jehovah
Oct. 7	ch. 45	The anointed Deliverer
	chs. 46—47	Bel's humiliation
Oct. 8	ch. 48	Bel's humiliation
	ch. 49	Calling and commission of the Servant-Christ
Oct. 9	50:1—52:12	Calling and commission of the Servant-Christ
Oct. 10	52:13—53:12	The suffering and overcoming Servant-Christ
	chs. 54—55	Joy, blessing, and revival
Oct. 11	chs. 56—57	Joy, blessing, and revival
	ch. 58	Worship and salvation
Oct. 12	ch. 59	Worship and salvation
	chs. 60—61	New Jerusalem
Oct. 13	ch. 62	New Jerusalem
	63:1-6	The Savior's coming again
	63:7—64:12	Meditation and appealing to God
Oct. 14	chs. 65—66	God answering with blessing and judgment

1. The appointing of Jeremiah

	chs. 1—6	
Oct. 15	1:1-3	Title and date of the prophecy
	1:4—3:25	Calling and proclamation
Oct. 16	chs. 4—5	Message to the people of Judah
Oct. 17	ch. 6	Message to the people of Judah

2. The speech in the temple

ch. 7	False confiding
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Oct. 18	chs. 8—10	False confiding
3. The journey of preaching	chs. 11—13	
Oct. 19	chs. 11—12	Murderous conspiracy
	ch. 13	Girdle
4. Draught	chs. 14—17	
Oct. 20	chs. 14—15	Supplication
Oct. 21	chs. 16—17	Curse and blessing
5. The speech on pottery	chs. 18—20	
Oct. 22	ch. 18	Clay
	ch. 19	The broken flagon
	ch. 20	The stocks
6. Kings, prophets, and the people	chs. 21—24	
Oct. 23	chs. 21—22	Four kings
Oct. 24	ch. 23	False prophets
	ch. 24	Figs
7. The cup, the yokes, and the letter	chs. 25—29	
Oct. 25	25:1-11	Judging Jerusalem
	25:12-38	Judging the nations
	26:1-19	Testimonies and sufferings of the prophets
Oct. 26	26:20-24	Testimony and death of Urijah
	ch. 27	Sending yokes to the kings
	ch. 28	Dispute with Hananiah
Oct. 27	29:1-23	Letter from the prophet to those in captivity
	29:24-32	False prophets Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah
8. Revival	chs. 30—31	
Oct. 28	chs. 30—31	New covenant
9. Siege and fall of Jerusalem	chs. 32—45	
Oct. 29	chs. 32—33	The purchased land
Oct. 30	chs. 34—35	Transgressing the covenant

Oct. 31	ch. 36	Transgressing the covenant
	ch. 37	The period of siege
Nov. 1	chs. 38—39	The period of siege
Nov. 2	chs. 40—41	Aftermath of the fall
Nov. 3	42—43:4	Aftermath of the fall
Nov. 4	43:5—45:5	Jeremiah in Egypt
10. Condemnation of the nations		
	chs. 46—51	
Nov. 5	46:1-12	The battle at Carchemish
	46:13-28	The word against Egypt
	ch. 47	The word against the Philistines
Nov. 6	ch. 48	The word against Moab
	49:1-6	The word against the Ammonites
Nov. 7	49:7-22	The word against Edom
	49:23-27	The word against Damascus
	49:28-33	The word against Kedar
	49:34-39	The word against Elam
Nov. 8	ch. 50	The word against Babylon
Nov. 9	ch. 51	The word against Babylon
11. Appendix		
	ch. 52	
Nov. 10	52:1-30	The fall of Jerusalem
	52:31-34	Jehoiachin in Babylon
Nov. 11	chs. 1—2	Desolation and grief
Nov. 12	chs. 3—4	Affliction and hope
	ch. 5	Jeremiah beseeching God

1. The appointing of Ezekiel chs. 1—3

Nov. 13	chs. 1—3	The vision of God
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2. The condition of Jerusalem chs. 4—14

Nov. 14	chs. 4—7	The sign of the besieged city
Nov. 15	chs. 8—11	The iniquity of Jerusalem
Nov. 16	ch. 12	The sign of captivity
	ch. 13	False prophets
Nov. 17	ch. 14	False prophets
3. Six parables	chs. 15—19	
Nov. 18	ch. 15	A vine
	ch. 16	A forsaken babe
Nov. 19	ch. 17	An eagle and a vine
	ch. 18	Sour grapes
	19:1-9	A young lion
	19:10-14	A vine
4. Transgressing the covenant	20:1-44	
Nov. 20	20:1-44	Elders inquiring of Jehovah
5. Six concluding words	20:45—24:27	
Nov. 21	20:45-49	Words against the south
	ch. 21	Jehovah's sword
Nov. 22	ch. 22	The blood-shedding city
Nov. 23	ch. 23	Aholah and Aholibah
	24:1-14	Rusty pot
	24:15-27	The sign of the wife's death
6. Condemnation of the nations	chs. 25—32	
Nov. 24	25:1-7	Ammon
	25:8-11	Moab and Seir
	25:12-14	Edom
	25:15-17	Philistia
	chs. 26—27	Tyre
Nov. 25	28:1-19	Tyre
	28:20-26	Sidon
	ch. 29	Egypt
Nov. 26	chs. 30—31	Egypt

Nov. 27	ch. 32	Egypt
7. Fall and recovery	chs. 33—48	
Nov. 28	33:1-20	Watchman
	33:21-33	The fall of Jerusalem
Nov. 29	ch. 34	Shepherd
	ch. 35	Judgment on Seir
Nov. 30	ch. 36	Blessing on Israel
Dec. 1	37:1-14	Dry bones
	37:15-28	Joined sticks
Dec. 2	chs. 38—39	Intrusion of Gog
Dec. 3	chs. 40—41	Recovering the temple
Dec. 4	42:1—43:12	Recovering the temple
	43:13-27	Recovering the priesthood
Dec. 5	ch. 44	Recovering the priesthood
	ch. 45	Recovering the worship
Dec. 6	ch. 46	Recovering the worship
	47:1-12	Water of healing
Dec. 7	47:13—48:35	New realm

1. Daniel in his youth	ch. 1	
Dec. 8	1:1-2	Captivity
	1:3-21	Promotion
2. During the reigning of Nebuchadnezzar	chs. 2—4	
Dec. 9	ch. 2	Nebuchadnezzar's dream
Dec. 10	ch. 3	Golden image
	ch. 4	Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation
3. Warning of Belshazzar	ch. 5	
Dec. 11	ch. 5	Words
4. Daniel in his old age	ch. 6	
	ch. 6	Promotion and trial

5. Daniel's visions	chs. 7—12	
Dec. 12	ch. 7	Four beasts
	ch. 8	The ram and the goat
Dec. 13	ch. 9	Daniel's prayer
	ch. 10	Daniel's fasting
Dec. 14	ch. 11	World history
	ch. 12	The great tribulation and consummation
 1. Wandering wife	 chs. 1—3	
Dec. 15	1:1	Title and date of the prophecy
	1:2-9	Judgment
	1:10-11	Mercies
	2:1-13	Judgment
	2:14-23	Mercies
	ch. 3	The victory of love
2. Wandering people	chs. 4—7	
Dec. 16	ch. 4	The Lord argues with His people
	ch. 5	The Lord argues with His priests
	6:1-3	Repentance
	6:4—7:16	Forsaking God
3. Calling for return	8:1—11:11	
Dec. 17	8:1—10:8	Judgment
	10:9—11:11	Calling them to repent
4. Revival	11:12—14:9	
Dec. 18	11:12—13:3	Answering to the former experiences
	13:4-14	Mercies
	13:15-16	Judgment
	ch. 14	Mercy's boasting

Joel

Key Word—Afterwards

Dec. 19	1:1—2:11	Calamity of locusts
	2:12-14	Calling them to repent
	2:15-17	Solemn assembly
	2:18-27	Consolation and recovery
	2:28-32	"Afterward"
	3:1-16	Valley of decision
	3:17-21	God dwelling in Zion
Dec. 20	1:1-2	Title and date of the prophecy
	1:3-5	Judging Damascus
	1:6-8	Judging Gaza
	1:9-10	Judging Tyre
	1:11-12	Judging Edom
	1:13-15	Judging Ammon
	2:1-3	Judging Moab
	2:4-5	Judging Judah
	2:6—4:13	Judging Israel
Dec. 21	chs. 5—6	Judging Israel
	7:1-9	Intercession of the prophet
	7:10-17	Opposition of Amaziah
	8:1—9:10	Judging Israel
	9:11-15	Recovery

Obadiah

Key Word—Gaining

vv. 1-9	Humiliation of Edom
vv. 10-16	Sin of Edom in opposing Judah
vv. 17-21	Deliverance and inheritance

Jonah

Key Words—Preaching the Word

Dec. 22	1:1-2	Jonah's first appointment
	1:3-17	Jonah's evasion
	ch. 2	Jonah's prayer
	3:1-2	Jonah's second appointment
	3:3—4:11	Jonah in Nineveh
Dec. 23	1:1	Title and date of the prophecy
	1:2—2:13	Judging Samaria
	ch. 3	Judging Jerusalem
	4—5:1	Fulfilling the recovery
Dec. 24	5:2-15	Kingdom restored
	6:1-8	True worship
	6:9—7:6	Ought to cleanse the city
	7:7-10	Prayer and faith of Hezekiah
	7:11-17	Jehovah's answer
	7:18-20	Hezekiah's thanksgiving

Nahum

Key Word—Perdition

Dec. 25	1:1-7	Jealousy of God's love
	1:8-14	A full end of the enemies
	1:15	Restoring worship
	chs. 2—3	Overthrowing of Nineveh

Habakkuk

Key Word—Faith

Dec. 26	ch. 1	Faith's inquiring
	ch. 2	Faith's waiting
	3:1-15	Faith's prayer
	3:16-19	Faith's joy
Dec. 27	1:1	Title and date of the prophecy
	1:2-18	Judging Jerusalem
	2:1-3	Word of advice
	2:4-15	Judging the nations
	3:1-8	Judging Jerusalem
	3:9-20	Salvation

Haggai

Key Word—Considering

ch. 1	Day 1 of the 6th month of the 2nd year of King Darius: Consider your ways
	Day 21 of the 7th month of the 2nd year of King Darius: The glory of the new temple
	Day 24 of the 9th month of the 2nd year of King Darius: Defiled by sins
	Day 24 of the 9th month of the 2nd year of King Darius: Zerubbabel as a signet
2:1-9	
2:10-19	
2:20-23	

1. Exhortation	1:1-6	The 8th Month of the 2nd Year of King Darius
Dec. 28	1:1-6	"In the eighth month, in the

second year of Darius...turn"

**Day 24 of the 11th Month of
the 2nd Year of King Darius
The Night of Visions**

2. Ninefold vision 1:7—6:8

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1:7-17 | (1) Four horses |
| 1:18-21 | (2) Horns and craftsmen |
| ch. 2 | (3) City without walls |
| ch. 3 | (4) Joshua's change of garment
and being crowned |
| 4:1-10 | (5) Golden lampstand |
| 4:11-14 | (6) Two olive trees |
| 5:1-4 | (7) Flying scroll |
| 5:5-11 | (8) Ephah and the woman |
| 6:1-8 | (9) Four chariots |

**3. Joshua's being
crowned 6:9-15**

Dec. 29 6:9-15 The Branch

**4. Fasting and
feasting chs. 7—8**

chs. 7—8 Fasting becoming feasting

**5. Coming of the
King chs. 9—14**

chs. 9—10 Coming of the King

Dec. 30 chs. 11—13 The King's being rejected

ch. 14 The coming kingdom

**1. Replying to six
questions of excuse chs. 1—3**

- | | | |
|---------|----------|---|
| Dec. 31 | 1:1-5 | "Wherein hast thou loved us?" |
| | 1:6—2:9 | "Wherein have we despised thy
name?" |
| | 2:10-16 | "Why do we deal treacherously?" |
| | 2:17—3:6 | "Wherein have we wearied him?" |
| | 3:7-12 | "Wherein have we robbed thee?" |
| | 3:13-18 | "What have we spoken so much |

against thee?"

**2. The great and
fearful day**

ch. 4

ch. 4

Burning and healing

**THE NEW TESTAMENT
ITS MAIN THOUGHT—IN CHRIST
I. History**

**1. Being introduced to His
people**

1:1—4:11

Jan. 1	1:1-17	Genealogy
	1:18-25	Birth
Jan. 2	ch. 2	Youth
Jan. 3	3:1-12	Precursor
	3:13-17	Preparation
Jan. 4	4:1-11	Being attacked

**2. The gospel of the
kingdom**

4:12—7:29

	4:12-25	Preaching and healing
Jan. 5	5:1-20	A sevenfold speech
Jan. 6	5:21-48	A sevenfold speech
Jan. 7	ch. 6	A sevenfold speech
Jan. 8	ch. 7	A sevenfold speech

**3. The initial impression
made by His ministry**

8:1—9:34

Jan. 9	8:1-17	Works of healing
Jan. 10	8:18-34	From evening to evening
Jan. 11	9:1-17	From evening to evening
Jan. 12	9:18-34	From evening to evening

**4. The expansion of His
ministry**

9:35—11:30

Jan. 13	9:35—10:42	Sending the twelve apostles to preach
Jan. 14	ch. 11	Works in Galilee

5. The King being rejected 12:1—16:12

Jan. 15	12:1-21	Split from the Pharisees
Jan. 16	12:22-50	Split from the Pharisees
Jan. 17	13:1-30	A sevenfold parable
Jan. 18	13:31-52	A sevenfold parable
	13:53-58	Great works
Jan. 19	ch. 14	Great works
Jan. 20	ch. 15	Great works
Jan. 21	16:1-12	Great works

6. The way of the cross 16:13—20:34

	16:13-28	The cross
Jan. 22	ch. 17	Glory
Jan. 23	18:1-20	The final lesson
Jan. 24	18:21-35	The final lesson
Jan. 25	19:1-15	Journey to Jerusalem
Jan. 26	19:16-30	Journey to Jerusalem
Jan. 27	20:1-16	Journey to Jerusalem
Jan. 28	20:17-34	Journey to Jerusalem

7. The week of suffering 21:1—27:61

Jan. 29	21:1-17	Entering Jerusalem for the last time
	21:18-22	Works in the temple
Jan. 30	21:23-46	Works in the temple
Jan. 31	22:1-22	Works in the temple
Feb. 1	22:23-46	Works in the temple
Feb. 2	23:1-22	Works in the temple
Feb. 3	23:23-39	Works in the temple
Feb. 4	24:1-28	The final word
Feb. 5	24:29-51	The final word
Feb. 6	25:1-30	The final word
Feb. 7	25:31-46	The final word
Feb. 8	26:1-16	Anointed for burial
	26:17-30	The last supper
Feb. 9	26:31-56	The garden
Feb. 10	26:57-75	Being judged
Feb. 11	27:1-26	Being judged

Feb. 12	27:27-61	Crucified on the cross
8. The King's victory	27:62—28:20	
Feb. 13	27:62—28:15	The opened tomb
	28:16-20	The King's charge

1. Introducing this Servant 1:1-13

Feb. 14	1:1-8	Having been preached
	1:9-11	Having been confirmed
	1:12-13	Having been tested

2. The works of His earlier years 1:14—3:35

	1:14-20	Endeavoring to work
Feb. 15	1:21-45	Endeavoring to work
Feb. 16	ch. 2	Endeavoring to work
Feb. 17	ch. 3	Firm to resist

3. His words and His works 4:1—6:6

Feb. 18	4:1-20	Parables
Feb. 19	4:21-34	Parables
	4:35-41	Miracles
Feb. 20	5:1-20	Miracles
Feb. 21	5:21-43	Miracles
Feb. 22	6:1-6	Miracles

4. The expansion of His impact 6:7—8:26

	6:7-29	Through the twelve apostles
Feb. 23	6:30-56	Through the twelve apostles
Feb. 24	7:1-30	Through the twelve apostles
Feb. 25	7:31—8:26	Through the twelve apostles

5. Unveiling of the cross 8:27—9:50

Feb. 26	8:27—9:8	To glory through the
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		cross
Feb. 27	9:9-32	To glory through the cross
Feb. 28	9:33-50	To glory through the cross
6. The final portion of His journey		
	ch. 10	
Feb. 29	10:1-22	Questions and answers
Mar. 1	10:23-52	Questions and answers
7. The final week		
	chs. 11—15	
Mar. 2	ch. 11	The Servant with authority
Mar. 3	12:1-17	The final warning
Mar. 4	12:18-44	The final warning
Mar. 5	ch. 13	The final discourse
Mar. 6	14:1-26	The final supper
Mar. 7	14:27-52	Gethsemane
Mar. 8	14:53-72	Hall of judgment
Mar. 9	15:1-20	Hall of judgment
Mar. 10	15:21-47	Golgotha
8. The exalted Servant		
	ch. 16	
Mar. 11	16:1-18	Resurrection
	16:19-20	Ascension
1. Birth and childhood		
	chs. 1—2	
Mar. 12	1:1-23	His relatives
Mar. 13	1:24-56	His relatives
Mar. 14	1:57-80	His relatives
Mar. 15	2:1-20	Birth
Mar. 16	2:21-52	Childhood
2. Introduction to public work		
	3:1—4:13	
Mar. 17	3:1-22	His forerunner
Mar. 18	3:23-38	His genealogy
Mar. 19	4:1-13	Test

3. The works of His earlier years in Galilee **4:14—6:11**

Mar. 20	4:14-30	In Nazareth
Mar. 21	4:31-44	In Capernaum
Mar. 22	5:1-16	In Capernaum
Mar. 23	5:17-39	In Capernaum
Mar. 24	6:1-11	Outbreak of opposition

4. Training and works of the disciples **6:12—9:17**

Mar. 25	6:12-49	With teachings
Mar. 26	7:1-23	With examples
Mar. 27	7:24-50	With examples
Mar. 28	8:1-25	With examples
Mar. 29	8:26-56	With examples
Mar. 30	9:1-17	Preaching and return

5. Unveiling of the cross **9:18—13:21**

Mar. 31	9:18-36	The cross and glory
Apr. 1	9:37-62	The cross and glory
Apr. 2	10:1-20	Expanding the work of preaching
Apr. 3	10:21-37	Expanding the work of preaching
Apr. 4	10:38—11:13	At home and during prayer
Apr. 5	11:14-32	Opposition increasing
Apr. 6	11:33-54	Opposition increasing
Apr. 7	12:1-21	Opposition increasing
Apr. 8	12:22-40	Opposition increasing
Apr. 9	12:41-59	Opposition increasing
Apr. 10	13:1-21	Opposition increasing

6. Journey to Jerusalem **13:22—19:28**

Apr. 11	13:22-35	Being a test to the disciples
Apr. 12	ch. 14	Being a test to the disciples
Apr. 13	ch. 15	Being a test to the

		disciples
Apr. 14	16:1-18	Stewardship
Apr. 15	16:19—17:10	Stewardship
Apr. 16	17:11-37	Being prophesied to be rejected
Apr. 17	18:1-18	Being prophesied to be rejected
Apr. 18	18:19-43	Being prophesied to be rejected
Apr. 19	19:1-28	Being prophesied to be rejected
7. The final week	19:29—23:56	
Apr. 20	19:29-46	Entering Jerusalem
Apr. 21	19:47—20:18	His last days
Apr. 22	20:19-47	His last days
Apr. 23	ch. 21	His last days
Apr. 24	22:1-38	The last supper
Apr. 25	22:39-71	Garden and arrest
Apr. 26	23:1-32	Being judged
Apr. 27	23:33-56	Being crucified
8. Resurrection and ascension	ch. 24	
Apr. 28	24:1-12	Man of resurrection
Apr. 29	24:13-49	Messages in His appearance
	24:50-53	Man in heaven
1. From divinity to humanity	1:1-14	
Apr. 30	1:1-14	The testimony of two Johns
2. John the Baptist's testimony and his disciples	1:15-51	
	1:15-34	John the Baptist's testimony

May 1	1:35-51	Five disciples' testimony
3. Earlier divine deeds and testimonies in Galilee, Judea, chs. 2—4 and Samaria		
May 2	2:1-12	In Cana
	2:13-25	In the temple
May 3	3:1-21	Dialogue with Nicodemus
	3:22-36	In Judea
May 4	4:1-26	In Sychar
May 5	4:27-42	In Sychar
	4:43-54	In Cana
4. Later divine deeds and testimonies to the Jews chs. 5—12		
May 6	5:1-9	Divine deed by the pool
	5:10-18	Speech in the temple
May 7	5:19-47	Speech in the temple
May 8	6:1-14	Divine deed of the five loaves and two fishes
	6:15-21	Divine deed of walking on the sea
May 9	6:22-71	Speech by the seashore
May 10	7:1-24	Debates in the temple
May 11	7:25-53	Debates in the temple
May 12	8:1-30	Debates in the temple
May 13	8:31-59	Debates in the temple
May 14	9:1-7	Divine deed of the blind receiving sight
	9:8-41	The dispute that followed
May 15	10:1-18	Parable of the good shepherd
May 16	10:19-42	The dispute that followed

May 17	11:1-16	Lazarus resurrected
May 18	11:17-46	Lazarus resurrected
	11:47-57	Plotting to kill Jesus
May 19	12:1-19	Testimonies of the crowd
May 20	12:20-50	The last appeal by Christ

5. Jesus' testimony to His disciples
chs. 13—17

May 21	13:1-20	Divine deed at supper Prophesying the
May 22	13:21-38	betrayal and denial of the Lord
May 23	ch. 14	Speech at the table
May 24	ch. 15	Speech at the table
May 25	ch. 16	Speech at the table
May 26	ch. 17	Prayer after supper

6. Jesus' testimony before the priests and Pilate
chs. 18—19

May 27	18:1-27	Before the high priests
May 28	18:28—19:16	Before Pilate
May 29	19:17-42	Crucified

7. Divine deed and testimony of resurrection
chs. 20—21

May 30	ch. 20	Mary and the disciples
May 31	ch. 21	Peter's restoration

The Acts of the Apostles

Key Words—To Be Witnesses

1. In Jerusalem **1:1—8:3**

June 1	1:1-14	Charge to the disciples
June 2	1:15-26	Charge to the disciples
June 3	2:1-4	The day the church was born
	2:5-13	Being witnesses in Jerusalem
June 4	2:14-47	Being witnesses in Jerusalem

June 5	ch. 3	Being witnesses in Jerusalem
June 6	4:1-12	Being witnesses in Jerusalem
June 7	4:13-31	Being witnesses in Jerusalem
June 8	4:32—5:11	The church established and purified
June 9	5:12-32	Testimony and persecution
June 10	5:33-42	Testimony and persecution
June 11	6:1-6	Choosing seven men
	6:7-15	Testimony and persecution
June 12	7:1-19	Testimony and persecution
June 13	7:20-40	Testimony and persecution
June 14	7:41—8:3	Testimony and persecution
2. To Samaria and Africa		
	8:4—11:18	
June 15	8:4-25	Being witnesses in Samaria
June 16	8:26-40	Being witnesses in Africa
June 17	9:1-30	Witness chosen for the nations
June 18	9:31-43	The number in the church increasing
June 19	10:1-23	Gentiles being added
June 20	10:24-48	Gentiles being added
June 21	11:1-18	Gentiles being added
3. To Asia Minor		
	11:19—15:35	
June 22	11:19-30	Being witnesses and persecuted in Asia
June 23	ch. 12	Being witnesses and persecuted in Asia
June 24	13:1-15	Paul's first preaching journey
June 25	13:16-41	Paul's first preaching journey
June 26	13:42—14:7	Paul's first preaching journey
June 27	14:8-28	Paul's first preaching journey
June 28	15:1-35	The church's council and announcement
4. To Europe		
	15:36—26:32	
June 29	15:36—16:15	Paul's second preaching journey
June 30	16:16-40	Paul's second preaching journey

July 1	ch. 17	Paul's second preaching journey
July 2	18:1-22	Paul's second preaching journey
July 3	18:23—19:20	Paul's third preaching journey
July 4	19:21-41	Paul's third preaching journey
July 5	20:1-16	Paul's third preaching journey
July 6	20:17-38	Paul's third preaching journey
July 7	21:1-16	Paul's third preaching journey
July 8	21:17-40	Paul in Jerusalem
July 9	ch. 22	Paul in Jerusalem
July 10	23:1-11	Paul in Jerusalem
July 11	23:12-30	Paul in Jerusalem
July 12	23:31—24:9	Paul in Caesarea
July 13	24:10-27	Paul in Caesarea
July 14	ch. 25	Paul in Caesarea
July 15	ch. 26	Paul in Caesarea
5. To Rome	chs. 27—28	
July 16	27:1-26	Paul's journey to Rome
July 17	27:27-44	Paul's journey to Rome
July 18	28:1-15	Paul's journey to Rome
July 19	28:16-31	Paul's testimony in Rome

II. Experience

1. Introduction	1:1-17	
July 20	1:1-7	Blessing
	1:8-12	Thanksgiving and prayer
	1:13-17	Purpose for writing
2. Condemnation	1:18—3:20	
July 21	1:18-32	Gentiles being condemned
July 22	2:1-16	Jews being condemned
July 23	2:17-29	Jews being condemned
July 24	3:1-8	Jews being condemned
	3:9-20	The whole world being condemned
3. Justification	3:21—5:21	

July 25	3:21—4:25	Justification is by faith and not by law
July 26	ch. 5	Justification is by faith and not by law
4. Sanctification	6:1—8:17	
July 27	ch. 6	Sanctification is by joining to the Lord
July 28	ch. 7	Sanctification is by joining to the Lord
July 29	8:1-17	Sanctification is by joining to the Lord
5. Glorification	8:18-39	
July 30	8:18-39	God's purpose being accomplished
6. God's selection	chs. 9—11	
July 31	9:1-18	Hindered by unbelief
Aug. 1	9:19-33	Hindered by unbelief
Aug. 2	ch. 10	Hindered by unbelief
Aug. 3	11:1-12	Hindered by unbelief
Aug. 4	11:13-36	Hindered by unbelief
7. Consecration	12:1—15:13	
Aug. 5	12:1-8	Humility
	12:9-21	Love
Aug. 6	ch. 13	Obedience
Aug. 7	ch. 14	Heart of compassion
Aug. 8	15:1-13	Heart of compassion
8. Conclusion	15:14—16:27	
Aug. 9	15:14-33	Personal charge
Aug. 10	16:1-24	Personal greetings
	16:25-27	Praise
1. Introduction	1:1-9	
Aug. 11	1:1-3	Blessing
	1:4-9	Thanksgiving

2. Dealing with hearsay 1:10—6:20

Aug. 12	1:10-31	Forming parties
Aug. 13	ch. 2	Forming parties
Aug. 14	ch. 3	Forming parties
Aug. 15	ch. 4	Forming parties
Aug. 16	ch. 5	Error of tolerating sin
Aug. 17	6:1-8	Suing one another
	6:9-20	Sanctification of the body

3. Replies to questions chs. 7—11

Aug. 18	7:1-24	Marriage
Aug. 19	7:25-40	Marriage
Aug. 20	ch. 8	Things lawful and expedient
Aug. 21	ch. 9	Things lawful and expedient
Aug. 22	10:1—11:1	Things lawful and expedient
Aug. 23	11:2-34	Order in the meeting

4. Spiritual gifts chs. 12—14

Aug. 24	12:1-13	Joining in the spirit
	12:14-27	Members of the Body
	12:28-30	Functions in the church
Aug. 25	12:31—13:13	The greater gift—love
Aug. 26	ch. 14	The safe rule—building up

5. The final victory ch. 15

Aug. 27	15:1-28	Christ's resurrection
Aug. 28	15:29-58	Christians' resurrection

6. Conclusion ch. 16

Aug. 29	16:1-18	Fellowship of practical matters
	16:19-24	Greetings

1. Introduction 1:1—2:11

Aug. 30	1:1-2	Blessing
	1:3—2:11	Personal vindication

2. Ministry and minister of the word 2:12—7:16

Aug. 31	2:12—3:18	Extraordinary development
Sept. 1	4:1-6	Extraordinary development
	4:7—5:8	Hardship of preaching
Sept. 2	5:9-19	Purpose of preaching
Sept. 3	5:20—6:18	The appeal of the preacher
Sept. 4	ch. 7	The appeal of the preacher
3. Giving and receiving	chs. 8—9	
Sept. 5	ch. 8	Donation for the saints
Sept. 6	ch. 9	Donation for the saints
4. Witness of the apostleship	10:1—13:11	
Sept. 7	ch. 10	Reply to criticisms
Sept. 8	ch. 11	Reply to criticisms
Sept. 9	ch. 12	Reply to criticisms
Sept. 10	13:1-11	Reply to criticisms
5. Conclusion	13:12-14	
	13:12-14	Greetings
1. Introduction	1:1-10	
Sept. 11	1:1-5	Blessing
	1:6-10	Reason for writing
2. Paul's apostolic authority	1:11—2:21	
	1:11-17	From God
Sept. 12	1:18—2:21	Recognized by the church
3. Proclamation of the gospel	3:1—5:1	
Sept. 13	3:1-14	Justification by faith
	3:15-29	The law and the gospel
Sept. 14	4—5:1	Slaves or children
4. Paul's appeal	5:2—6:10	
Sept. 15	5:2-12	Walk in freedom

	5:13-15	Walk in love
Sept. 16	5:16—6:10	Walk by the Spirit
5. Conclusion	6:11-18	
	6:11-17	Personal testimony
	6:18	Blessing
1. Introduction	1:1-2	
Sept. 17	1:1-2	Blessing
2. God's will	1:3-23	
	1:3-14	Being made known
	1:15-23	Praying for this
3. Heavenly position	chs. 2—3	
Sept. 18	ch. 2	God's dwelling place
Sept. 19	3:1-13	Revelation to the universe
	3:14-21	Praying for this
4. Conduct on the earth	4:1—6:9	
Sept. 20	4:1-16	Christ's Body
	4:17-32	Christ-like living
Sept. 21	ch. 5	Christ-like living
Sept. 22	6:1-9	Christ-like living
5. Spiritual warfare	6:10-20	
	6:10-17	Armor
	6:18-20	Practical application
6. Conclusion	6:21-24	
	6:21-24	Greetings
1. Introduction	1:1-11	
Sept. 23	1:1-2	Blessing
	1:3-8	Thanksgiving
	1:9-11	Prayer
2. Abundant joy in Christ	1:12-30	
Sept. 24	1:12-30	Regardless of what happened

3. Rejoicing in the day of Christ ch. 2

Sept. 25 2:1-18 Fruitful end
Sept. 26 2:19-30 Fruitful end

4. Joy from knowing Christ ch. 3

Sept. 27 ch. 3 Value judgment

5. Always rejoicing in Christ 4:1-20

Sept. 28 4:1-20 Under all circumstances

6. Conclusion 4:21-23

4:21-23 Greetings

1. Introduction 1:1-14

Sept. 29 1:1-2 Blessing
1:3-14 Thanksgiving and prayer

2. Exaltation of Christ 1:15-29

Sept. 30 1:15-29 The fullness in Him

3. Warnings 2:1—3:4

Oct. 1 2:1-15 Holding the Head
Oct. 2 2:16—3:4 Holding the Head

4. Exhortation 3:5—4:6

Oct. 3 3:5—4:6 Putting on Christ

5. Conclusion 4:7-18

Oct. 4 4:7-18 Greetings

Oct. 5 1:1 Blessing

1:2-10 Waiting for His coming

Oct. 6 ch. 2 The joy at His coming

Oct. 7 ch. 3 The holiness at His coming

Oct. 8 ch. 4 The reunion at His coming

Oct. 9 5:1-25 Being kept until His coming

5:26-28 Greetings

Oct. 10	1:1-2 1:3-12	Blessing Revelation of Jesus Christ
Oct. 11	ch. 2	Destruction of the man of sin
Oct. 12	3:1-5 3:6-15 3:16-18	Patiently waiting Quietly working Greetings
Oct. 13	1:1-2 1:3-20	Blessing Commission
Oct. 14	ch. 2	Commission
Oct. 15	ch. 3	Qualification
Oct. 16	ch. 4	Warnings
Oct. 17	ch. 5	Teachings
Oct. 18	6:1-10 6:11-20 6:21	Teachings Keeping the charge Greetings
1. Introduction	1:1-5	
Oct. 19	1:1-2 1:3-5	Blessing Thanksgiving
2. Paul's final word	1:6—4:8	
	1:6—2:2	Teacher's responsibility
Oct. 20	2:3-13 2:14-26	Soldier's calling Workman's expectation
Oct. 21	ch. 3	Days of testing
Oct. 22	4:1-8	Evangelist's responsibility
3. Conclusion	4:9-22	
	4:9-18 4:19-22	The word at the end Greetings
1. Introduction	1:1-4	

Oct. 23	1:1-4	Blessing
2. Order in the church	1:5—3:11	
	1:5-16	Elder's qualities
Oct. 24	2:1-14	Elder's teaching
Oct. 25	2:15—3:11	Elder's authority
3. Conclusion	3:12-15	
	3:12-14	Personal arrangement
	3:15	Greetings
Oct. 26	vv. 1-3	Blessing
	vv. 4-7	Thanksgiving
	vv. 8-22	Interceding for Onesimus
	vv. 23-25	Greetings

1. Christ's salvation	great chs. 1—10	
Oct. 27	ch. 1	Christ—more excellent than the angels
Oct. 28	ch. 2	Christ—more excellent than the angels
	(2:1-4	Exhortation and warning)
Oct. 29	3:1-6	Christ—more excellent than Moses
	3:7-19	Exhortation and warning
Oct. 30	4:1-7	Exhortation and warning
	4:8-10	Christ—more excellent than Joshua
	4:11-13	Exhortation and warning
Oct. 31	4:14—5:10	Christ—more excellent than Aaron
Nov. 1	5:11—6:20	Christ—more excellent than Aaron
	(5:11—6:12	Exhortation and warning)
Nov. 2	7:1-10	Christ—more excellent than

		Aaron
Nov. 3	7:11-28	Christ—more excellent than Aaron
Nov. 4	ch. 8	Christ's covenant being more excellent
Nov. 5	9:1-22	Christ's covenant being more excellent
Nov. 6	9:23—10:18	Christ being a more excellent sacrifice
Nov. 7	10:19-39	Exhortation and warning
2. Faith being the great pathway		ch. 11
Nov. 8	11:1-16	Considering the witnesses
Nov. 9	11:17-40	Considering the witnesses
3. Living of faith		12:1—13:19
Nov. 10	12:1-13	"Go forth unto Him"
Nov. 11	12:14-29	"Go forth unto Him"
Nov. 12	13:1-19	"Go forth unto Him"
4. Conclusion		13:20-25
	13:20-25	Prayer and greetings

James

Key Word—Godliness

Nov. 13	1:1	Blessing
	1:2-12	Testing by trials
Nov. 14	1:13-21	Testing by temptations
	1:22-27	Testing by God's word
Nov. 15	2:1-9	Testing by respect of persons
	2:10-13	Testing by perfect submission
Nov. 16	2:14-26	Testing by good works
Nov. 17	ch. 3	Testing by words spoken
Nov. 18	4:1—5:6	Testing by the world
Nov. 19	5:7-12	Testing by the Lord's coming again
	5:13-20	Testing by prayers

Nov. 20	1:1-2	Blessing
	1:3-12	The great salvation
Nov. 21	1:13-25	Living a sanctified life
Nov. 22	2:1-10	Practicing the royal priesthood
Nov. 23	2:11—3:7	Submitting to one another
Nov. 24	3:8-22	Glorifying God in afflictions
Nov. 25	ch. 4	Glorifying God in afflictions
Nov. 26	5:1-11	Exhorting elders and younger ones
	5:12-14	Greetings
Nov. 27	1:1-2	Blessing
	1:3-11	Adding diligence
Nov. 28	1:12-21	Remembrance
Nov. 29	ch. 2	On guard
Nov. 30	3:1-7	The last days
	3:8-13	The day of the Lord
	3:14-18	Growth

1 John

Key Words—Fellowship and Knowledge

Dec. 1	1:1-4	Children and their fellowship
	1:5—2:6	Children and their sins
Dec. 2	2:7-17	Children and their sins
Dec. 3	2:18-29	Children and their sins
Dec. 4	3:1-10	Children and their sins
Dec. 5	3:11-24	Children and each other
Dec. 6	4:1-6	Children and their enemies
	4:7—5:3	Children and their love
	5:4-12	Children and their faith
Dec. 7	5:13-21	Children and their knowledge

Dec. 8	vv. 1-3	Blessing
	vv. 4-11	Reception in Christ's fellowship
	vv. 12-13	Conclusion and greetings
Dec. 9	vv. 1-4	Blessing
	vv. 5-12	Receiving people for Christ's sake
	vv. 13-14	Conclusion and greetings
Dec. 10	vv. 1-2	Blessing
	vv. 3-19	A living outside of God's love
	vv. 20-23	A living within God's love
	vv. 24-25	Praise

III. Prophecy

Dec. 11	1:1-3	Introduction
	1:4-5a	Greetings and blessing
	1:5b-7	Jubilation
1. Things seen	1:8-20	
	1:8	God's testimony
	1:9	John on the island of Patmos
	1:10-16	Vision of the glorious Christ
	1:17-20	The Lord's commission
2. Things present		chs. 2—3
Dec. 12	2:1-7	Ephesus (the post-apostolic church)
	2:8-11	Smyrna (the suffering church)
	2:12-17	Pergamos (the corrupted church)

		church)
	2:18-29	Thyatira (the Roman church)
Dec. 13	3:1-6	Sardis (the reformed church)
	3:7-13	Philadelphia (the faithful little flock)
	3:14-22	Laodicea (the apostate church)

3. Things to come chs. 4—22

Dec. 14	4:1	The heaven opened
	4:2-3	The throne
	4:4	Twenty-four elders
	4:5-6	Scenery regarding the throne
	4:7-8	Four living creatures
	4:9-11	Praise
Dec. 15	5:1-4	Who is worthy to open the scroll?
	5:5-7	The Lion-lamb
	5:8-10	Praises from the living creatures and the elders
	5:11-14	Praises from the angels and the creation
Dec. 16	6:1-2	First seal—white horse
	6:3-4	Second seal—red horse
	6:5-6	Third seal—black horse
	6:7-8	Fourth seal—pale horse
	6:9-11	Fifth seal—crying beneath the altar
	6:12-17	Shaking of the earth and heaven
Dec. 17	7:1-8	The remnant of Israel
	7:9-17	The raptured Gentiles
Dec. 18	8:1-2	Seventh seal
	8:3-5	Scenery in heaven after the

seventh seal

	8:6-7	First trumpet
	8:8-9	Second trumpet
	8:10-11	Third trumpet
	8:12-13	Fourth trumpet
Dec. 19	9:1-12	Fifth trumpet—first woe
	9:13-21	Sixth trumpet—second woe
Dec. 20	10:1-7	The strong Angel
	10:8-11	The little scroll
	11:1-2	The temple and the altar
Dec. 21	11:3-12	Two witnesses
	11:13-14	Great earthquake
Dec. 22	11:15-18	Seventh trumpet
	11:19	Scenery in heaven after the seventh trumpet
	12:1-5	Great vision
	12:6	The woman fleeing
	12:7-9	War in heaven
	12:10-12	Loud voice
	12:13-18	Dragon persecuting the woman
Dec. 23	13:1-10	Beast from the sea
	13:11-18	Beast from the earth
Dec. 24	14:1-5	Firstfruits
	14:6-7	First angel
	14:8	Second angel
	14:9-12	Third angel
	14:13	Blessing of the dead
	14:14-16	Reaping the harvest
	14:17-20	Gathering the grapes

Dec. 25	15:1	The last seven plagues
	15:2-4	Praising
	15:5-8	Scene in heaven before the seven plagues
	16:1-2	First bowl
	16:3	Second bowl
	16:4-7	Third bowl
	16:8-9	Fourth bowl
	16:10-11	Fifth bowl
	16:12	Sixth bowl
	16:13-16	Armageddon
	16:17-21	Seventh bowl
Dec. 26	17:1-6	Describing the woman
	17:7-15	Angel explaining
	17:16-18	Angel prophesying
Dec. 27	18:1-3	Angel crying
	18:4-5	Calling for separation
	18:6-8	Her pride and her destruction
	18:9-19	Weeping over Babylon
	18:20	Rejoicing in heaven
	18:21-24	Utter destruction
Dec. 28	19:1-6	Praising in heaven
	19:7-10	Marriage feast of the Lamb
	19:11-16	Christ coming again
	19:17-21	War at Armageddon
Dec. 29	20:1-3	Satan bound
	20:4-6	Millennial kingdom
	20:7-9	The last rebellion
	20:10	Satan's eternity

Dec. 30	20:11-15	Judgment of the white throne
	21:1-8	New heaven and new earth
	21:9-27	New Jerusalem
Dec. 31	22:1-2	Water and river of life
	22:3-5	Seven kinds of glory of the redeemed
	22:6-11	Angel's message
	22:12-13	The Lord's message
	22:14-15	Two categories of people
	22:16	Christ's own testimony
	22:17	Response from the Spirit and the bride
	22:18-19	The final warning
	22:20-21	The final message, prayer, and blessing