

《Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship(Vol.6)》

CONTENTS

CONFERENCES, MESSAGES, AND FELLOWSHIP (6)

1. Preface

SECTION SIXTEEN: MISCELLANEOUS MESSAGES AND FELLOWSHIP

2. God's Christ and the Things of God (Chapter One Hundred Sixty)
3. Christ in the Law, Psalms, and Prophets (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-One)
4. Spiritual Reality—Three Views (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Two)
5. The Work of the Holy Spirit (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Three)
6. Light and Knowledge (Light Versus Knowledge) (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Four)
7. The Place of Women (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Five)
8. Anointing in Relation to Ministry (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Six)
9. Enduement (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Seven)
10. Law in Romans and Galatians (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Eight)
11. The Christian's Relationship to the Law (Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Nine)
12. Free from Law (Chapter One Hundred Seventy)
13. The Lord's Prayer (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-One)
14. The Hannah Ministry (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Two)
15. God's Eternal Purpose (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Three)
16. Romans 12 (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Four)
17. God's Building (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Five)
18. Paul and Agabus (Guidance) (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Six)
19. Priestly Ministry (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Seven)
20. "The Joy of the Lord is Your Strenght" (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Eight)
21. The Faith of God (Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Nine)
22. Faith (Chapter One Hundred Eighty)
23. The Cup (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-One)

24. Separation from the Wooden and Earthen Vessels (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Two)
25. The Limitations of God (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Three)
26. The Offense of the Lord (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Four)
27. Fellow Workers (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Five)
28. God's Ways (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Six)
29. The Two Wills of God (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Seven)
30. The Will of God (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Eight)
31. The Suppression of Affections (Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Nine)
32. The Present Will of God (Chapter One Hundred Ninety)
33. Conformity (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-One)
34. The Four Aspects of the Lord's Death (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Two)
35. Four Kinds of Discipline (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Three)
36. Five Kinds of Forgiveness (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Four)
37. Exposition on Luke 17:20-37 (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Five)
38. Romans 14:1–15:7 (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Six)
39. Hosea 14:5-8 (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Seven)
40. The Book of the Revelation (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Eight)
41. Revelation 1:9 (Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Nine)
42. Worship (Chapter Two Hundred)
43. Prayer (Chapter Two Hundred One)

PREFACE

Volume 46 of The Collected Works includes miscellaneous messages given by Watchman Nee throughout the period of time covered in Set 2 of The Collected Works. They are primarily notes on messages and fellowship from Sister Elizabeth Rademacher's collection. Since these notes were originally transcribed in English, translation from Chinese was not required.

SECTION SIXTEEN

MISCELLANEOUS MESSAGES AND FELLOWSHIP

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY

GOD'S CHRIST

AND THE THINGS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:15-19; 2:6; Rom. 8:32; John 6:35; 8:12; 11:25; 14:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:10

Christ is the fullness of God. All the fullness dwells in Him. The word fullness is simple yet very puzzling. What does the phrase the fullness of God mean? We must turn to the Old Testament for an explanation. There God uses this word in a peculiar way. The Psalms say, "The earth...and the fullness thereof" (24:1), and "The sea and its fullness" (96:11). The earth and the fullness mean the earth and the things of the earth; the sea and the fullness mean the sea and all the things in the sea. Christ as the fullness of God means Christ is the things of God. The things of God as His fullness dwell in Christ.

What does Christ being the things of God mean? We understand that Christ is a person, and we think that there are things of God apart from Him. There are a thousand things, and there is Christ. But no! All things are in Christ. All the things of God are Christ. He said, "I am the bread." He did not say He was the giver of the bread; He is the thing called bread. He said, "I am the light." He did not say He is the giver of light. Again He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." He is the very thing itself.

We think of Christ as being a living person, but we also want to have some truth in addition to that. But He is the truth. He presented Himself not only as a person, as the Son of God, but also as the fullness of God. All the things of God are simply bits of Christ. Christ as a person is the very things of God. For us to know more of God and to receive grace from Him in practical issues, Paul not only tried to lead us to see that Christ is a person, but he also said that Christ was "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). He did not say that Christ had borne our sins, or that He was our deliverer, but that Christ had become sin, that is, He became a thing. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 Christ became wisdom to us. Wisdom is itself a thing and it comprises three things: righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. This verse does not say that He was our Justifier; it says that He is our righteousness. This verse does not say that He is the Sanctifier; it says that He is made unto us sanctification. It also does not say that Christ is our Redeemer; it says that He is

made redemption unto us. He is the thing itself. Instead of saying that He is a person, this verse says that He is these things. What does all this mean?

According to our concept, God is a great Giver, a fountain, and His chief gift is His Son—the greatest gift that heaven could have ever made. But we also see that we need grace, peace, righteousness, goodness, etc. We need many things. Therefore, we come as those who are needy and ask for these things. Our needs are all different, so we think that the supplies must also be different. But this is not the way God works. We make the mistake of seeking these things as things. We seek righteousness, as if we receive Christ and then later receive righteousness. We seek sanctification, as if we receive Christ and then later receive sanctification. But if we have a vital relationship with the Lord, we get these things! This is a most important principle. We cannot have anything apart from Christ. This is the reason we find so many occurrences of the phrase in Christ in the New Testament. It is always in Him. Everything is in Him. We cannot receive anything apart from Him. We have to first get in touch with Christ and then we will receive the things.

First Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ has been made righteousness to us. The person becomes the thing. We all know that when we come before God, the question of righteousness arises. If we do not go out to visit someone, we do not think of our clothes! We think of them only when we have to meet someone. Only when we approach God does the question of what we appear in arise. The presence of God always produces a sense of the need of righteousness. Our first thought is, "What have I done?" or "What have I not done?" Our whole thought is on the thing. We wonder what we have to bring before God. Praise the Lord, our righteousness is not based on whether we have prayed, witnessed, or read our Bible. Christ is our righteousness! It is a great thing to see this. None of us could ever have true rest if this were not settled. We could easily be put out of the battle, and we would have ups and downs all the time. If we could only come to see that our righteousness is a person! My righteousness is not my patience, but Christ. My patience may fail, but not my righteousness. My love may wane, but not my righteousness, for my righteousness is not in me but in Christ. If He does not change, then my righteousness will never change. We try to look for some thing within. But we should not seek righteousness as a thing; we should seek Christ. Oh, to be delivered from things and to know Christ! He is the things of God! This is the foundation. Unless this question is fundamentally settled, there will be no rest. No matter how much I have failed, my righteousness has not

changed. No matter how lofty a position I may have attained or how successful I may seem, my righteousness is still Christ. There is always a danger of looking at our attainments instead of Christ, or feeling that we have arrived at something. Someone may think that since he has not lost his temper, he can pray louder! No, it is not what we have or have not done; we do not stand on that ground but on the ground of the righteousness of Christ.

Praise the Lord! This is not all. Christ is made unto us sanctification. All righteousness has to do with God; that is, it is on the objective side. But because we are walking on the earth, we also need something subjective. How can we be meek, loving, and patient? We try to look into ourselves to find what we need and then go to God with these needs. We think of our needs in terms of things, perhaps meekness or humility, and we pray for them. We may pray a great deal and never get them. We think that we need a new part as if it were a question of parts and accessories! No, we need a new "car"! We need the Lord Himself, not a thing. If we seek patience we will never get it, but if we seek Christ we will get patience. The person leads to the thing. If we merely have patience, what we have belongs to the natural life and is not divine. God does not dispense things. God has only one answer to all of our difficulties—His Son. God has only one remedy and that is His Son. God does not give us power to be holy, but He lets His Son live His life of holiness in us and through us. Our life on earth has nothing to do with things, even divine things; our life has to do with Him. It is not that we fight and try to resist, but that He does it all. Whatever lack we have, we can trust Him to be the answer to that lack. I cannot emphasize the word be too much. When He is obeyed, trusted, and believed, we will find that Christ has been made unto us that very thing. So, what need have we? We may think that all our needs are different, but the fullness of Christ answers them all.

Christ is made unto us redemption. This is looked upon as being something in the past, but the full effect of it will be manifested in the future. It will be manifested at our translation, or resurrection, at the redemption of our body. How can we be raised? Christ is our redemption. What does that mean? It is Christ who is going to be taken up. Something of Christ in us is going to be raised. I was once at the funeral of a brother, and there were two funerals going on at the same time. I asked a bystander a question. Pointing to our brother who had gone to be with the Lord, I said, "Do you know what we are doing to his body?" "Burying him," the bystander answered. "Oh, no," I replied, "The man who is not a Christian is being buried." "Then what are you doing with him?" he asked. I

said, "We are planting him." There is a difference between burying and planting. With the latter there is something that will come up. Nothing in us will survive death; only Christ will survive death. What makes it possible for us to come up? The Lord of life who cannot be held makes it possible. Anything that does not come from heaven can never go into heaven. Nothing of ourselves will ever be raised; only the Lord will be raised. Now we can see why Paul said, "To know Him" (Phil. 3:10). Hence, it is "Who will deliver me?" (Rom. 7:24), not "What will deliver me?" It is a question of who. Our experience is not one of adding one experience of grace to another experience of grace. We grow, but we grow in the knowledge of the Lord. This knowledge is the knowledge of Him as all the things. Romans 8:32 says, "With Him freely give us all things." All things are with Him because all things are in Him. Blessed be the name of the Son of God! (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

CHRIST IN THE LAW, PSALMS, AND PROPHETS

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:25-27; Heb. 11:24-26; John 12:41; 8:56; Acts 2:25-28, 30-31; 1 Cor. 7:25b, 40b

When our Lord was on the earth, He plainly stated that He could be found in the Old Testament: in the books of Moses, in the psalms of David, and in the prophetic writings. We readily admit that, in addition to the law, psalms, and prophecies in the Old Testament, there is also Christ. My question today is not, "How many places can we find Christ in the law, psalms, and prophecies?" My question is, "How can we find Christ there?" I am not asking how many passages refer to Christ, or how many passages tell us things about Him. I am asking how did He come to be in the Scriptures at all? How is this possible? He is not only spoken about in the Scriptures, He Himself is in the Scriptures. We see Christ in the law and say, "Here are the types of Christ." We see Christ in the psalms and say, "Here are the messianic psalms." We see Christ in the prophets and say, "Here are the prophecies of Christ." When we think of Christ being in the Scriptures, we think in terms of types, messianic psalms, and prophecies. But is Christ merely written about in the Word of God, or is there something beyond this? We read of Joseph and others and speak of them as being types of Christ, because there was much about their lives that was like His. But if that is all, then the manifestation of Christ in the Scriptures is very superficial. Let us look for a

moment at the law, the psalms, and the prophets and see how Christ is found there.

THE LAW

In Genesis 4 we see Abel offering sacrifices. God did not instruct Abel to offer sacrifices. Abel just offered them spontaneously. Christ in him moved to offer in that way. Christ in him expressed Himself in that way. In Hebrews 11 we read that Moses saw Christ and esteemed the riches of Egypt as filth. When we read the law of Moses we read of goats, bulls, and other sacrificial animals, and we read of a tabernacle. But Moses did not see just these things, he saw Christ. We read of Abraham: "Your father Abraham exulted that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced" (John 8:56). Abraham saw Christ.

THE PSALMS

David records his joys and sorrows; he tells us of his sighs and groanings, of his hopes and fears. We say, "Oh, how they speak of Christ!" Then we call these records messianic psalms. But these psalms are messianic psalms not only because they foretell the experiences of the Messiah, but because the Messiah Himself is in them. David wrote of his own experiences, but because it was the life of the Lord that took him through these things, the Word declares that these things were written of the Lord (see Acts 2:25-31). We touch Christ Himself in the record of David's experiences. We meet David, but we also meet Christ in David. In the messianic psalms it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the words that refer to David and the words that refer to Christ. There is no possibility of separating Christ from His people.

THE PROPHETS

When we read the prophetic books, we say, "Here are prophecies that foretell of Christ; therefore, Christ can be found in the prophets." But is the manifestation of Christ in the prophets just an external matter? Is it merely objective? Many people say that the Old Testament prophets did not know Christ, and that they were merely inspired to write of Him for our sake. But was Isaiah in the dark as to the things he wrote? Our Lord says that Isaiah wrote what he wrote "because he saw His glory and spoke concerning Him" (John 12:41). No one is a prophet who does not see Christ; no one is a prophet who does not see the glory of Christ. Seeing is conditional to prophecy. It was so in the Old Testament days, and it is so today. We read of David's sighs, cries, and desires and say, "That's David!" No, that is Christ! The record of what Christ in David went through produced the messianic psalms. The same is true with all the prophecies. It was not that God

gave the prophets certain knowledge and then they recorded it; rather, the life of Christ in them took them through certain experiences and they recorded them. Throughout the Old Testament we do not find just types that foreshadow Christ and prophecies that foretell of Christ. In many matters and through many persons, Christ expressed Himself, and the record of these persons makes up the Word of God.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Read 1 Corinthians 7 and note verses 12, 25, and 40. Some modernists concede that there is a divine element in the Bible. But we have to go one step beyond and say, "Praise God, there is a human element in the Bible." God speaks words from heaven, but these words pass through human channels. Every true prophet utters the words of God, but they are not just words that he has read in the Bible. They are the expression of the life of the Lord in him, and what this life has taken him through. They are words that have been burned into his very being in the furnace of experience and then spoken out. The narration of such an experience is not the speaking of mere words. Prophecy is nothing objective.

Consider the length of time it took to write the Word of God. And consider the length of time that it takes for some to prepare a sermon. It may take as long as ten years! As we look at Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, etc., we see a specific manifestation of Christ by seeing the specific way that Christ took each of these through their circumstances. If there could be a Moses or a David who was an earthen vessel to contain this heavenly treasure, we can say, "Lord, here is another earthen vessel to contain heavenly treasure." It is in this way that we receive the Word of God. It is subjective, not objective; experiential, not just intellectual.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

SPIRITUAL REALITY—THREE VIEWS

(Editor's Note: This article is similar to the first part of "The Holy Spirit and Reality" in Volume 36 of The Collected Works. We have included this chapter in this volume because it contains some additional utterance.)

Scripture Reading: John 4:23; 16:13; 3:5; 6:51-54; Matt. 26:26-29; 16:18-19; 18:17-18; Acts 13:2-4; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:24-25; Col. 2:11-12

Christianity is not a combination of externalities. It is "the truth," that is, the reality. So much that is merely external has become associated with Christianity

that it is difficult to discern what truly is of God today. Let us consider this vital question: What is of God? What is reality?

The Word of God tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of reality, and that He will lead us into all reality. Anything which can separate us from the leading of the Spirit is not reality. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit. Outside the sphere of the Spirit, which is the sphere of God, there is no reality. Only that which is spiritual is real, and spiritual things can only subsist in the realm of the Spirit. If something is separated from the Spirit, it is dead. If we are to be brought into any spiritual reality, it can only be through our dependence on the Spirit of reality. Whatever we can arrive at by thought and study, by the seeing of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, is outside the realm of eternal verity; it is not the truth. In this light, let us briefly examine baptism, the Lord's supper, and the church. There are three different viewpoints regarding these: the materialistic viewpoint, the intellectual viewpoint, and the spiritual viewpoint. In other words, we might refer to these viewpoints as Romish, Reformist, and Christian.

THE MATERIALISTIC VIEWPOINT

Baptism

The materialist fixes his gaze on the water and insists that without material water there is no new birth. This begets the Romish doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

The Lord's Supper

The materialist notes the word, "This is My body" (Matt. 26:26), and looking at the material bread, he insists that a change must take place in the bread so that it may be truly called Christ's body, because the Word is true. The result is the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation.

The Church

The materialist sees the outward form of the church and sees in the Word that there is only one church. The result is the Romish doctrine of the one true church.

THE INTELLECTUAL VIEWPOINT

The intellectual man is puzzled by the seeming inconsistency between the Word of God and so-called Christianity, so he brings his mind to bear on the problems that arise.

Baptism

He says there is the true and the false, the real and the unreal, the outward ceremony and the inward reality. However, God makes no such distinctions in His Word.

The Lord's Supper

The reformist says, "This represents the Lord's body; it is a symbol of His body." But the Word of God speaks of nothing concerning representation or symbolism; it speaks of literal fact. It says, "This is My body."

The Church

The reformist solves the inconsistency that he observes by using his interpretation of true and false, real and unreal. Or he says, "There is a church within the church."

THE SPIRITUAL VIEWPOINT

Baptism

The Word does not say that a person's immersion symbolizes his receiving life, but that he actually does receive life. Note the bold declarations that Paul makes about baptism: "Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). According to Paul, baptism is not merely an external rite, an intellectual doctrine, or a representation of eternal reality; for him it is the reality. He does not say that a person's immersion in water typifies his burial with Christ; he says that his immersion is his burial. "We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death." In writing to the Colossians, Paul is no less bold than in writing to the Romans. He says, "Buried together with Him in baptism, in which also you were raised together with Him" (2:12). With Paul there was no such thing as a baptism that did not involve death with Christ, or a baptism that did not involve resurrection with Christ. With him there was no thought that a Christian could experience baptism on a certain date and at a later date enter into the experience of death and resurrection with Christ. No, baptism into Christ is death with Christ, and baptism into Christ is resurrection with Christ. Baptism does not symbolize death; it is death. It does not symbolize resurrection; it is resurrection. Paul knew the reality of burial with the Lord; he was not occupied with baptism either as a doctrine or as a type but only as a reality. When God opens our eyes to see the reality of baptism as Paul saw it, then we,

like him, will not see things from an intellectual or a materialistic viewpoint, but only from God's viewpoint. There will cease to be the doctrine of baptism, and there will cease to be the type of baptism; there will only be baptism. It will be so real to us that there will be no place left for that which is unreal. There will be no such thing as an outward form and inward experience; there will simply be baptism, and baptism will be so real that talking of baptism in any terms other than its reality will be mere infant's babble. You say, "Baptism does not regenerate." I say, "Where can you find a baptism that does not regenerate?" You say, "What Romish heresy!" I say, "We may speak the words Rome speaks, but we are seeing what Rome never saw."

The Lord's Supper

Our Lord's own words regarding the bread and the wine leave no room for the Romish theory of transubstantiation or for the Reformist theory of symbolism. Concerning the bread He said, "This is My body," and of the wine He said, "This is My blood." When He referred to it as His blood, He also referred to it as the fruit of the vine. At the same time it is His blood and it is the fruit of the vine. No transubstantiation has taken place. This fruit of the vine is His blood. The one is the other. There is not the type and the anti-type, the representation and the real; there is only the real. But we need anointed eyes to see. We can only be brought into the reality of the Lord's supper by the Spirit of reality. Paul quoted our Lord, who said, "This cup is the new covenant established in My blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). It is the cup of wine, but it is still the blood. Paul also said, "Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body" (10:17). It is readily admitted that "we" refers to literal persons. How then can the "one bread" be figurative? Literal and figurative language cannot be combined in one phrase. "We who are many" is literal; "one bread" is also literal. "We who are many" is a fact; "one bread" is no less of a fact. For those who have touched spiritual reality in the Lord's table, there is no thought of type or doctrine as we behold the bread and wine. We see only the broken body and the shed blood. For those who have seen the ultimate, the doctrine is the reality and the type is the reality. There is only the reality.

The Church

Today many Christians become quite apprehensive at the very mention of the word church. Whenever the subject is brought up, great precautions are taken to clear the ground lest any confusion arise in the minds of the hearers. Care is taken to differentiate between the true church and the false church. But in the Lord's Word and in the Lord's thought there is no such distinction; the Lord added

no footnote to the Scriptures when He spoke of the church. He did not seek to safeguard the spiritual reality by differentiating between a true and a false, between a real and an unreal, nor did He differentiate between the local and the universal. In the Word of God there is only "the church."

How nervous we are about the church! How reluctant we are to trust the church! We say, "What if the church should make a mistake? What if the church should come to the wrong conclusion?" However, the Lord made no provision for failure of any kind in the church. In His thought no such contingency could arise. We think of the church in Corinth as a church that was far below the standard, but to that church Paul wrote, "You were washed...you were sanctified...you were justified" (1 Cor. 6:11). Whenever Paul mentions the church in his Epistles, he speaks of the church as altogether perfect, and he inserts no modifying clauses to avoid misperception. John does likewise. In Revelation 2 and 3 our eyes detect many failures and mistakes in the churches; but John does not distinguish between the churches that are right and the churches that are wrong. He writes of the seven churches as being seven golden lampstands, lampstands all of gold. Paul saw the church as eternally perfect. He only saw the ultimate reality. He did not see Demas and Alexander the coppersmith and many other false brothers constituting a false church which should be distinguished from the real. Paul knew nothing of a real church and a false church; he knew only the church. Those who, like Paul, see the church, the Body of Christ, see spiritual reality and only that reality. To them there is no church except "the church."

We say, "From God's point of view the church should be this or be that." No, the church is this or is that. The church is what, from God's point of view, it should be. Once we see this eternal reality, we will cease to differentiate between what the church is positionally and what it is actually. Once there is such a seeing, we will not say, when we meet only a few persons or just one person standing on the church ground, "Oh, there are only a few persons here," or "There is only one person here." We will cease to be distressed at the few believers in Acts 13 who made such important decisions. We will cease to think, "There was an inadequate representation of the church there; important decisions should be arrived at by a unanimous vote of the church!" No, we will be satisfied that they saw the spiritual reality and were not bothered by technicalities. When we have seen the reality of the church as those in Acts 13 saw it, we will recognize the church when we meet it. This will be true even with a tiny group of believers who are standing on the church ground experimentally. Although they have no special

standing and are not specially appointed representatives of the church, they are the church nevertheless.

When Ananias went to Saul, he went by himself, and he alone laid hands on Saul. "Out of order!" you exclaim. "Quite contrary to the principles of the Body!" "Independent action!" Not at all! Ananias was on clear Body ground; the whole Body moved when he moved. If you have come into the eternal reality of the church, you yourself can speak and act as the whole church. A movement on the part of one member of the Body who is in the spiritual good of the Body is a movement of the entire Body of Christ. The life of such a one transcends all externalities and transcends all doctrine.

The implications of this are tremendous. We have no business viewing things from the materialistic viewpoint or from the intellectual viewpoint, but only from God's viewpoint. God knows only "the church," and when we permit the Spirit of reality to lead us into the spiritual reality of the church, we will only see the church that God sees. A person who cannot afford to wear pearls will buy a string of paste beads and think of them as being imitation pearls. But a person who can afford to wear pearls does not think of the paste beads as imitation pearls. To her there are not real pearls and false pearls; there are only pearls; the paste beads have no more connection with pearls than any other beads. The only pearls she recognizes as pearls are real pearls.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is the fundamental difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament? In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit gave new birth to people. He also gave new birth to the people of the New Testament. Regarding the matter of the new birth, there is no difference in the Old and New Testaments. All is the work of the Holy Spirit. We must not think of the new birth as something peculiar to the New Testament. The Lord told Nicodemus that as a teacher in Israel he should understand the new birth. What is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? In the Old Testament one thing is certain: we cannot find the Holy Spirit dwelling in human hearts. Of course, He worked in human hearts, but He never dwelt within them. We cannot find one verse in the Old Testament that says the Holy Spirit took up His abode in human hearts. In the Old Testament we find the Holy Spirit coming upon, but not in, human beings. In the Septuagint we find epi, upon, used

continuously, but never in. In the New Testament we also find the Holy Spirit coming upon people. This aspect of the Holy Spirit continued, but the Holy Spirit did more than that. On the night the Lord was betrayed, He said, "He abides with you and shall be in you" (John 14:17b). This was something quite new. Thereafter men are said to be temples of the Holy Spirit. Being temples of the Holy Spirit means that the Holy Spirit lives within men.

In the New Testament we find two aspects of the Spirit's work: (1) His coming upon men, and (2) His dwelling within men. His coming upon men is still for power, miracles, and witness. His dwelling within men is for holiness. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is to minister Christ to us, to make Christ ours, to make Him our life, and to make us bear the fruit of holiness.

If we carefully differentiate between the two, we can understand the many misconceptions regarding the Holy Spirit. Many think that if they can only have their "Pentecost," their problems would be settled. But now that you have had your "Pentecost," has it solved your problems related to holiness? Has it brought you victory over your temper, etc.? This has not settled the question of victory over sin. With this kind of "Pentecost," we find only gifts but not fruit.

When Paul saw the condition of the church in Corinth, he did not say, "Things are too bad here; we must stop everything." Many modern teachers would sweep everything away as carnal and devilish. Paul did not sweep everything away; rather, he brought something in to balance it. First Corinthians 3:16 says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" We must learn what it means to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

Modern teachers teach us that the gifts are childish. They say, "We are grown up. We do not need toys like tongues. Our Christianity is far beyond that stage. We are far beyond the apostles. We can cast them away." However, those who stand for the gifts of the Holy Spirit have nothing in their mind except the gifts; they despise everyone who has not had a similar experience. They say, "On such and such a day I had the baptism of the Holy Spirit." Both of these parties are wrong.

In the New Testament we find these two aspects set before us. From the Lord's last supper until Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was spoken of four times: (1) During the Lord's supper, He was spoken of as the Paraclete, the Comforter. "He will give you another Comforter...He...shall be in you" (John 14:16-17). (2) After the Lord's supper the Holy Spirit was spoken of on the evening of His resurrection. He breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). (3)

Immediately before the Lord was taken up to heaven, He referred to the Holy Spirit when He said, "I send forth the promise of My Father upon you;...stay in the city until you put on power from on high" (Luke 24:49). (4) Finally, the Holy Spirit was referred to on the day of Pentecost.

People generally think that the promise of the Comforter was fulfilled at Pentecost, but this is not borne out by the Word of God. Both chapter fourteen and chapter twenty of the Gospel of John were written by John. In John 14 the Lord promised, "He will give you another Comforter" (v. 16). In John 20 this promise was fulfilled. There is no promise that the Holy Spirit would come upon men before the death of the Lord; before His death He only promised that the Spirit would dwell within men. On the day of His resurrection, He breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 22). What is a breath? A breath is life. If we give up breathing, we give up life. Christ breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Did the Lord say, "You must wait another fifty days"? No. He breathed into them, and they received the Holy Spirit then and there. John 14 was fulfilled in John 20. The promise that was given at the Lord's supper was fulfilled on the day of resurrection. Then the Lord said to His disciples, "Stay in the city until you put on power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Pentecost was the fulfillment of Luke 24. Luke was written by Luke and Acts also was written by Luke! Acts 1 can be considered to be Luke 25 because it is the continuation of Luke. It is only natural that Luke would continue his own narrative.

Based on this we can see that the indwelling Holy Spirit, imparted by the Lord's breathing and based on His resurrection, is for life. The coming-upon Spirit, based on glorification of the Lord, is for service.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

LIGHT AND KNOWLEDGE

(LIGHT VERSUS KNOWLEDGE)

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 4:3

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those who are perishing" (2 Cor. 4:3). Being veiled is related to perishing, but being enlightened means salvation. As soon as we see, we are saved. Salvation does not occur subsequent to seeing; it is simultaneous with seeing. Seeing is salvation. If we hear the doctrine and understand it without anything happening, it is certain that we have not seen the truth. We expect first to see and then to have the corresponding experience;

but the moment we truly see, we have the experience. Seeing and experience are not two steps, but one. There is no interval between the two. We do not need to wait for experience once revelation breaks upon us, because we have the experience the moment revelation breaks upon us. Where there is mere knowledge of the Word, there are human efforts to carry out the Word. When there is revelation, there is no need of such efforts, because we see that everything has been done. For instance, if we merely understand from the Word that we are proud, we will seek to be humble. But the moment we truly see that we are proud, we cease to be proud, and there is no need to try and be humble any longer. The light that reveals the pride slays the pride. We do not need to do anything about it from the moment we see, because it is gone from that moment on. There is no second step necessary; there is no need to even wait for experience, because the experience is simultaneous with revelation. The divine light is enough to do away with the negative, because divine light slays. The divine light is also enough to bring in the positive, because divine light produces experience. Many Christians who lack the light which automatically produces experience resort to works to produce the experience. Works are always an indication of darkness. Where there is light there is experience; hence, there is no need of works.

What the fire discloses the fire destroys (1 Cor. 3:12-15). The fire that enlightens is the fire that consumes. The light that makes manifest is the light that slays. In photography the exposure of the film and the impression of the portrait are not separate processes; they are simultaneous. As soon as there is an exposure there is a portrait. Wherever there is the need of two steps—first knowledge, then experience—there is no Christianity. When a sinner seeks salvation and we present Christ to him so that he sees, there is no need to tell him to pray in order to be saved, because he is saved. When a saved person seeks sanctification and we present Christ to him so that he sees, there is no need to tell him to pray in order to experience Christ as his sanctification, because he already has the experience. If we require that the sinner pray one sentence or that the saint pray one sentence in order to enter into these experiences, the sinner will not be genuinely reborn and the saint will not be genuinely sanctified.

If we have light objectively and eyes subjectively, we will surely see. Many Christians are searching within for light. They analyze and dissect, but they fail to discover what they seek because light comes objectively. Many Christians are trying to see with their hands, instead of their eyes. They grope around and feel

all over, but discover nothing. We do not discover the truth by our feeling, but by our seeing. There are two weaknesses which hinder the advance of believers above all others: resorting to the effort of the will in time of weakness and resorting to introspection in time of darkness. Both of these are contrary to the New Testament and arrest spiritual progress. There are two principles which govern Christian living. These two principles are seeing and believing. The only way to get rid of light is to shut it out. Light will find its way through the tiniest crack.

We need a fundamental seeing, and we also need a daily seeing. Revelation comes to us in a crisis, but thereafter it comes in a process. Progressive seeing is based on fundamental seeing, that is, the seeing that slays the natural life. There is enough power in the light of God to destroy everything that is contrary to the will of God with one stroke. Miss Barber once said that a leaf can hide a star (cf. Matt. 6:22-23).

When we walk in the light, He cleanses us by the blood (1 John 1:7). Walking in the light and cleansing by the blood are not separate experiences; they are simultaneous. We do not need to concern ourselves with the matter of cleansing, because cleansing is automatic as we walk in the light.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

THE PLACE OF WOMEN

God made man for expression; God made woman for storage. God made man a type of doctrine, and woman a type of experience. All doctrines are typified by man; all experiences are typified by woman. For example, Abraham typifies the doctrine of justification by faith, while Sarah typifies obedience and submission, which are experiences. Man represents objective doctrine, and woman represents subjective experience.

Paul said, "Does not even nature itself teach you..." (1 Cor. 11:14). Nature teaches many things, not just things about hair. There are certain things that are beautiful in a man, but these same things are ugly in a woman, and vice versa. Today there are many womanly men and many manly women. A masculine woman and an effeminate man are monsters.

The question is not whether a woman can express herself in the meeting, such as prophesying, etc. The question is whether or not she is standing on her ground as a woman. She can prophesy, but she should prophesy with her head covered, i.e., standing in her position as a woman, not standing in a position as a

man. If a woman takes a man's position, she loses something womanly. It is all right for a woman to prophesy, but she must prophesy as a woman.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

ANOINTING IN RELATION TO MINISTRY

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:27; Lev. 14:14-17; 8:22-30; Psa. 133

All ministry follows anointing. Aaron did not exercise his priestly ministry until after his anointing, and David did not enter into his kingly ministry until he had been anointed. Following his anointing Elisha's prophetic ministry began. Even our Lord's public ministry began after the descent of the Holy Spirit.

We usually associate anointing with power and we are justified in doing so to a certain degree, but we are also apt to miss the significance of the anointing because of that very association. The power of the Holy Spirit in ministry is the result, not the object of the anointing. Its object is sanctification, that is, being set apart for God. Anointing is the first condition of ministry. Only those who are "set apart unto the Lord" are qualified to serve Him (Exo. 13:12). Unless the Lord has said, "This one is Mine," there can be no ministry to the Lord. When Jesus was anointed at the Jordan River, before He entered upon His ministry, a voice from heaven said, "This is My Son, the Beloved." The divine acknowledgment of Christ came first, His ministry followed thereafter. No one can deny that His ministry was powerful, and we are right in saying that power accompanies anointing; however, the anointing is not a matter of power, it is a matter of divine sovereignty. The anointing proclaims that the one anointed is under the authority of God. It is God's recognition that that one has been chosen by Him. On the divine side, the anointing signifies a setting apart by God for Himself. On the human side, it signifies ministry and carries power with it. Power is incidental to the anointing; it is not its primary object. The primary object is the setting apart of an individual to the Lord. Power follows because the Lord assumes the responsibility of empowering all the ministry that He has sanctioned.

For the one who ministers, the anointing does not mean power, it means the presence of the Spirit. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). What registers in the life of the one anointed is the presence of the Spirit; what registers in the lives of others is the presence of power. The anointing teaches us, and it teaches us not through reason but

through its presence. The presence or absence of the anointing always directs our course.

In the cleansing of the leper and in the consecration of Aaron, blood was smeared upon the ear, hand, and foot; thereafter, oil was put upon the bloodsmeared parts. In other places in Scripture, the blood speaks of redemption and is only for God. It is objective, but it is subjective in relation to the cleansing of the leper and the consecration of Aaron. It speaks of a subjective working of death. The blood on Aaron signified that Aaron had died. The blood on the ear, hand, and foot indicated that the Lord's priests should let the cross deal with all they hear, with all their work, and with all their walk. The anointing does not come upon uncrucified flesh; it only comes where the cross has already been. When God wants someone to serve Him, He does not look for quickness of mind or warmth of heart; He looks for the marks of the cross on the ear, hand, and foot.

Our Lord's ministry recorded in Luke 4 was preceded by His baptism. The waters of the Jordan in which He was baptized speak of death. Following this the Spirit descended. This is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament blood and oil. There is no ministry without anointing, but there is no anointing without the cross.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

ENDUEMENT

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:32-41

Let us specially note Acts 2:33, which says, "He has poured out this." The Holy Spirit was poured out by the Lord Jesus at Pentecost. He was poured out on the basis that Jesus was exalted! The Spirit was not poured out because I have a clean heart or have been earnestly seeking and praying, but only because the Lord had been exalted. Israel must be brought to know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ. The Spirit was not poured out to prove that we have been good and earnest, but to let the whole house of Israel know that Jesus is Lord and Christ. How does God prove this? Verse 36 is connected with verse 33 by the word "therefore." What have they seen and heard? The Spirit poured out! The Spirit is poured out in order to prove that Jesus is Lord (cf. John 7:39).

The Spirit has been poured out. This is the gospel. There was a man in China who had this truth presented to him, then he knelt down and prayed, "Lord Jesus, You have received two things from the Father: Glory for You and the Spirit for

me. You have received the glory, but I have not received the Spirit." Then he quickly corrected himself and said, "It is unthinkable that You have not received the glory, therefore it is equally unthinkable that I have not received the Spirit. I praise You that I have received the Spirit." Immediately, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him. The remission of sins is based on what Christ has done on the cross. The Spirit of Christ was poured out because the Lord is on the throne, that is, on the basis of His glorification. The outpouring of the Spirit was based on the condition of His being glorified, not on us being or doing anything. We did nothing for the forgiveness of our sins, and we have done nothing to receive the Spirit. Look at verse 38. The condition for the remission of sins is also the condition for the gift of the Spirit. If we have fulfilled the condition for the remission of sins, we have also fulfilled the condition for receiving the Spirit. If we go to a shop and pay ten shillings for two books but bring only one book back, should we return and pay another five shillings for the one we left behind?

In Acts 8:14-17 the Spirit was poured out upon the Samaritans. Individuals receive the remission of their sins as, for example, the thief on the cross, but the outpouring of the Spirit is not for individuals, but for the whole Body. The outpouring joins all the disconnected members into one Body, just as cement unites separate stones into one building. "For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). In the case of the Samaritans, Philip went out, he was not sent by the church. If the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them when Philip was preaching, the oneness of the Body would have been lost. The apostles laid hands on them to express their identification with them. With this expression of the oneness of the Body, the Spirit fell upon them. At the inception of things, God reveals the governing principles. The Samaritans were saved, but had no fellowship with the Body. This fellowship had to be clearly established before the Holy Spirit could be poured out.

Even though the Spirit has been poured out on all the Body, many of us have not realized it. A room may be full of furniture, but we cannot see until the light is turned on. Although Joseph had reached the place of exaltation in Egypt, his father considered that he was as good as dead. Joseph's brothers could not persuade their father that he was alive, much less that he had been exalted. But when their father saw the chariots, he believed. In the Old Testament chariots represent power.

Acts 10:44 says, "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell." If the Spirit had not acted directly upon the audience and Peter had been called

on to lay hands on the Gentiles as he did on the Samaritans, would he have been willing? The laying on of hands implies identification. Was Peter identified? If he had laid hands on them and the Spirit had fallen, how would the brothers in Jerusalem have reacted? They would have said to Peter, "This is all your fault. If you had not laid hands on the Gentiles nothing would have happened." They were still distinctly Jewish in their outlook. Peter did not lay hands on those gathered at Caesarea; he did not even speak about the Spirit, but while he was in the middle of his speech the Spirit fell. So Peter said, "Can anyone forbid the water so that these would not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we?" (v. 47). To those in Jerusalem he said, "Who was I that I could have forbidden God?" (11:17). Peter was silenced by the falling of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 19:1-6 was supplementary to that at Caesarea. In both cases the outpouring was upon the Gentiles. They were true believers because first, they were referred to as "disciples" (cf. 11:26), and second, if they were not saved, then Paul was preaching regeneration by baptism. Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, by which they bore testimony to their connection with the Head. The laying on of hands followed the testimony of their connection with the whole Body.

The passages prove that the Spirit that has been poured out upon believers is the common heritage of the whole Body, and that it should mean power in ministry. Why do so few really have power? It is because they lack the in-wrought work of the cross. The result of having the Spirit "within" and the Spirit "upon" is power. Paul speaks of the power of Christ's resurrection. Without the experience of resurrection life there can be no true power. Resurrection is life going into death and coming out with the natural energy, abilities, etc., ruled out. We have many natural powers, including intellect, personality, magnetism, etc. These must go before there can be resurrection power. Everything that does not come with the new birth must go. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). We count on our natural ability for divine service, but because of our eloquence we lose utterance. We need a crisis, a revelation of the hatefulness and emptiness of our natural ability. God has no need of our strength or our wisdom.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

LAW IN ROMANS AND GALATIANS

Two New Testament books deal specifically with the subject of the law: Romans and Galatians. Romans is declaratory, and Galatians is argumentative. In

Romans Paul himself introduces the theme and makes certain positive declarations. In Galatians he deals with a theme that was introduced already (the Galatians had come under the influence of the Judaizers). He treats the subject of the law argumentatively in order to correct an existing condition.

In Galatians Paul makes some very strong statements regarding the seriousness of coming under the law. For example, he says, "You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law" (5:4). The Galatians fell as easy prey to legalism, but we are no less prone to do this than they were. Many Christians fail to see their bondage to the law because they see the law only as a standard of living. If they never see the bondage of the law, they will never see the liberty that is in Christ.

The law is not just a standard; it is a fixed standard. When we were young, our gymnastic teacher raised or lowered the pole for the high jump according to our age and ability. The standard was not fixed; it was subject to adjustment. There was room for development, and allowance was made for the lack of development. The standard of the law, however, is fixed. On the one hand, it makes no concessions where there is a lack of development. On the other hand, it leaves no room for development beyond a given point. Even if someone in the Old Testament days tried to attain to the standard determined by the law, such a standard could not have been gained, because the fixity of the law precludes all possibility of advancing beyond a certain point. Because the standard of the law is set, observance of the law is bound to result in bondage. At an early stage in our Christian life we may feel that the law's standard is too high, but at a later stage we will feel that it is too low.

Our Lord said, "You have heard that it was said to the ancients....But I say to you" (Matt. 5:21-22). What is the law? It is what the Lord has said in the past. What is life? It is what the Lord says today. What is bondage to the law? It is adhering to a standard of the past. What is freedom from the law? From a negative viewpoint, it is the emancipation from any fixed standard set by the Lord's past speaking. From a positive viewpoint, it is the freedom to follow the Lord's present speaking. The guidance of the Spirit is our liberty in Christ. As soon as we fix a standard of living according to a command of the Lord in the past, we come under the bondage of the law. The leading of the Spirit is absolutely up-to-date; it is always living and always new. Any command that is not a present command of the Lord is not in life. Making His speaking of yesterday the standard for today results in bondage and death. As soon as we fix

a standard of life and set rules and regulations, the liberty of the Spirit is gone. The law, being fixed, makes no provision for growth beyond a given point. The moment we accept any command of the Lord as a standard for any time other than when it was given, we restrict growth. Life in Christ is eternally progressive, and unlike the standard of law, the standard of life is always subject to alteration and adjustment.

What is the law? It is what was said to the ancients, and the ancients are not just the persons we read of in the Bible. One heard a remark such as this: "That matter was settled in Darby's day." Darby is an "ancient." The "you" and "I" of the past are "ancients." Even the "you" and the "I" of yesterday are "ancients." If I do what I did a month ago because the Lord leads me to do so today, this is life. But if I do what I did a month ago because He led me to do so a month ago, that is the law. The law can be a day old, a week old, a month old, or even centuries old; but the leading of the Spirit can never be twenty-four hours old. If we act according to what was proven to be right yesterday, we are in bondage to the law; we have lost the liberty of the Spirit. Many Christians think that liberty in Christ is the liberty to act. No! It is the liberty to grow. When we are emancipated from the fixed standard of the law, we are free to grow and our growth will not be stopped.

"It was said to the ancients....But I say to you" (Matt. 5:21-22). These words apply not only to the hearers of the sermon on the mount; they apply to us as well. They are not just a statement made during the course of an address; they are a principle for all time. "It was said to the ancients"—this is the law. "But I say to you"—this is life. Liberty in Christ means that the Lord is free to set a new standard of living at any moment, and we are free to conform to a new standard at any moment. Spiritual freedom is not freedom to do anything we like, but freedom from the past commands of the Lord to obey His present commands, even though the present commands may seem to conflict with the past commands. Freedom in Christ is emancipation from the recognized rules of right and wrong so that we are untrammelled in our ability to follow the leading of the Spirit. As soon as we settle on an accepted code of living, we come under the bondage of the law and live our life in the principle of works. It is so easy to maintain a past standard. However, the Lord has set us free to follow Him to ground that is higher than ever in the past. The Lord is adjusting the standard according to our measure of life daily; therefore, we must live daily in the freshness of the Spirit. Who are the sons of God? They are those who are led by

the Spirit (Rom. 8:14). The Spirit's leading is liberty. There is no leading under the bondage of the law.

There is so much blindness among the children of God because they have a clearly defined standard of living. They are shaping their lives by the word of the Lord, but it is what He has said of old, not what He is saying today. They are blinded by their past visions. What they have seen in the past hinders them from seeing what the Lord is seeking to show them today. For instance, there are missionaries in this land who had a call to China ten years ago, and they are working in China today on the basis of that old call. They are following an old vision. They have become "ancients," and they have come under the bondage of the law. The word spoken to them years ago is dead, and conformity to its standard means death. They lack the freshness of today's life in the Spirit. Christianity is something very new and very living. Alas, we live in closer proximity to the law than we realize. Our Lord died on the cross to satisfy the fixed standard of the law so that we would be under no further obligation to fulfil its demands. If we set up a new standard of law today, we are nullifying the work of the cross and coming under the curse.

The potentialities of the life in Christ are infinite, so we dare not set up any standard of right and wrong; otherwise, we will limit our progress. Our future is far too great to allow any fixed rules for life. But it should be clearly understood that being free from the law is not for us to do as we please, but for us to be free to do whatever the Lord pleases. It is being free to do what He says today and being free to not do what He said yesterday. Being delivered from the bondage of the law means to be released from all obligation to the written law so that we can obey the indwelling law, "the law of the Spirit of life...in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). "It was said....But I say to you." The Lord does not give us liberty so that we can do as we please, but He frees us from the dead letter of a past speaking by the living word of a present speaking. There must be the speaking of the Lord today.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

In reading the Epistles it is necessary to differentiate between "law" and "the law." Where the definite article is used, the word refers to the Mosaic law; when there is no article, the word refers to law as a principle. Our deliverance from "the law" is based on our deliverance from "law" as a principle. God no longer deals

with us according to the principle of law. As a result, we have no connection with the law of Sinai. "Law" as a principle is greater than "the law" as a thing. Law as a principle includes "the law" as a thing. What do we mean when we say that God does not deal with us on the basis of law? We mean that He makes no demands upon us. If I am living according to the principle of law, I am seeking to please God, but this seeking to please God is displeasing to Him.

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

Do we think that our good behavior will cease if we stop trying to please God? If we left all the giving and working to God, do we think the result would be less satisfactory than if we did some of it ourselves? When we seek to please God, we are according to the works of the law. Our works are hateful to God—even our "good works." All of our works are "dead works" and need to be repented of. As soon as we stop giving, we will prove what a Giver He is. As soon as we stop working, we will see what a worker He is. The elder brother and the prodigal son were equally far removed from the joys of the father's house. The elder brother, though not in the "far country," was only at home positionally. His theoretical

position could never become experiential, as it was in the case of the prodigal, because he refused to forsake his own good works.

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

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY

FREE FROM LAW

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

We have seen that in delivering us from sin God did not deal with sin directly, neither did He touch the body of sin; rather, He crucified our old man. The picture in Romans 6 is of a slave and his master. God's way of delivering the slave from

the tyranny of his master is not to slay the master, but to kill the slave. The master may still live and be the cruelest of masters, but he can no longer touch the slave, because the slave has been taken out of his way by the cross. The mastery of sin cannot reach the other side of the grave.

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

What is the meaning of the law? The existence of the law implies that God requires certain things of us. Let us be perfectly clear that there is nothing wrong with the law. Paul said, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). There is nothing wrong with the law, but there is something decidedly wrong with us. The demands of the law are righteous, but the persons upon whom the demands are made are unrighteous. The trouble is not that the demands of the law are unjust, but that we are unable to meet them. It may be right for the government to require payment of a thousand kroner [a unit of Danish currency], but I will be wrong if I have only ten kroner to meet the demand.

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

clumsy when he was sitting still as when he was working, but our demands made the clumsiness within him, whether he was active or inactive, manifest.

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

In Romans 6 we see how God delivered us from sin. In Romans 7 we see how He delivered us from the law. In chapter six we are shown the way of deliverance from sin in the picture of a master and his slave. In chapter seven we are shown the way of deliverance from the law in the picture of the two husbands and the wife. The relationship between sin and the sinner is that of a master and his slave; the relationship between the law and the sinner is that of a husband and his wife. Note that in the picture of our deliverance from law there is only one woman, while there are two husbands. The woman is in a very difficult position because she can only be the wife of one. Unfortunately, she is married to the less desirable one. Suppose a woman is married to a good man, yet the husband and wife are totally unsuited for each other. On the one hand, he is very particular and accurate to a degree. On the other hand, she is decidedly haphazard. Everything is definite and precise with him, but everything is vague and hazy with her. He wants everything just so, while she simply accepts things as they come. How could there be any happiness in this home? The husband is so exacting! He is always making demands of his wife. Yet there is nothing wrong with him. As a husband he has a right to expect something of her; all of his demands are perfectly legitimate. There is nothing wrong with the man or with his demands. But he has the wrong kind of wife to carry them out. The two cannot get along at all; they are utterly incompatible. The poor woman is in great distress. She is fully aware that she often makes mistakes, but in living with him, it seems as though everything she says and does is wrong. What hope is there

for her? If only she were married to another man, everything would be well! He could be no less exacting than her first husband, but instead of just making demands, he could also help her carry them out. He could be very exacting, but also very helpful. She wants to marry him, but her husband is still alive. What can she do? Unless he dies, she cannot legitimately marry another man.

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

The law will continue for all eternity. If the law never passes away, how can we ever be united to Christ? How can we marry a second husband if our first husband refuses to die? There is only one way out. If he will not die, we can die, and if we die then the marriage relationship will be dissolved. This is exactly God's way of deliverance from the law. The most important point to note in the section of Romans 7 is the transition from verse 3 to 4. Verses 1 through 3 show that the husband should die, but in verse 4 we see that it is the woman who dies. The law does not pass away, but we pass away. By death we are freed from the law. Let us clearly realize that the law can never pass away. God's righteous demands remain forever, and if we live, we must meet those demands; but if we die, the law has lost its claim upon us. The law cannot follow us beyond the grave.

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

marriage bond is dissolved. The law may still make demands, but the power to enforce them reaches only to the grave.

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

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

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

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

Now that we have settled the doctrinal side of the question, we must come down to the practical issues. What does it mean in our daily life to be delivered from the law? It simply means that henceforth we are not going to do anything for God. We are not going to try to please Him. "What awful heresy!" you may say. But if we try to please God, we are immediately under the law. Being delivered from the law means that we are no longer under obligation to fulfill its demands. I broke the law, the law pronounced a death sentence, the sentence was executed, and now we have been set free from all its claims through death. The law still continues to make demands, but Another fulfills them in us. The law's demands are met, but we ourselves do nothing to meet them. God is satisfied, but it is Another who works in us that which is well-pleasing to Him. Henceforth, we do not have to do anything through our power to serve God. God has said that we must please Him, but we failed to please Him; therefore, He consigned us to the cross. By doing nothing through our own energy to please God, we are admitting that He was justified in proclaiming us fit for the cross. By refusing to do anything in our natural strength, we agree to God's verdict upon our old man, and as we simply remain in the place of death, the Lord manifests His resurrection life in us.

We have discovered a simple formula for Christian living. Whenever the law makes a demand upon us, we should say, "Lord, I cannot do it. Lord, I will not try. Lord, I trust in You to do all that You require in me." When I am tempted to lose my temper, I simply say to the Lord, "Lord, I cannot be patient, and I will not try to be patient, but I trust You to be patient in my stead." Likewise, when I am

tempted with pride, I say, "Lord, I cannot be humble, and I refuse to try to be humble, but I trust You to be humble instead of me." This is the real meaning of being delivered from the law and being "joined to another." We know that we cannot be patient, and we know that we cannot be humble, but we still try. Once we see clearly that we are delivered from the law, we will no longer try to fulfill its demands. The weakness of the law is not that it makes demands, but that it can do nothing to supply them. However, the Lord makes demands and supplies us for all the demands that He makes.

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

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:10

God is waiting for the prayers of His children to bring His kingdom in. The Lord taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come." This age is important, but the kingdom age is more important. All the privileges and power we now enjoy are only a foretaste and pledge of the age to come. The fullness of God is manifested in the kingdom age. In the light of this we see the importance of "the Lord's prayer." (This prayer was not contested until the last century when it was said to be only a prayer for the tribulation saints.) God has commanded His people to pray for thousands of years, but He has given no instructions throughout the centuries concerning what we should pray about other than this one prayer. What is prayer? True prayer begins in the heart of God, is made known to the hearts of men, and is prayed back to God; then God answers. This is not merely a definition. We must understand the principle of God's work in the universe. God has a purpose, and He will not accomplish His purpose without the cooperation of the human will. Prayer is the only way we can put the human will on the side of the divine will. Prayer is the exercising of our will in order to declare that God's will will be done. Without our prayers God will do nothing. He makes known His

will and puts prayer into our heart, but He waits for a response from our heart. Someone has said, "God's power is like the steam engine, our prayers are the rails." The steam engine is very powerful, but it cannot move without the rails. Our prayers make a way for God to come in. Prayer is always three-sided. It involves someone who is prayed to, someone who is prayed for, and someone who is prayed against.

The great trouble with prayer today is that we only ask, "Is my prayer according to God's will?" The question should not be, "Is it according to God's will?" but, "Is it God's will?" Prayer is for God to notify us of His will, and for us to pray His will back to Him. God's will is the starting-point. He makes His will known, and we will that will in prayer. This is the cycle.

The Lord's prayer is not just a model for us, but a revelation of God's heart. For thousands of years He did not tell anyone what He was working toward, but in this prayer it is made known. This is a great revelation. "Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth." "Your will be done." Yes, but where? "On earth." This is the only place where God's will is not done. Genesis 3 tells us that Satan is bound up with this earth. God's kingdom can be brought in by the created will of man being in union with the uncreated will of God and seeking the displacement of the rebellious will of the devil. The kingdom means the sovereignty of God. Wherever there is the created will linked with the uncreated will, there is God's sovereignty and authority. When human wills express themselves in this way, God can move. He is waiting for this. We do not know how much prayer is needed, but there must be a sufficient spiritual force on earth to bring in the kingdom. Our prayer must not just be, "Your will be done in me." That is the starting-point; it must go on to "Your will be done on earth." Note that the will of God is connected with the kingdom. "Not every one who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens" (Matt. 7:21). All we are and have must be set for the will of God. Only then can we pray effective prayers to drive a wedge into the power of the enemy. This is overcoming. God must have a few men throughout the nations who will persevere to bring in the next age. He must have a few who will hold the ground for God as to (1) ourselves, (2) our immediate concerns, and (3) the kingdom. If our prayers are ineffective in ourselves and our immediate concerns, they will not be effective in the kingdom. We must not be content to work for this age. We must definitely seek to work for the bringing in of the age to come.

Why do we want deliverance from sin? Why do we want enduement? God's children today are taken up with far too many small things. God is waiting for that importunate cry day and night (Luke 18). It is a widow, that is, a helpless one without resources, who implores the Lord.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

THE HANNAH MINISTRY

Scripture Reading: Rev. 12:5, 7, 9; 1 Sam. 1:1-2, 14-20, 22, 27

There are many points in the history of Israel which are similar to the history of the church. At the beginning of Israel's history we see Aaron as a priest representing man to God and Moses representing God to man. This stage did not last long. Soon after they entered into the land, they were ruled by judges. Their national life was on a very low level. We see them continually falling into sin and punishment by means of their enemies. When they cried to God, He would raise up a judge to deliver them, and then there would be a restoration. This happened again and again. We see this throughout the book of Judges. We read of Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Samson, and many others. There is a principle to be noted here. When the power of the judges was great, their deliverance was great, but when the power was diminished, the people fell into the hands of their enemies again. They fell and were raised up, sinned and were revived again and again. From this we see a great principle that God's people cannot govern themselves; they cannot be independent of God and be independent of Satan at the same time. This is an impossibility. They either have to bow to the authority of God or be under Satan's power; there is no middle road. When they were not under the control of God, they wholly lost their position as God's people. Consequently, they came under the power of their enemy. But praise God, His people were not always under Satan's power; there was revival.

This is the history of Israel, and it is the history of the church. Looking back, we can see that when the church reached a very low state, God would prepare a man of His choice, put His Spirit upon him, and commission him, and then the church would be revived. But after a period of time the church would go down again; there has been rising and falling, declension and restoration, again and again. If I was living in the period at the end of the time of the judges, what would be in my heart, what would I long after, and what would I even expect? I would know the history of the past years, and now that things were at a low ebb again, what would be my hope and what would I pray for? Would I not ask for another

judge to be raised up to revive the nation again? I am a member of the church, and I have seen its history of being revived and falling again and again. I have read of the revival under Luther and of the deadness that followed, of the revival through Wesley and of the backsliding that followed, of the great tide of life brought in by Darby and the other Brethren and of the deterioration that followed. All these years the church has just been repeating the history of Israel under the judges. But what should I hope for now? Should it not be for something quite new?

At this point we come to the first book of Samuel. The history of the judges should not continue forever; this is not God's thought. God's thought is toward the kingdom and not toward having more judges. God wants to bring in a kingdom and a King. He used the judges on the way, but His thought was upon David, and His purpose was a King. So we see the importance of 1 Samuel. It comes in between the road and the goal. It comes in the middle and depicts a period of transition. For the most part, this was not a time of great revival nor of great backsliding. The same is true with us today. While our thoughts are always on revival, the time of the judges has past. It had its limitations, whereas the kingdom will last forever. God's thought is not that the church should remain in a cycle of backsliding and revival. God is not going to give us many revivalists, He is going to bring in His King.

The first book of Samuel stands for a ministry, a ministry that brings in the King. We do not have a judge, but one who was both a priest and prophet. It is very easy for us to fix our eyes on revivalists; they were used by God in the past on the way, as it were, but they have no part in the real purpose of God, in the bringing in of the King. God wants Samuels.

Now that we have seen the background, we must come to our verses. They are related to the story of the two women, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, Hannah had none. Peninnah mocked Hannah by saying, "You have no children; look at all I have!" These two women represent two fundamentally different principles; they represent two fundamentally different ministries. Hannah's ministry was just to bring in the King, not to have many children. Peninnah's ministry was to have many children, that is, a ministry with much result. Peninnah and her children are God's people, but none of them have anything to do with God's King.

Hannah wept, fasted, prayed, and cried unto the Lord for a son who would be absolutely given to the Lord for His service. This son was the one who brought in

the King. Hannah had nothing to be proud of. However, Peninnah, had much to boast of. She could point to all her children and say, "I have this and that, all this and all that, etc." I want to say a word to you out of my heart. If you are still in the realm of the judges, you can be blessed and have results, but God's eyes are not on you. If these were not the last days, we would hope that Peninnah might have many more children. But if I am right, these are the last days and God's eyes are on those who can be the means of bringing in the King. Let us ask ourselves, "What is our ministry? Have we any part in this special ministry, this Hannah ministry?" Some have no other thought but revival. They think that the principle of the judges will continue to the end. But there is the more important ministry of bringing in the King.

Hannah's way was not an easy way, and it was made even more difficult because of Peninnah's comparisons and tauntings. Those who want to be Hannahs must prepare themselves for persecution, scorn, weeping, and fasting. This ministry costs. A price has to be paid because all such ministry comes through testing and suffering; it has to be wrought into us. Others can eat and drink and look at their children, but here was one who fasted and wept. It is not a matter of how many we can save but a matter of God getting His company of overcomers. God wants to get a people who will be able to pray and bring in the kingdom.

Hannah's prayer was the means for the birth of Samuel. Our prayers should result in the bringing forth of overcomers. What have we done in this respect? Some who have worked much and have many children will say, "It seems that you are not doing anything. In the past you could lead revival meetings and do this and that. What are you doing now?" Even Eli, God's priest, did not understand Hannah. He said, "What are you doing? You are drunk."

From the birth of Samuel we see a line of prophets who could also be priests to bring in the King. Hannah bore a son—a prophet. God had done quite much with Hannah; He led her through all sorts of difficulties. As a result, He was able to find one who could put eating and drinking and all else aside. She came to the point where she could not go on without a son; she came to a point where she had to have a son. The son in 1 Samuel 1 is the man-child of Revelation 12, the one who brings in the King and the kingdom.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

The first thing we should recognize is that God is a God of purpose. In Matthew 10:29 the Lord said, "Not one of them [sparrows] will fall to the earth apart from your Father." Even the death of a sparrow, which seems too trifling to note, is something that God takes account of. The Creator of the whole universe has a will regarding even one sparrow.

God is a God of purpose, and He has a purpose concerning creation. Creation was not an accident, but the expression of a definite purpose on the part of God. God purposed and creation was with a view to the accomplishment of that purpose. Modern theology makes redemption more important than creation. Yet creation was part of God's original purpose, redemption was only remedial. Redemption was brought in to restore that which had been diverted from God's purpose. God sought to arrive at a purpose by creation, but something intervened. Redemption brings things back to God's original intention.

Ephesians 1:5 speaks of "the good pleasure of His will," and verse 9 speaks of "the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself." Verse 11 says, "The purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will." Ephesians 3:11 also says, "According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord." In Ephesians 1 the eternal purpose is referred to as something that God "purposed in Himself," while in chapter three we read that this purpose was "made in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We have to go back to eternity past to discover what this purpose was. In eternity past God purposed something very definite in Himself (Eph. 1); then all this definite purpose was summed up in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3). God in eternity past had a counsel with His Son. His purpose was that His Son should be "all and in all" (Col. 3:11). The creation was with this end in view. It was for the purpose that the Son should be the sum total of the universe (Eph. 1:10).

God is the eternal Creator, and it is essential to His nature that He express Himself in creation. He could not be satisfied in any other way. An artist cannot be content without expressing his art in painting. A musician must express the music that is in his soul, and a mechanic craves to do work suited to his temperament and gift. In the same way, the Creator must express Himself in creation. Being such a God as He is, the creation of mere inanimate objects could not possibly satisfy Him. He had to create beings capable of responding to Him; hence, these beings had to have a free will. God created two orders of

beings—angelic and human—both with a free will. In creating free-will beings, He necessarily ran a great risk, because it lay with them whether they would set their wills for or against Him.

God first created the angelic beings. These were to be ministering spirits. In His foreknowledge He was aware that some of them would rebel and that the archangel would become His archenemy. Their rebellion consisted of raising the created will against the uncreated will. Note the many "I wills" of Satan in Isaiah 14. God could easily have destroyed all of His enemies with one word from His mouth, but the destruction of an inferior power in that way would not have been glorifying to the name of the Almighty God. It was "His good pleasure" to bring in another order of created beings—men—also free-will agents, that they might link their wills with His and cooperate with Him in dealing with the rebellious will. God brought man in to undo what Satan had done. Man was created and put in the garden of Eden to "keep it." The original word implies to "guard it." This implies that there was an enemy seeking to intrude and that God was seeking man's cooperation against him. Man was put in the place of authority to deal with the situation. (The rebellion of Satan touched the entire universe; therefore, it was necessary for Christ in redemption "to reconcile all things to Himself...whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens" (Col. 1:20). Hebrews 2:9 says, "So that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything," not "every man" as in the King James Version. According to 9:23, there had to be a purifying of the very heavens by the blood of Christ.)

God did not nullify Satan's power after his rebellion, but in a moral and spiritual way, He sought to deal with it through man. Therefore, Satan still held sway throughout the universe. When God created man, Satan immediately sought to make man his ally against God. However, his deception of man was a great mistake because his sphere of activity, which until then had been unlimited, became confined to the earth. When Satan tempted man and gained man's allegiance, God could righteously pronounce judgment on him and confine his sphere to the earth. Satan sought to involve man in his rebellion. Yet in the process, he became involved with man and became related to this earth. "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Genesis 3:14 was God's verdict upon the serpent. His sphere of movement was the ground, and his food was "dust," that is, what man was made of before God breathed into him "the breath of life." Because man capitulated to the devil, the adversary was authorized to have the "dust" element of man for his subsistence.

He had judicial rights in that realm. Man had given him ground and submitted to him, and Satan has a just claim upon man. The "flesh" (the carnal nature of man) is Satan's ground. Christ did not deny Satan's claim, but He took this ground away from him through His cross and removed his judicial right to man. In order for us to wield authority over the enemy, it is necessary for the cross to deal with the entire "flesh" element in us.

In God's thought man was not only to be the instrument of the eternal purpose, but was also the vessel for His eternal purpose. The eternal purpose was to be secured through man, but it was also to be secured for man. Man was to undo the enemy's work, and he was also to reap the benefit of that undoing. This is like sending a person for something, and then telling him that the thing for which he was sent also belongs to him. God's eternal purpose concerned Christ Jesus, but it also concerned man. This is the reason we were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Many theologians miss this point. They try to relate predestination with redemption. Actually predestination is related to God's purpose. In God's original purpose He did not elect all mankind to be the Body of Christ. He elected some to have the characteristics of His Son, while He predestinated others to be His very sons in His Son.

In eternity past God foreordained His Son to be Head of all angelic beings (Eph. 1:20-21) and also to be Head of the church, that is, the Head of man. It was understood by the Son that He should take on a human form and become a real man with a physical body. This individual Man, Christ Jesus, was to become the Head of the corporate man. He in Himself is the personal Christ; He plus the church is the corporate Christ.

Man was created innocent. He was perfect but not perfected. God intended him to be in union with His Son, having the life of His Son. Man was placed in the garden of Eden, in which were two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since man had a free will, he could choose according to his will. The tree of life is God Himself, who is the source of all life. The fruit of the tree of life is the tree of life in edible form, which is our Lord. In John 6:54 the Lord said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." Eating of the fruit of the tree of life would result in union with Christ in eternal life, whereas taking of the other tree would result in having independent judgment. Adam knew there was only One in the universe who could discern between good and evil. He knew that unless he ate of the forbidden tree, he

would have to refer to God's judgment in all questions; he would have to rely on God in everything. If you saw a man with no knowledge of good and evil, you would say he was an undeveloped man, and Adam was undeveloped, even though he was perfect. By taking the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he developed his manhood, developed himself independently of God; he became a full-grown man. We hear preaching such as this: "You have sinned; therefore, you need the life of God in order to be saved." Quite apart from sin we need the life of God. Adam, even before the fall, needed the fruit of the tree of life. Apart from committing any specific sin, as long as man develops through his own natural resources, he needs salvation. If man only perfects himself as man, he cannot still dwell with God, because he does not have the life of God. Just being a man is the same as being lost to God. It is not necessary to sin in order to need the life of God. If you miss the tree of life, you can have no inward union with 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).

God's purpose was that man should destroy the rebellious will by linking his will with the divine will, and man needed the life of God to fulfill the purpose of God. Alas, instead of linking his will with God's, man became Satan's ally so that both created wills were united against the uncreated will. How could God deal with such a situation? Man had failed God, but God's purpose could not be frustrated. He made another Man, the Man Christ Jesus. First, He is a typical man, a real man in every sense, yet with God's life as the mainspring, just as Adam would have been had he eaten the tree of life. He came not as the Son of God but as the Son of Man, as God's model man. Second, He fully answered to God's will for man. God's purpose was that man should be both an instrument and a vessel for His eternal purpose. Christ was both. On the earth there was one will and only one, which was perfectly linked with the will in heaven.

The more we appreciate the situation God sought to meet through Christ, the more we can appreciate what He has done. First, there was a rebellious will to be cast down. Second, there was the matter of sin to be dealt with. Third, there was life to be given. In the death of Christ all these things were accomplished.

Christ's propitiation was remedial, but His death was not just for propitiation. It was necessary, apart from redemption, for the fulfillment of God's original purpose. His death was necessary that He might become the fruit of the tree of life. He had to release His life through death (John 12:24). John 12 does not speak of propitiation, nor is it spoken of in Luke 12:49-50. Both speak of death

and resurrection, not of atonement. Luke 12:50 says that He was "pressed," and He longed for His life to be released through baptism, which is death and resurrection. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Those in view here are not "sinners" as such, but the church. In this verse there is no mention of the shedding of blood. It is entirely a matter of flesh and bone, not of blood (v. 30). In verse 31 we see that the illustration is taken from the garden of Eden and is used in connection with Christ and the church (v. 32).

Two things are spoken of. First, there is "bone." Adam's bone was the basis of Eve's life. Eve was built from his bone. Nothing was said of Adam's blood, because there was no propitiation in view, and there was no need of propitiation because there was no sin then to deal with. Adam was put to sleep so that Eve could be brought into being, and this sleep speaks of death apart from sin. Second, there is the "flesh." Man cannot eat "bone," but he can eat "flesh." "Flesh" is how we partake of Christ for the sustenance of the divine life which has been given us. The "flesh" is eaten for life, the blood is for propitiation. From the divine point of view, we have the "bone" for the building up of the Body of Christ. From the human point of view we have the "flesh" for the building up of the Body of Christ. Ephesians 5:26 says, "That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word." What does water refer to? We should return to Paul's illustration. Adam's side, from which Eve was taken, is typical of the Lord's side which was pierced and from which flowed both blood and water. The blood speaks of the propitiating aspect of Christ's death, whereas the water speaks of the non-propitiating aspect of Christ's death. The blood is for God and has sin in view. But even when our sin matter is settled before God, we still need the water of the word for our continual purification. The blood does not cleanse our heart. The "I" cannot be cleansed; it must be removed. God does this by giving us a new heart. The blood cleanses our conscience because it puts things right before God; therefore, our conscience is at rest. "When I see the blood, I will pass over" (Exo. 12:13). The blood was on the outside for God to see; it was not for the believer, who was on the inside. The water stands for the non-propitiating death of Christ, and life is released by this death, which has nothing to do with sin. Since man's fall Satan has had a double hold on man through sin and self. Our sins are the ground of his accusations, whereas our flesh is the ground of his activity in us. Since the blood has settled the whole matter of sin before God, it is

the answer to every accusation of the enemy. The blood overcomes Satan because it enables God to stand justly on our side. Objectively, the blood delivers us from the power of Satan by removing all ground of his accusations; subjectively, the cross delivers us from the power of Satan by dealing with the flesh. The flesh is the ground of his working in us, just as our sins are the ground of his accusations of us. (Even God has to justify Satan's use of our flesh, for it bears his nature; it represents our fallen nature, and this nature has fallen over to him.) The blood propitiates; the cross does not propitiate. The blood deals with sin; the cross deals with us. The blood does not cleanse the flesh, which cannot be cleansed and must be done away with. The blood speaks of substitution; it speaks of His death for us. The cross speaks of identification; it speaks of our death with Him.

We are identified with Him not only in death, but also in resurrection. We must realize the importance of resurrection. When Christ passed into Hades, all the powers of hell were there to hinder His resurrection. Satan's greatest power is death; beyond this he has no power. In resurrection Christ passed beyond the touch of the satanic forces. Satan has no power over us only as we are in union with Him in resurrection. The natural life in us can always be touched, but not the resurrection life. A person, however patient by nature, always succumbs to the adversary's temptation to impatience, whereas one who by nature is very impatient can go patiently through any test if he relies upon the imparted patience of Christ. A healthy person, who could stand anything in the ordinary course of activity, will be physically drained if Satan assails him. But the weakest person who depends upon Christ's resurrection life for his body can go through any test without physical breakdown, because Satan cannot touch the resurrection life in him.

Christ by death destroyed him who has the might of death. But this triumph over the enemy, which has been established in Christ in His resurrection and exaltation and has been judicially accomplished on behalf of the church, has to be wrought into the church in the power of His resurrection life. Christ has dealt with Satan judicially, but He is waiting until all His enemies are made His footstool (Heb. 10:13), and this has to be accomplished by the church. The Lord has bruised Satan's head; his doom is sealed. However, the fact that he is a defeated foe has to be fully demonstrated in and by the church. Christ has already won the victory, but the fact of His victory must be manifested in the church.

The church has a definite responsibility before God. First and foremost, it is saving souls. Yet it is not to save them from hell, but to save them for the glory of God. The King must have people for His kingdom, and the increase of people means the increase of His glory. Second, the church bears the responsibility to register the victory of Christ in the devil's territory.

Why do we seek victory? Why do we seek enduement? It is so that we can be fully equipped for the cooperation with God in the outworking of His eternal purpose. Victory and enduement are precious items, but we must not lose sight of our great objective. It has pleased God to limit Himself to human cooperation for the accomplishment of His end. Christ has done everything potentially, but the accomplishment of His finished work has been committed to the church. We have been entrusted with the task of casting down God's enemy from the heavenlies!

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

ROMANS 12

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:1-5

Before we actually go into the Word of God regarding the Body of Christ, it will be well to look back at Romans 1—8 in order to lead us into chapter twelve. Chapters nine through eleven are parenthetical, so we can put them in brackets and let chapter twelve follow chapter eight. Chapters nine through eleven illustrate the truth previously discussed. They are necessary, but we will better understand the thought of Romans by going straight from chapter eight to chapter twelve.

In order to get into chapter twelve, we must cover chapters one through eight. The first eight chapters of Romans deal with two phases of the Christian life. Romans 1—5:11 is the first section, while Romans 5:12—8 is the second. Romans was not written to the unsaved but to the saved. In the first section the matter of sin and its power is not dealt with; rather, the matter of sins is dealt with, that is, the things we have done. The salvation for sins is forgiveness. We have guilt because we have done certain things. God does not ignore our sins and wink at them. He has judged our sins in the person of Christ. We are forgiven on the ground of being judged, not on the ground of God being gracious. There is not only something wrong with the things we have done, there is something wrong with what we are. There is something fundamentally wrong with us; therefore, in the second section the matter of the sinner is dealt with. In the

first section the proof that man is a sinner is in Romans 5, not in Romans 3. We are sinners by constitution. We are sinners because we came from the wrong stock. Our stock decides what we are. Anyone who comes from the stock of Adam is a sinner whether or not he sins. The thing that is wrong with us is not what we have done; it is with our life.

The law means that God demands something from us. Putting ourselves under the law means trying to do something for God, trying to be something for God. Deliverance from the law means not trying to do or be anything for God. I know what stock I came from, I know what kind of make-up I have, so I do not try. The man in Romans 7 did not set out to sin but to please God. Yet setting out to please God results in sinning!

A man after the Spirit is a man who sees that the blood has dealt with his sins before God and that the cross has dealt with the man who produced those sins. If the crucifixion is true, we can no longer do anything for God. If we still try to please God, we are virtually denying our crucifixion with Christ.

Romans 12:1 says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice...to God." Please note that this verse says "living sacrifice." Something has happened! When we have traveled through Romans 1 through 8 into Romans 12, and when we have presented ourselves to do His will, we find ourselves automatically in the Body of Christ. When we go from Romans 1 to Romans 8, we will surely find ourselves in Romans 12. We have seen the mystery of the Body of Christ, but what is the secret, hidden throughout the ages, and now made known in this age? Christ was anointed for this, but why is this so important?

We believe in the centrality of the cross, but the cross is not the end in itself. It is a divine means to a divine end. The end is the Body. When the cross has done something quite specific in our life, we find ourselves in the Body. Spontaneously, we find ourselves in the Body.

Personal holiness, as sought by many believers, is very precious. Victory, as sought by many believers, is also very precious. Praise the Lord for salvation, justification, and deliverance from the power of sin. However, God did not give us these spiritual experiences so that we could be hundreds and thousands of individual, separate units scattered over the earth. God never meant that Christians should be single units.

Reading the guide to London can never take the place of visiting London. Having a book of recipes can never take the place of being in the kitchen. Knowing the truth of the Body can never take the place of being in the Body experientially.

The trouble today is that we think of Christians as just being many individuals. We think of salvation, victory, etc., as personal experiences. Salvation is related to the Body, deliverance is related to the Body, and having personal holiness is related to the Body. The divine thought is one corporate man, not a host of small men. Praise the Lord, we are saved as individual sinners, but we must end as members of the Body. God will take nothing less than the Body. He is working toward the Body. The cross is for this. It is futile to seek to produce individual saints. God does not have the thought of just having people here and there—individuals or groups—who are being justified and sanctified. The one loaf is still one after each member has taken part.

God is not satisfied with single, separate Christians. When we believed on the Lord and partook of Him, we became part of His Body. God has to give us the revelation of the Body. Are we seeking spiritual experience for ourselves? Are we making converts for some denomination? Or have we seen the vision of the one heavenly man and realized that God is seeking to bring men to this? When salvation, deliverance, and everything spiritual is seen from a different standpoint, everything will be revolutionized. Today many people have the teaching of one Body. Even the Vatican teaches one church, but Catholicism has its own head, because it has never seen the Body.

What constitutes us a member of the Body? If God gives us a revelation of the Body, what will be the effect on us? Will the revelation just be a new truth to expound? No, the revelation will mean a revolution! What constitutes us as members of the Body is not something we have experienced or something we have to do, it is Christ in us that constitutes us as members of the Body. It is nothing we are in ourselves that makes us a member of the Body, it is the life of the Lord in us.

The Body of Christ is Christ. Paul did not say anything wrong spiritually when he said, "As the body is one...so also is the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). Grammatically speaking, this is wrong; he should have said, "Christ and the church." But the Head is the Christ and the Body is the Christ. Everything that comes from Christ constitutes the Body, so that everything that does not come from Christ must be ruled out. It cannot get into the Body. It is not a matter of "plus"; it is all a matter of "minus." We do not need to get anything or do anything in order to get into the Body. We only need to be stripped of all we are and have. This is where the cross comes in. The cross is the divine means in us of ruling out that which prevents us from taking our place in the Body. The things of our self,

temperament, make-up, etc., must all be ruled out. God must touch these things. Some folks have a keen mind and think that they can better understand and minister the Word of God by their keen mind. No! This needs to be eliminated. Often we minister just because we have a keen mind. How many of us need salvation from our mind, and the helmet of salvation for our head. The backbone of our natural strength must be broken. We must have a proper perspective on the divine things.

If we come to God and ask Him to show us Ephesians and what His purpose is for this age, He will certainly show us the Body. The cross points us straight to the Body, and the Body rules out everything that is of Adam. Nothing that is of us has any part in Him. We cannot add anything to our physical bodies, because they are already complete. So it is with Christ.

We must realize that a revelation of the Body is very costly. It will touch the very spring of your life. When this happens, the whole matter of moving as individual members ceases. There cannot be any free-lancing in the Body. If I move my finger, the muscles of my arm cannot refuse to move. If my arm moves, my finger cannot but go along with it. All that is individual must go. We have to move with others and wait for others. We cannot go on alone, we have to go on with the brothers.

If we expect to see the Body, the matter of other headships has to be dealt with. Other headships are interfering with the absolute lordship of Christ. Saul represents a system of things against God's anointed. David had two enemies—Goliath and Saul. Saul was fighting Goliath, but he was as much an enemy of David as Goliath because he tried to keep David from the throne. One was an enemy on the outside; the other was an enemy on the inside. The outstanding feature of Saul was his head, and the outstanding feature of Goliath was also his head (i.e., height). Everything that comes from human intellect, ideas, and opinions keeps the Anointed from the throne. However, one day a stone from David's sling dealt a deathblow to Goliath; Saul's doom was also sealed that day. We do need not to make a direct hit against the present system of things: "For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh" (Eph. 6:12a). When Goliath is dealt with, Saul is dealt with also.

If we really know the cross, it will lead us into the Body. So many Christians profess to know the Lord, the deeper meaning of the cross, and the truth of the Body, and they profess to be all one in Christ. They stress that the old man must go, but there is a tragic lack in the outworking of their words. All of God's dealings

with us have been with a view to prepare us for the Body. All of His work in us is a process of elimination so that we can become functioning members of the Body.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE

GOD'S BUILDING

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:10-15

The foundation of God's building is always the same. Christ Jesus is the foundation that God Himself has laid. The building differs in its material and workmanship, but there would be no building without Christ as the foundation. Many of God's servants use gold, silver, and precious stones. God does not and will not ask how large a building we have built or how clever, speedy, or ornate it is, but of what material has it been built with. It is not enough to assent to this or to see the truth of that. Even such "seeing" may be wood, grass, and stubble. The matter of importance is whether or not we are using gold, silver, and precious stones. Gold means God—all that God does, all that is out from God—the glory of God. If God is doing everything, all the glory goes to God. Man only gets glory when he is mixed up with it. Silver means redemption. We know that all our work is based on and hinges on the cross. Precious stones represent the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the complete cycle of what our materials should be.

Isaiah 40:6 says, "All flesh is grass." This is the "grass" that will be burned up. All that is of the flesh will be destroyed. "Wood" refers to man in contrast to God. "Stubble" represents the weakness of man, the deadness, flabbiness, and uselessness of the natural life, the feelings, and the mind. The one who uses gold, silver, and precious stones knows God as the Father, knows the cross subjectively as well as objectively, and has died to all that he is and has. He also knows that everything must be the work of the Holy Spirit. People often want us to help them, or rather, we want to help them spiritually. But the question is, "What is our motive?" Is it to gain a bit of comfort, ease, or pleasure for ourselves? Is it to be doing something? Is it to get something later? We cannot help them, and we are held up because we know that this desire has not had the cross applied to it; it has not gone through death. We also may feel led to go and talk to someone, and we may know what to say, but we go beyond and say more. The cross had indeed cut off some of what was not of God, but the cutting work was not complete; we said what God gave us plus something else.

The precious stones mean that which is first wrought in us and then manifested in life and words to others. Precious stones are rare and hard to come by, but stubble is plentiful. Many Christian workers are working mainly according to their feelings. When they feel good, feel on fire, or feel close to the Lord, they work hard for Him! But if they feel cold, tired, dull, or indifferent, they do nothing. Being hot and cold is just of ourselves, and it is useless. Everything that is based on feelings is stubble. Many others only use the materials of the flesh, that is, intelligence, cleverness, expressiveness, eloquence, resourcefulness, ability, etc., but these are all grass. They are earthly, not heavenly, and they will be entirely burned up because they are entirely natural. God will bring into the light our strongest and most pivotal things. He will expose them and deal with them.

Wood represents that which is human and earthly. Most of the Christian work we see has not come forth from God. People think that only the gospel counts in preaching the gospel, rather than the person who is preaching; they think that the Word does the work. But no, God wants to know who is preaching, that is, through whose hands it has gone forth, in whose strength it was preached, and by whose command. He wants to know by whom a person is sent and of what material his work was built. There can be no mixture about it; it must all be of gold, silver, and precious stones. Gold, silver and precious stones are costly; wood, grass, and stubble cost little. There is also a difference in the weight. Wood, grass, and stubble are very light, but gold, silver, and precious stones are heavy. What is our weight? If only people would talk a little less about spiritual things! Often their lives and their words do not tally! Their lives do not match their words.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

PAUL AND AGABUS (GUIDANCE)

God never allows the church to take over the individual's responsibility of receiving guidance from God. Agabus was a prophet and a very earnest one, but he was young, inexperienced, and very anxious to display his guidance for Paul. On the one hand, we find in God's Word that one needs clear guidance from God. On the other hand, we need the backing of the church. But there may be a group of Christians who say, "We are the church, you must obey us." The prophetic voice, however, should never come before the voice of the Spirit to an individual. Otherwise, we will have a Romish church. The so-called church often uses its authority like this.

The Holy Spirit may not speak to us directly; He may speak to another and then to us through him. But He cannot ignore us; He cannot fail to inform us at the same time by giving us the witness in our spirit. He will let us know that we are to receive guidance through the church. Furthermore, this guidance cannot be contrary to any light He has already given us or any partial guidance we received in the past. If it is from Him, He will give us clarity in our spirits, and our spirits will respond to what the church says. In other words there will be the confirmation in our spirits. The Holy Spirit will always let us know if we are going to receive guidance through the church. Having a prophet come to us first and tell us what God wants us to do is part of the Old Testament dispensation, not the New Testament dispensation. If the Lord had meant to give Paul guidance through the disciples He would have intimated this fact to Paul first, preparing his heart for their word. Then Paul would have responded and acquiesced. Agabus's act was contrary to God's way of guidance in the New Testament. As a result, Paul did not go along with his suggestion. Subsequently, we hear nothing more concerning this prophet, but God uses eight out of twenty-eight chapters in Acts to tell us of Paul's doings after he made this so-called false step! It was not God's will for him to go to Jerusalem, but because a dangerous precedent would have been set, He allowed Paul to go and blessed him in it because his heart was perfect toward God. The prophet precipitated this by rushing in instead of waiting for God to show the same thing to Paul first.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

PRIESTLY MINISTRY

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:1-6; 1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:6; 22:3-4; Phil. 4:18; Rom. 12:1; Heb. 2:10; 4:16; 5:1; 6:19; 7:18-25; 8:1, 3; 9:7-8, 24; 10:19-22; 12:22; 13:14-15; Acts 13:1-2

In the book of Genesis we see God's creation of man for the realization of His purpose and man's failure regarding that purpose. Then we see God moving to recover what was lost in man. First, we see Him seeking an individual. After securing this individual, we see Him seeking and securing a family. For the discipline of His people and the realization of His purpose, God took that family into Egypt. He took a household into Egypt, but He brought a nation out of Egypt. Why did God go to such effort over such a prolonged period—a period of about 2000 years—to secure this people? He Himself made His purpose known: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself...ye shall be unto me a

kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:4-6). God's purpose in redeeming His people is to obtain priests. This was why He said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go that they may serve me."

God chose Abel, and Abel brought an offering. He chose Noah, and Noah built an altar and offered offerings. Then God called out a whole nation for Himself, and He clearly made known to them His purpose in their redemption: that they might be "a kingdom of priests." Because of a breakdown on their part, only a section of the people ultimately became priests. However, it was God's original purpose that the whole nation should be priests. God's thought for Israel and for the church is one—a universal priesthood! What God could not secure in Israel He is going to secure in the church.

The book of Hebrews is specially devoted to the subject of the priesthood; it reveals that the primary matter in relation to the priesthood is entering into the presence of God (4:16; 6:19; 7:19, 25; 8:1; 9:7-8, 24; 10:19-22; 12:22). We find few commands in the book of Hebrews. Its greatest command is to enter into God's presence. The all-inclusive ministry of the children of God is to enter into the presence of God and never go out. God brought Israel out of bondage and bade them enter into the land which He had set before them. He also has brought us out so that He might bring us in. The sum total of God's purpose is to bring us into His own presence. Opening the way was costly because it had to be opened by the shed blood of the Lamb of God. Now our ministry is in the Holy of Holies within the veil.

Every child of God is called to be a priest, and every priest exists for the specific purpose of offering gifts and sacrifices (Heb. 5:1; 8:3). Is there then no work in which the children of God can engage? Yes, for if priests offer "gifts and sacrifices," it is obvious that they require things to offer. In order to obtain these things, they must work. The trouble with many Christians is that their work is an end in itself; it is just work as work. The vital matter is not whether we are engaged in this or that work, but whether or not our work is on the ground of our priesthood. Many of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt were shepherds, but that was not their calling; they were called to be priests. Many of them were craftsmen, but that was not their calling; they were called to be priests. A person might want to offer a sheep because he was a shepherd or offer his handicraft because he was a craftsman, but God cannot accept offerings on this ground. He can accept them only on the ground of the priesthood. The

question is not what work we are doing, but whether or not we are doing the work as priests.

In Old Testament days the prophets were esteemed above the priests, but God's thought was not to have a kingdom of prophets. He wanted a kingdom of priests. Just as in the days of the Old Testament, the prophetic ministry is valued far above the priestly ministry in the New Testament age. But God's purpose for His people is the priesthood. He wants a universal, not a limited, priesthood. Acts 13:1-2 speaks of the "prophets and teachers" that "were ministering to the Lord." These men were prophets and teachers, but their prophecy and teaching were "unto the Lord." It was based on the priesthood. If we are not priests, we will never be prophets and teachers. Our priestly ministry determines the quality of all our other ministry. The value of all the work we do is estimated by the priestly element in it. God's original purpose for all the Israelites was that they would pass by way of the altar into the presence of God. This is the priesthood.

Priestly ministry is the basis of all ministry to God. There is no ministry to Him apart from the altar. It was the altar that distinguished Abel from Cain. Abel had an altar that was stained by blood. In Noah's history we see the altar again, as well as in Abraham's history. Wherever we find a man chosen of God, we will inevitably find an altar to God.

While God was dealing with individuals, the altar was used only occasionally. However, after He secured a people for Himself, the altar ceased to be intermittent and became permanent. Abraham built more than one altar; so did Isaac and Jacob. But when Israel was constituted a people, the tabernacle was set up and the altar was permanently established there. Sacrifices were no longer at intervals but continuous; the altar was no longer a personal matter but a corporate matter.

God's thought in building the church is to have a place for the exercise of the priesthood. In Ephesians 2 we are told that He is building up His saints into a holy temple so that He might have a habitation for Himself. This is from God's side. In 1 Peter 2:5 we see that from man's side a spiritual house is being built so that spiritual sacrifices might be offered by a holy priesthood. The book of Hebrews shows us an eternal priesthood, and the expression of that eternal priesthood is a perpetual altar with perpetual sacrifices. The existence of the church is for priestly ministry. If this is lacking, the foundation of the church is gone. God wants a perpetual priestly ministry, expressed by a perpetual altar and perpetual sacrifices. The altar must never be empty. God's demand is that the

fire on the altar should never go out. The church does not exist merely for service or even for warfare, but for the offering of sacrifices to God. The church's calling is to priestly ministry, and the object of priestly ministry is to offer sacrifices. If the church fails in this, she fails in everything.

First Peter 2:5 does not say that the church is "built up as a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices," but that the church is "being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices." The priesthood offers the sacrifices. The church is not just a place where sacrifices are offered, but a place where the priesthood is established. It is not a matter of the offering of many isolated offerings but the institution of a permanent priestly ministry. In the Old Testament days an ordinary Israelite could easily count the occasions on which he presented sacrifices at the altar; but a priest could never count the number of the offerings he offered. It was not an occasional occurrence for him; it was a ceaseless matter. His offering could not be recounted as isolated acts; it constituted his whole ministry. He lived for this and for nothing else. His life consisted in the offering of sacrifices. God's expectation of His people is not just for occasional or even frequent sacrifices. His priesthood is a perpetual priesthood. Many Christians have a definite date on their calendar that marks their consecration; some have several dates when they offered themselves in a special way to God as the result of revival meetings, etc. But this is far from God's thought for His people. He is not looking for separate, sacrificial acts, but for a life that is a perpetual sacrifice. The vocation of the church is the priesthood, and since the vocation of the church is the priesthood, the work of the church consists in the offering up of sacrifices. This is the all-inclusive ministry of the church. If we are priests, then our only occupation in life is to offer gifts and sacrifices. But it is a "holy priesthood" that offers up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God. There is no satisfaction in the heart of God when His people offer up sacrifices if they in themselves are not a priestly people.

We are not primarily called to be workers; we are primarily called to be priests. Work provides much that builds man up, interests him, and satisfies the flesh. But priestly ministry is an altogether different matter. It contributes nothing to man; rather, it takes everything from him. When we finish a piece of work, there often follows a sense of success that ministers satisfaction to the flesh, but we reap no satisfaction for ourselves when we offer sacrifices to God. We are just left with empty hands. When we have offered an offering to God, it is gone.

God accepts no work that is not a sacrifice, that is not wholly offered up to Him. The question is not: "What have I done?" Rather, the question is: "Has what I have done been done as an offering to God? Has it passed out of my hands into His?" If what we have done has not passed over to the other side, it is not priestly ministry and it is outside the realm of the church's vocation. If what we have done has not passed over to the other side, then we have not passed over to the other side either, because the offerer goes with the offering. If our offering ascends to God, we will ascend with it. When we retire to bed at night, we should not ask, "How much have I done today?" Rather, we should ask, "Of what I have done, how much has been a spiritual sacrifice?" How often can we look up to the Lord at the end of the day and say, "Lord, may I put this into Your hands?"

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT

"THE JOY OF THE LORD

IS YOUR STRENGTH"

Scripture Reading: Neh. 8:10

According to Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of the Lord is our strength. It is not a matter of having strength because we have peace. His joy upholds us. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16 Paul commands us to always rejoice. How is this possible? How can we rejoice in difficulties, distresses, trouble, etc.? Where does this joy come from? We cannot manufacture it, because if we do not have it, we just do not have it! In Philippians 4:4 the apostle gives us the secret: "Rejoice in the Lord." Lord, Your joy is my strength! What is the joy of the Lord? How often did the Lord rejoice? The fact of the Lord rejoicing is only recorded once so it is easy for us to get the meaning. The Lord had apparently failed in His ministry to Tyre and Sidon (Luke 10:13-15). Verse 21 says, "In that hour He exulted in the Holy Spirit and said, I extol You, Father,...because You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it has been well pleasing in Your sight." Jesus Christ rejoiced to do God's will; He rejoiced in God's will. The Lord's joy had nothing to do with circumstances. He said, "Father...it has been well pleasing"—it is Your will. There was no kicking against, no rebellious thought, no question of why He should go through all this. "Father,...it has been well pleasing in Your sight" is all. A man was visiting a school for the blind and asked the children why they were blind. There was an awful silence, and then one child replied with tears running down his face, "Father, it pleases Thee." We have to see that our Lord had a joy; it was the joy

of God's will being done. Sometimes we have to rejoice in tears. The source of the Lord's joy on earth was not that He was successful or that the work was prosperous; He rejoiced only in the will of the Father.

It is not that we have to try to copy the Lord, but that the very joy that He had—the joy of the Lord—is ours. We can have something of the Lord imparted to us. We can have the joy of the Lord; His joy will be our strength.

The worst kind of life to live is a life of reactions in which we are always affected by persons or circumstances. This means that we are living by something which is outward, something which is not from the Lord. What does it mean to live a life of reactions? It means that when we speak and someone receives our message we are full of joy, but that we are just the opposite when our message is not received. We are affected by this and that; everything causes a reaction in us, and we are constantly up or down. This kind of life shows that our being is not in the Lord. Of course, we are still in the flesh and we do feel things, but these feelings must never be so strong that we live by them. We must cease from a life of reactions. But this can only happen when we live by the joy of the Lord. When we are tempted to be down, we should look up and say, "Has the Lord lost His joy today?" If He has, then we can be content to be joyless! None of us can have real strength by being cast down. If we praise the Lord, there is strength. As soon as we have lost our joy, we have lost our strength. This is the reason we are told to give thanks. We should say with a heart bent towards His will, "Lord, I do not mind. It has pleased You; therefore, it pleases me." We must live by something that is in Him. It is not a matter of our joy but of His joy; not a matter of our peace but of His peace. When we are feeling flat, the only thing that can raise us up is the joy of the Lord. We have to learn to live above our troubles.

To those who love God, everything works for good, and loving God means loving His will. Once one of God's children said, "Our hearts may be riven, but we are praising Thee for Thy will, for what Thou art." (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINE

THE FAITH OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Gal. 2:20; Mark 11:21-22

Would you like to have the faith of George Müller? Do you think that this would be a great thing? In Mark 11:14 the Lord said to the fig-tree, "May no one eat fruit from you forever!" The tree died, and the next day Peter called the attention of the Lord to it, because he remembered what the Lord had said. The Lord replied,

"Have faith in God" (v. 22), because that was the secret of that miracle. This sentence is not translated well. In Greek the word "God" is in the possessive case, so it should to be translated "have the faith of God." The Lord possessed the very faith of God and by that faith something was done. He felt the futility of asking people to believe in God so He emphasized that they must possess the very faith of God. The faith of God is the faith that God possesses in His own word. God creates by authority, not by power; God does not believe in the power of His word but in the authority of His word.

The Lord did not pray to God to curse the fig-tree. He did not pray to Him to put forth power, but He gave a command and authority was there. It is not that we have faith, but that God's very faith is in us. We have to believe that what we say will come to pass. "I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). This is the meaning of having the life of the Lord in us. Nothing in the Scriptures is abstract. Something in Him is given to us. We believe that the Lord was our Substitute in the past, but do we believe that we live by substitution today? The Lord Himself is giving Himself to us. On earth He believed in the Father and today we can live by this very faith, not a similar faith. This does not mean that we are going to copy the Lord's faith but that we have the very same faith because of our resurrection life with the Lord. We are now living by His faith. The question is not whether we have faith, but whether we believe with that faith. Faith is like sight; believing is like seeing. The possession of sight enables us to see but does not guarantee that we will see. Faith is given to us, but we have to believe, to use it. Our attitude must be, "I can believe; I will believe!" We must see that the Christian life is not abstract. It is always a repetition of what the Lord has given us as a legacy. What is a legacy? It is something that we have done nothing for and which is left to us. The Lord's legacies are given to us. His peace, His faith, and everything that is His has been given to us. (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY

FAITH

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:24

The promise of Mark 11:24 is very comprehensive. It is one of the biggest verses in the Bible. John 3:16 speaks of "every one," but this verse speaks of "all things." John 3:16 tells us that "every one who believes into Him...would have eternal life"; Mark 11:24 tells us that "all things that you pray and ask...you will have them." This is a very comprehensive verse; "all things" includes everything.

But this verse has a condition: we must believe. If we do not have faith, we cannot have what we ask for. This verse not only tells us of the necessity of faith but also the nature of faith. As far as I can tell, this is the only verse which tells us of the nature of faith.

What is the nature of faith? What should we believe? When we see something spiritual and reach for it, how should we believe? I am not here dealing with the necessity of faith—this is apparent. The question is about how to believe, and this is the only verse which answers this question. "Believe that you have received them, and you will have them." How should we believe? "Believe that you have received." The way to believe is not that we will receive or can receive or that we are able to receive or are going to receive, but that we already have received. Faith is that we have received, not that we will receive one day. There is nothing so wrong as believing with all our heart that we can receive or that we are going to receive. This is hope, not faith. Faith refers to the past, it has nothing to do with the future. What is in the future is always hope, not faith. Our Lord did not say, "You must believe that you are going to receive." On the contrary, He said, "You must believe that you have already received." It is something already done by God, something given to us by God. Whenever our faith is in the future, it is not faith but hope. Let us see from a few illustrations what the right kind of faith—"have received"—means.

SALVATION

Suppose I am a gospel preacher, and a sinner comes along and asks me to tell him the way of salvation. I do my best to make it clear, telling him about the blood, the cross, atonement, redemption, and that the Lord has done everything. Then he says that he wants to be saved. We both kneel down together. Then I pray a little and ask him to pray. He says, "Lord, I know that the blood of Christ Your Son cleanses from all sin, so please forgive my sins. Amen." Before getting up I ask, "Are your sins forgiven? Are you saved?" He replies, "I believe I will be saved, I believe God will forgive my sins, I believe with all my heart that God can forgive my sins." Is this man saved? No! Are his sins forgiven? No. What should he say? He should just look up and say, "Praise the Lord, all my sins are forgiven; praise the Lord, all my sins have already been forgiven; praise the Lord, I am saved." There is only one kind of faith—have received. This principle operates in regard to everything else. So much of so-called faith is only hope. Many say that they have faith, but it is all in the future. They think they are going

to get something some day. But we are not going to get something some day, we have already got it!

HEALING

In the past I have been asked quite often to pray for the sick. Immediately after the prayer, I knew whether or not the person was going to be healed. After entering the room I would anoint him, depending upon the situation, and after my prayer I would ask, "Well, how is your sickness?" The answer would show at once whether or not the person had faith. If he said, "Praise the Lord, it is all settled," he might still feel very weak and have a high fever, but he could praise the Lord. I would then ask, "Do I need to come back and pray again?" If he said that there is no need because it was all done, I could leave in confidence, no matter how serious his condition seemed to be, because he did not believe that God would heal him, but that He had already healed him. Sometimes when I asked a person about his sickness, the answer was different: "I believe that the Lord is going to heal me. I am as certain as anything that God is going to heal me. I believe with all my heart that I am going to be healed." He may seem to have all the faith in the world that he is going to be healed, but I go home disappointed. I know that he is not going to be healed. There was no divine touch, no faith. The man said that he believed, but he did not believe at all, he only hoped.

Do we see the importance of Mark 11:24? God says we must believe that we have received. Once the Lord granted me a wonderful healing, and I testified to a few of the believers. Among them was a sister who had very serious eye trouble. Every week she had to travel a considerable distance by steamboat to be treated by a doctor, under whose care she had gradually improved. She heard my testimony and thought, "Though the doctor said I would be better, he said I never could be normal again." So she prayed and believed that the Lord would heal. But she had an appointment with the doctor and so she went to see him. He gave her some glasses and a jar of ointment. After she got on the steamboat, she prayed again and said, "Lord, are You really going to heal me?" She believed that the Lord had already heard her prayers and that the thing was done. So she said, "Lord, what do I need these glasses and ointment for?" However, Satan said, "Do not be so quick; do not be excessive; do not be fanatical. Wait and see if it works. If it does not work, you will still have your glasses and ointment to fall back on. In this way, you will be protected on both

sides." But she said, "My prayer has been heard; it is already done; I am healed. There is no need for glasses or ointment." Then Satan said, "The glasses cost thirty dollars. If you throw them away, you will be wasting thirty dollars. If your prayers and faith do not work, you will have to spend another thirty dollars to replace them." But she said, "I am already healed. What do I need ointment and glasses for?" So she threw them overboard. (I am not suggesting that you throw your glasses away, and that we do not need the help of doctors. But if we have faith, we can do anything.) She went back and her eyes were really healed. Remember the Lord's word, "Believe that you have received them, and you will have them." Faith is always in the past tense, though experience may be in the future. If we make faith a matter of the future, because experience is still in the future, our faith is hope. After the sister returned, she testified of what the Lord had done, and a brother who was in exactly the same circumstances heard her testimony. (He was also present when I spoke of what the Lord had done for me.) This brother had exactly the same disease and went to the same doctor, who prescribed exactly the same treatment for him. He said to himself, "If God is able to heal her eyes, is He not able to heal my eyes?" So he prayed. Then one of my co-workers came to me and said, "Do you know that Brother So-and-so is trusting the Lord to heal his eyes? Is this not grand?" "No," I said, "We should wait to see whether it is hope or faith." He also had an appointment with the doctor, and he too went to get glasses and ointment. After he got them, he boarded the same boat and argued, "If I am healed, should I not throw away my glasses and ointment?" He remembered that the sister had thrown her glasses and ointment into the river, and so he did the same thing. He said, "I will trust the Lord and the Lord alone; I will not trust the doctor or medicine." On his return he came to see me. I asked him, "Why did you throw your glasses and ointment away?" "Oh, I trust God. From today I will not trust man but God alone," he replied. "What about your eyes?" I asked. "I can trust God," he said. Then I said, "But you have only those two eyes; they are very precious. If anything happens to them, you can never replace them." He said, "I believe God is going to heal my eyes." "Do you really believe that God is going to heal your eyes?" I asked. He said, "Yes, if I did not believe that God was going to heal my eyes, do you think that I would have been so foolish as to throw away my glasses and ointment?" I said to him, "I am sorry to say this, but your faith is too big for God to do anything. I am afraid that one day you will have to go back to that doctor and buy another pair of glasses." "What do you mean?" he asked. I replied, "You have

hope in God but no faith." He was rather irritated, and he went out and said to another brother, "One day Brother Nee will see that he is wrong. I will prove to him that I have faith. I know God is going to heal me." My co-worker came in and asked, "Why did you say that he has no faith? Why do you believe that God is not going to heal him?" I replied, "Because he has no faith at all; he has only hope." "What do you mean?" he asked. "Do you not remember that Mark 11:24 explains the nature of real faith?" I said. He responded, "Do you mean to say that a person who risks blindness does not have real faith? If this is not faith, what is? Do you mean to say that a person who throws away thirty dollars for his faith and throws away fees amounting to a hundred dollars does not have real faith? If that is not faith, what is?" I said, "These are all works, not faith. It is all something that he has done; it is not believing in what God has done." Of course, I was more than willing for him to be healed. I did not want him to not be healed so that I would be proven right! A month passed, and nothing happened. Two months passed, and I saw him again. His eyes were redder and the discharge worse. One day he came to me and said, "Do you still believe that I do not have faith?" I said, "I fear that this is the case." He replied, "I believe that God is going to heal me. One thing I know: God has shown me that I must go up the river to preach. I will stay for two months, and when I come back, I will be healed." I said, "Try your best to believe that you will be healed." I said nothing to discourage him, but I said to my co-worker, "He believes that if he does something for God, God will do something for him. His belief is related to the future, not the past." He came back unhealed, and he had to resort to glasses. Today he still wears them.

These two cases were exactly parallel. One was healed and one was not healed because one had faith and the other had none. One believed and the other only hoped. We think that if people risk something, they have faith; however, these are the works of men, not the faith of men. If we believe, we should say, "Praise the Lord, it is done."

DELIVERANCE

Regarding salvation we must believe that it is already done. The same principle applies to healing. Deliverance is on the same basis. We must know that it is accomplished.

There was a man who was an elder of a church in a large city. He was very zealous for the Lord. He had three or four big stores. He also supported the pastor in his church and preached with him. Furthermore, this man had a very

hot temper! He came to me early one morning with tears in his eyes and said, "I am due to preach in church this morning, but I am afraid I cannot." "What is your trouble?" I asked. He said, "You know I have an awful temper. I realize this, and I hate it. I know that I should not lose my temper. I confess and then lose my temper again. I tell all my employees about the Lord Jesus, and then I lose my temper. They say, 'What is the use of being a Christian?' I have lost my temper in all of my stores, so I have lost my testimony too. Yesterday, I was very annoyed with some of my employees. I managed to control myself even though I was very irritated. I thought, 'It is my turn to preach tomorrow, I dare not let my temper flare,' so I kept it under control until I got home. I was shaking all over with suppressed wrath. Then I was irritated by happenings at home, but again I thought, 'It is my turn to preach tomorrow so I dare not flare up.' So I kept it all under control. This morning when I got up, I recalled what had happened yesterday and shook all over at my remembrance of it. Then my daughter did something to upset me. Then, to aggravate matters, my wife burned the food. After all that I said, 'This is beyond endurance; even if it is my turn to preach, I cannot keep this under control any longer. I cannot control myself, and I just cannot preach because I am about to burst!' Now what about this?" I smiled, and he said, "Do not make fun of me." I said, "I feel very happy." "Why?" "I am rejoicing in another great case for the Lord," I said. "Do not think that my case is easy; my temper is beyond my control," he replied. I said, "It may be too much for you, but it is not too much for the Lord. I believe in practical salvation, not in theoretical salvation." Then I turned to Romans 8:2 and read, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." I asked him, "Are you in Christ Jesus?" "Certainly I am," he replied. "All right, then what does the Word of God say?" "The law of the Spirit...has freed me." I asked him, "What tense is used?" "Past!" he exclaimed. "Yes, God says that the law of the Spirit of life has already made you free. Are you free?" "Of course not," he replied. Then I said, "I did not ask you whether or not you have lost your temper today. I am asking whether or not you are free. According to the Word of God you are free because it says, 'has freed me.'" He replied, "According to Romans 8:2 I am free, but according to my experience I am not free." Then I asked, "Are you going to believe in your experience or in God's Word? Which is more reliable, God's Word or your experience?" He answered, "Of course, as a Christian I must say God's Word, but I cannot say that I am free." I said, "God does not so much mind your temper as much as He minds your evil heart of unbelief."

God's Word says, 'The law of the Spirit of life has freed me.' When you say that the Spirit has not freed you, you are saying that God's word in Romans 8:2 is not true. I do not mind your bad temper as much as I mind your evil heart of unbelief." He said with tears, "I am convicted of unbelief, because I am hoping that I will be free but cannot believe that I am free. I cannot believe the Word of God that I am already free." I said, "This Sunday morning I have to speak; I must go and prepare. I am sorry that I cannot stay any longer, but I can let you have my sitting room. You should deal with God about this sin of unbelief." I came back a half hour later. The brother gripped my hand and said, "Praise the Lord, hallelujah." "What has happened?" I asked. He responded, "Praise the Lord, I am free!" I asked, "What about your temper?" "I only know this, I am free. I care about nothing else because I am free," he replied. Then I asked, "Are you going to be free, or are you free now?" "I am free now," was his reply. As he went out the door, he said, "Praise the Lord, I am free." Two months later I met him and asked, "How are you now?" His answer was simply, "Praise the Lord, I am free." Four months later I met him again and asked the same question. He still answered, "Praise the Lord, I am free." After six months he still had the same answer to my question. This is faith. Faith is not, "I will be free" or "God is able to make me free." Faith is standing on the Word of God and saying, "I am free." How can we have faith? We must have our eyes opened. This is the most important point in regard to faith. We cannot just sit down and say, "I am saved; therefore, I am saved" or "I am healed; therefore, I am healed" or "I am free; therefore, I am free." This is auto-suggestion, not faith. Instead, we need our eyes to be opened; we need revelation from the Word of God so that we can say, "God has heard my prayer, I know it!" We may not understand, but we know. We may not be able to explain whether we heard a voice or saw a vision, etc., but we just know. How do we know? We know; that is all. How do we know our name? We just know it. We do not need to go to a registry office to verify it or look in our passport once in a while to make sure. We know. Someone may say, "The Word of God says so." This is all right, but it may mean nothing. Yes, the Word of God says so, but do we know it? If we reason, "Since I have had a revelation, I have faith," and ask, "What should I do next?", then we have no faith! Faith is spontaneous. Faith is: "Lord, I praise Your name; it is done." Praise is the natural outcome of faith, the spontaneous result of faith. We do not have to work it up. Whenever there is faith, God honors it; whenever there is faith, there will be praise and prayer will cease. We will say, "Thank You," and we will not plead. No

one will need to urge us to praise because we cannot help but do so. May God teach us the true nature of faith. All prayer is heard on this basis. (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE

THE CUP

Scripture Reading: Mark 10:37-40

We have to drink the cup that the Lord drinks. This is quite clear from Mark 10:37-40. We are put into the same position and we should have fellowship with Him along this line. The cup and baptism that is referred to in this verse have nothing to do with atonement, which is something we have no part in.

This cup is doing the will of God, and it is doing His will irregardless of the things that are involved. Certain things are bound up with the will of God, but we should not be occupied with these things as such, but with God's will itself. The cup is a perfect giving over of ourselves to do the will of God, without being occupied with the things that are related to this will.

The practical difficulty with many is that when they try to find out God's will, they get occupied with the thing in question. For instance, suppose I am asked to go to India for some meetings there. When I kneel down to pray, my thoughts go to India—the place, the opportunities, the drawbacks, the money I will spend going there, the other places I might go instead, etc. All the pros and cons come before me, and I immediately become occupied with the thing, instead of simply being occupied with the will of God. This is how Satan gets a hold on us. His way is to occupy us with the things or the difficulties. As a result we become timid and cannot know God's will.

It is a simple matter to know the will of God if we are not taken up with the things His will involves. If we truly want God's will and are occupied with His will, the power of God will be there. But if we are occupied with the difficulties and all that the doing of His will may involve, Satan will come in. If we are perfectly willing to do God's will and are not afraid of anything, He then shows us His will quite easily. We will just know, and that is all that there will be to it!

The Lord was occupied with the will of God, not the cross. This is why He could bear the cross. If His thoughts had been occupied with how heavy the cross was or how terrible the nails were, He could not have borne it.

Whenever we are seeking the will of God, we must be careful. We must refuse to be occupied with the things that may be involved. It is easy for us to become

taken up with thoughts about the things. We must refuse such thoughts. Suppose God's will is for you to do something, yet you need some money. You may wonder how you can live through the next night and where the money will come from. This is being occupied with the things, and Satan will get you if your mind is set on these things.

There was a captain in a great war. An order was given by the colonel to attack a certain point. This order was really a mistake, and the captain realized that to follow it meant death. But he asked the orderly only one question; he inquired if this was really the order. On being assured that it was, he concerned himself with nothing else. They attacked and were all killed. This must be our attitude. We must be concerned only with the order, the will of God; we should not be concerned with the things or the difficulties. If we do it, Satan can never lay hands on us.

I am going to do the will of God and will not be pinned down to anything. I will be perfectly mobile and detached. All struggles come because we become occupied with the things. Satan will inject more and more fear into us. If we are wholly occupied with God's will alone, we are drinking the cup. This kind of drinking has glory in view.

The will of God is perfect, good, and acceptable. It is acceptable to us, and it will continue to be so if we are occupied with the will alone. There is something in us, something of God, that will never be satisfied with anything less than the will of God. We should live by this.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

SEPARATION FROM THE

WOODEN AND EARTHEN VESSELS

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:19-22

I do not believe that the church is in ruins. The church could never be in ruins, but I do believe that the outward testimony of the church is in ruins. Truth has been lost, the churches are divided, and schism is found everywhere. The foundation is right, but the building is not all of silver and gold. There is much wood, grass, and stubble. The distinct Christian testimony to the world has been lost; man has failed in this respect, and we find ourselves in great confusion. We are Christians, but we have been brought into a state of great confusion. After reading a few chapters of Concerning Our Missions, an aged missionary said, "We have been born hundreds of years too late. It is now very difficult to put

things right." We are in days of outward ruin; things have departed from what was set down by God. Because of this kind of ruin, the apostle John's ministry had to come in. We can call this the days of the "Babylonian captivity of the church." Little by little the Lord has been bringing things back, restoring truth that has been lost.

Does the Word of God tell us what we can do in these days of recovery? What is the part of the faithful ones? There are Scriptures that deal with this. Herein lies the peculiar preciousness of 2 Timothy 2. This chapter deals with days of departure. I believe that God allowed degradation to come in before the death of the apostles in order that we might have instruction when we find ourselves in a similar departure. Second Timothy is the last letter written by Paul and is altogether different from 1 Timothy. The first letter deals with church order. When God's house is in order, the elders and deacons are spoken of. But in 2 Timothy there is nothing about elders or deacons; only faithful men are spoken of because God's house was no longer in order. What should we do with the testimony when the church is not in order? We must hand it over to the faithful ones. In days of departure the elders are not necessarily faithful. In 1 Timothy the church of God is looked upon as "the house of God," but in 2 Timothy there is no reference to "the house of God"; there is only reference to "a great house." Paul did not say that this was the church, but he did use this term as a figure of speech. I regard the "great house" as the outward testimony in those days. All Christians were in it, but some to "honor" and some to "dishonor." This stands for the Christian sphere. According to its nature the church could not degenerate to this, but its outward sphere could.

"But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor" (v. 20). What are vessels "unto honor, and...unto dishonor"? It is a separation between what is of God and what is of man. "Gold" stands for what is of and from God. "Silver" signifies redemption through the cross. Gold is everything that is from God, and silver is that which has gone through the cross of His Son. "Wooden" represents the humanity of man, and earth, his natural life. "Earthen" refers to those who are living a life according to man and according to the natural life. It refers to those whose nature is the animating power within them. God is seeking to have everything out of Himself, not out of man. We have to refuse all that is out from man. In order to be a vessel unto honor there are certain conditions, and there are things that have to be done.

Verse 21 says, "If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these." One has to separate himself from the earthen vessels. This is not only a matter of whether we are made of gold and silver ourselves; it is not a matter of our personal life alone. In this verse we are told to purify ourselves from those earthen vessels by separating ourselves from them. God is after two aspects: our personal cleansing and our association with others. I, myself, must stand for nothing earthly or of man, and I must refuse to do anything from myself. This is the personal cleansing. Yet at the same time I must separate myself from anyone who is a wooden or earthen vessel. This is the aspect of association. This does not mean we are to separate ourselves from them as Christians, but from whatever they have been doing that is of wood, grass, and stubble. We have to separate ourselves from a fellow Christian whose work is wooden in nature, and we cannot associate our work with his.

The emphasis here is on "vessels." A vessel stands for doing something; it represents the side of work. People will call us separatists, because not only do we refrain from doing those things, but we also will not associate ourselves with those who do them. We will not associate ourselves with their work, with the established order of things, or with the man-made system. We must be clear on this point. We are not separate from them as persons but as vessels.

The Exclusive Brethren tried to throw away the man, the person. We are in fellowship with every true believer of God, but it is what they are as workers that we have to stand apart from. We should not be linked up with that work. This is something that cuts. We should have nothing to do with the earthen vessels. We cannot be linked up with that system of things. We cannot be separated from other people as children of God; we cannot be separated from them as persons, but we can be separated from them as vessels. This will mean that we are "sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work."

Verse 22 says, "Those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This is different from salvation where all are saved. This only refers to those who call out of a pure heart. We follow after and associate ourselves with such persons. They are our fellow-workers. This association is based on four things: righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Notice that peace is spoken of last, not first. Some say, "Peace at any cost." Man always puts peace first and righteousness last, but that is not God's order. We must maintain fellowship with all the children of God, but at the same time, we must separate ourselves from the vessels of dishonor.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE

THE LIMITATIONS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: 2 Chron. 16:9; 2 Kings 13:18-19; Matt. 13:22; 23:37-38; Mark 1:45; 6:5; John 5:19, 30; Luke 12:49-50; Num. 14:22-24; Isa. 50:2; Mal. 3:10-12; Eph. 1:22-23

The Lord has been speaking to us these days on the limitations of God. God's limitation is a solemn thing to consider. We talk a great deal about the power of God, but we seldom think of the limitations of God. There are many things He cannot do today. Have we thought about the seriousness of this situation? The fact that God cannot do something is not because He is impotent. He is omnipotent, yet He has His limitations.

The Word of God is a mighty thing; it will not return to Him void. Yet in the Lord's parable in Matthew 13, we read that it is possible for man to "choke" the word of God. The Lord Jesus said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem,...I desired...and you would not" (23:37). The result was, "Your house is left to you desolate" (v. 38). There was nothing wrong with the Lord, but there was a limitation to the Son of God. There is something in man that is so powerful as to limit Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament Jehovah swore that the land should be given to His people, but eventually they could not enter. God could bring them in, He could chase out the enemies, but in Numbers 14 we see that they had the power to deflect and defeat the purpose of God for them.

Isaiah 50:2 says, "Is My hand so short that it cannot redeem?" No! Then why did He not work? It was because of the people's sins and iniquities. This verse shows us that the omnipotent hand of God is limited by the sins of His people. He is not limited because He cannot do something; rather, man limits Him. Blessings have been delayed because of something in man.

Second Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." Think of this! God is looking for a man whose heart is perfect, to whom He can show Himself strong. He is limited by an imperfect heart. He is looking for one where there is no limitation.

Mark 6:5 says, "He could not do any work of power there." Why could our Lord not do anything? Verse 6 gives the answer: "Because of their unbelief."

In Mark 1:41-45 the Lord healed a man and then told him not to say a word about it. But the man was disobedient and the result was that the Lord could not go into

the city. He was limited to the deserted places because of the natural zeal of man in witnessing.

God is omnipotent, but His omnipotence is subject to limitation because He must have certain conditions suitable for His working. The question is whether or not we are in the position for Him to show forth His power. I know that I cannot help God; I cannot further anything of His. But it is possible that something of me can hinder Him. Sin, unbelief, natural energy, etc., will hinder the very power of God. The Lord has to give us light to see what He can do, and He has to give us light also to see what we can hinder Him from doing. We can put Him into a position where He cannot do what He wants to do. The Creator of heaven and earth can be limited by us. May the Lord search our hearts and deal with us in a drastic way. Is there anything in us that is hindering Him? Are there props in our Christian life? Is there a leaning to sight or feeling or are we walking by faith? Is only God in our lives? He is our life and power, but are there plans, programs, that substitute for Him? Are we trusting Him to bring something out of nothing? Are we trusting Him to bring the dead back to life? He is always the God of resurrection. If we abide in Him, we will see light. It is not by self-examination that we find out what is hindering; it is by being before Him.

Luke 12:50 speaks of the limitations of the Lord. The Lord spoke of being "pressed," that is, cramped. This word means not having a free way. The Lord said He was going to cast fire on the earth by being baptized with a baptism. "How I am pressed" means that the power was confined in Himself. There was a limitation by the condition of being in the human body. He could not be in two places at the same time. He was limited by being in a body on earth, and so He looked for the day of baptism, the day when He would die on the cross. By His death and resurrection He would have a spiritual body, and through the Holy Spirit His life could be given to His people. John 12:24 is a parallel passage. Life—the power to produce—was encased in a grain, and release could only come when it fell into the earth and died. Before the Lord's death He was the only begotten of the Father. But on the morning of His resurrection, He said, "My Father and your Father." At this point, the matter of the church comes in. We are His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

The body is for the full expression of a person's personality. What is the Body of Christ? The Body of Christ is that which expresses Christ. The Lord Jesus expresses Himself through each member, and the whole of Him is expressed through His church. The Body can either be for His expression or His limitation.

On earth He moved in a limited body of flesh; today He moves in a spiritual Body—His church—to express and manifest Himself. He is moving within His Body in the Spirit. On earth He manifested Himself in His body, and today He is doing the same. We are the members of this spiritual Body, and we are either being used to express Him or we are limiting Him. It will be a great day when the light dawns and we realize how great our responsibility is. We are the only expression that Christ has. The Body is the way for Him to express Himself. Outside of our bodies, what expression do we have? None. In the same principle we are in the position to give Him a full expression or to limit His expression. For this reason the complete sovereignty of Christ is of supreme importance. In order to bring Him to bear on evil situations in the spiritual world and to express Himself, we must not limit or restrict Him in any way. How can it be that omnipotence is limited by man? Will it continue throughout eternity? God is El Shaddai—in eternity past and also in eternity future nothing can limit Him. In the two eternities nothing can stop, hinder, or delay Him. However, God has a will. He has a Son, but He wanted many sons—a people who would share His life and manifest His Son. For this reason He created heaven, earth, and man. But herein lies the trouble: man was created with a free will. The limitation of God began at this point. From the time of the garden of Eden until now, three wills have been at work—God's, Satan's, and man's. God will not abolish the human will. He wants the human will to be on His side; therefore, He accepts the limitation that this desire entails. God will not compel man to do anything as He works toward His goal. In the two eternities God's omnipotence is absolute; today His omnipotence is relative, for He is subject to certain limitations. In creation God put His almighty power under the limitation of the human will. This will can be on the divine side, or it can be on its own side or Satan's side to limit God. If this will is set for God, then there will be something much more for the glory of God than before creation. Thus, the omnipotence in eternity future will be much greater than in eternity past. It will be possible to be limited, but there will be no limitation because we will have been brought to a place where we stand for everything that is of God. God will therefore have far greater glory. There will always be a separate will, but it will become so subject to God that it is a glory to God. God has run a risk to bring this about. Our capacity will be the capacity of the power of God; God will be as great as our capacity allows Him. This is the measure in the earthen vessel. If we enlarge our capacity, we will enlarge the power of God. Today the power of God is limited by our capacity, and it is subject to our will,

submission, obedience, and faith. The power of God takes the shape of our faith in Him. We are the meter, the measure. The divine almightiness today is subject to us.

The One whose will is absolutely identified with God's and the One in whom God has no limitations is the Lord Jesus. God can do what He likes with Him and through Him. Through His death and resurrection a Body has been formed by the power of the Spirit, and God is looking and seeking for members who will be fully responsive to Him and in whom His will's limitations will be forever done away with. God is limited only in this creation in time; He is not limited in eternity. The church secures for Him the abolition of limitation. We are entrusted with a great vision! God almost entrusts us to restore His own omnipotence! He entreats us to abolish His limitation. For this He must have a free way with us before we can bring in the eternal purpose. This is the meaning of the kingdom. The kingdom means that God can do what He wants, that He has His own way, that He is unhindered, and that He has authority and power and therefore glory. He has a sphere in which He is supreme. The church has to bring this in. One day the church will be the vessel of all that He wants, but it must begin today. God is waiting until we are fully obedient; this is the principle on which God works. We expect God to work but God says, "What can I do with you?" We cannot expect God to show forth a greater measure than what we afford Him. He is absolutely limited. The power of God today is utterly subject to our measure. God is in many ways no more powerful than we are. He has put Himself into us and made us His channels. We can shut Him out or we can release Him. The whole matter of the divine purpose is at stake.

Today this is the secret of service. How can we really serve the Lord? It is not by doing things or by being zealous, but by coming to a place of real submission. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Whenever there is much sacrificing, it is doubtful that there is much obedience! It was easier for Abraham to put Isaac on the altar than to take him back. The Lord must bring us to a place where we have nothing to hinder Him, where we are pliable in the hands of the Lord. He must bring us to a place of utter responsiveness to Himself so that He can have a free and unhindered way. Then there will be nothing that He cannot do. "The Son can do nothing from Himself" (John 5:19). That is the secret. Oh, this tenacious nature of ours! "Lord, from today may I have grace not to trust in myself, not to use my own power, nor to think highly of myself. May all that is hindering You be put under the blood."

The church is the firstfruit of God's creation. What is going to be true in the kingdom age should be true among the overcomers in the church today. "Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth." This means that no human will should come in to limit Him. When the matter of authority is settled, the matter of power will also be settled. In the kingdom God will be unlimited. We should pray, "Lord, what is there in me that undermines Your lordship?" Jesus is Lord. This has never been a matter of power on God's side, but because of the nature of the present age, where the "will" is a determining factor, there are limitations on our side. Our eyes have to be opened to see God's limitation and to see how we should cooperate with Him.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR

THE OFFENSE OF THE LORD

Scripture Reading: Matt. 11:6

What does the offense of the Lord refer to? The Lord said, "Blessed is he who is not stumbled because of Me" (Matt. 11:6). The Lord's offense means that the Lord has done something which we are not pleased with; that is, we do not like what the Lord has done. We may even have a reason for not liking what He has done. In our own eyes we should be offended. What the Lord did or did not do made John the Baptist offended. John was not offended by the Pharisees or the publicans; he was offended by the Lord. From his standpoint there was a reason for him to be offended.

Why was he offended? He hoped for Israel's restoration as a nation, and he hoped that the Lord would bring in a revival. The first Elijah had gone up to Mount Carmel and had wrought mighty works. Israel was revived and Elijah's ministry was vindicated, but the second Elijah was put in prison and shortly would be killed. He sent a message to the Lord because he was offended. No doubt he thought that the Lord should do something for him. "Are You the Coming One, or should we expect another?" (Matt. 11:3). He wanted the Lord to do something to demonstrate who he was. Yet the Lord did nothing to show who he was or to vindicate his ministry.

"Not [being] stumbled because of Me" means not being offended by what the Lord does. We may feel that the Lord does not do what we want. He has not done what we feel He should; He does not vindicate us. Are we pleased with the way of the Lord with us? This is not a matter of knowing and doing the will of God, but of whether or not we like His ways. Often we do God's will with much

weeping. We weep because we are offended by the way He does things; we are offended by His ways, His methods, etc., and it seems as if we have reason to be offended.

This has nothing to do with the Lord's dealing with our flesh or our soul-life. That dealing is on a far lower plane. I am now speaking of one whose whole heart is for God. We have sought to know His will, wanting nothing for ourselves. We want His glory, and yet in many of God's ways we are disappointed. We come to a great difficulty and there is no way out. We are ill and we expect Him to heal us, but we are not healed. We are weak, but no strength comes. We are short of money, but no money comes. It seems as if God does not come up to our expectations. When this happens again and again, we are offended by "the offense of the Lord." Many people are not yet qualified to be offended by the Lord; they fall because of the flesh and the world. When the Lord seems to disappoint them, it is actually they who have been wrong.

Not being offended with the Lord is the highest form of discipline. Often we feel that the Lord must step in to take care of His testimony, and that His honor and faithfulness are at stake. Yet He will not come in. God led the children of Israel through the wilderness. After coming out of Egypt, they were pursued and shut in by the enemy. There were mountains behind them as well as to the right and to the left of them; furthermore, there was the sea in front of them. Then God opened a way through the sea. Whenever we get to a place where we are shut in, we expect God to open a way through the sea. However, many times He does not do it. The prison gates do not open; the money does not come; the situation is not dealt with. Here comes the test. Those who love the ways of the Lord can look up and say, "You were not pleased for us to die in Egypt. But if it pleases You that we die near the Red Sea, so be it. Whether or not the Red Sea opens, we are content and glad." Madam Guyon said, "I believe God more than His work." Even though God does not seem to keep His promise, we believe Him anyway. This is not being offended in Him. When there is an utter consecration and we give ourselves for His service, we expect God to do something for us. If we have such a consecration, we have a great expectation. When we are not up to that point, we can explain away everything on the ground of our weakness or because we were wrong or mistaken. But when we are at the point of utter consecration, we expect to see God's deliverance. When God does not come in and we feel that it is our right for God to come in, that is the offense of the Lord. Those who are not offended by the Lord's offense are blessed. We want to be

able to say, "If God acts according to His promise, it is good; but if not, it is also good." One day everything will be explained, and we will see that God was right. His ways are higher than our ways. There are many things which we cannot see or understand now. When we stand before the judgment seat, we will not be the only ones who are judged. Not only will we have to explain many things to the Lord, but also God will have to explain many things to us as well. There will be many cases when I thought I was right but was actually wrong. There will also be cases in which God will say, "I was right, but you were also right."

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE

FELLOW WORKERS

The sphere of our work determines the sphere in which we find our fellow workers. Before we settle the question of fellow workers we must settle this question: What is our work? There is no possibility of solving the problem of our co-workers until the problem of our own work is solved. Does our work answer the demands of God's eternal purpose? Is our ministry fully meeting God's need? If so, we cannot require less than this from any fellow worker—that he have a clear seeing objectively, and that he have a fundamental breaking of the natural life subjectively.

In the Gospels our Lord showed us that it is He who appoints fellow workers. He chose twelve disciples, and He sent them forth in six pairs. We read of Simon "and" Andrew, James "and" John, Philip "and" Bartholomew, Thomas "and" Matthew, James "and" Thaddaeus, and Simon "and" Judas. All twelve disciples were fellow laborers. Each one labored together with the other eleven, but in a more specific sense each one had a special co-worker.

Our Lord appointed them to a special task, and for the performance of that task He sent them forth two by two. In the Gospels we read of two times six, but in Acts 2 we read of "Peter...with the eleven." Six companies of two have now become a company of twelve. When the disciples labored throughout the country, they were divided into pairs of fellow workers. When they were assembled in Jerusalem, they were not there as a testimony for the unsaved but as a testimony to the resurrection of the Lord. They could not meet in the assembly as fellow workers, so the six pairs were dissolved. But when there was a special piece of ministry that had to be done, we read of special cooperation among them again. In Acts 3 we find Peter and John going out together, and in Acts 8 we find the same two going forth as special fellow workers. The principle

governing a special commission to special ministry is six times two, but the principle governing the Christian life is the oneness of all the disciples. (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SIX

GOD'S WAYS

Scripture Reading: Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 9:11-12, 15-16, 18; 1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 2:8-9; 3:14-19; Phil. 4:7, 19; Heb. 6:13-14; 8:8-10; 13:20-21; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2:13

God's ways are according to His own measure. All of the work that He does has a definite measure and a definite sphere which is not limited by man. We have to learn how weak we are. We may confess that there are many things we cannot do; we may confess that we are too weak to do God's will, to fulfill His holiness, to work for Him, or to please Him. These confessions of weakness, however, will not help us to progress one inch! It has been said that confessing our weaknesses is the first step toward making progress. I admit that this confession is necessary, but this kind of confession in itself will not get us anywhere. Let me say again, I do not despise the confession of weakness, because it is very necessary. But unless one particular weakness is realized and confessed, all of our other confessions will profit us nothing. We must recognize this fundamental weakness: We are helpless in pleasing God and in laying hold of God's power to operate for us. Many of us feel that we can move God by prayer, supplication, or fasting. However, there are two problems with this thought: First, we are impotent, and second, we cannot lay hold of God to do it for us. Some of us have prayed for a year or more about certain matters and nothing seems to happen. We cry to God for revelation and no revelation comes. We feel that we have not prayed long enough or prayed earnestly enough. We feel that there must be a lack in what we have done or that there is some confession which we have not made. Nevertheless, we must be brought to the point where we not only realize our own impotency, but we also realize that we cannot lay hold of God's strength to do something for us. We cannot do it, and we cannot look to God to do it. If we have not seen this, then all of our other confessions of weakness are useless. We have to see that God does everything according to His will and thought; it does not depend on our beseeching.

This is how salvation works. Many of the verses we have read refer to the matter of salvation, stating that God has saved us according to His will, good pleasure,

thought, etc. (Eph. 1:5). He works according to His own purpose, not according to what we want. God does not work according to our standard, program, or sphere, but according to His own pleasure. First Peter 1:3 says that we are saved according to His mercy. We are not saved because of our seeking but because of His good pleasure, will, and purpose. Many times we realize that God has the power, and we try to lay hold of His power or trust His power. But even our salvation is of Him, and our faith is from Him. If God wills, there is salvation and grace. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:16 is "according to the riches of His glory." We have to pray, but God hears our prayers because He is pleased to do so, not just because we have asked. God's response is not according to what we think; it is "above all that we ask or think" (v. 20). "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,/So are My ways higher than your ways,/And My thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). When the five thousand were fed in John 6, they were not expecting this! They had only gone to hear the Lord speak. But the Lord thought they needed to eat as well, and He fed them. This was grace—the fullness of God. When the prodigal son returned, his thought of food was just "bread," but he got a feast instead. He expected to be a servant but instead he was a son; everything was lavished upon him. God does what will satisfy Himself. He does not do what we think He will do, but what He thinks He will do. He does that which is in keeping with His nature. In the first three Gospels we see how the Lord performed miracles in response to prayer or an appeal, but in John we see a marked difference. There is a different line running through John. The Lord shows forth His glory, moving on a different plane. In chapter two there is the miracle of turning the water into wine. When Mary said to the Lord, "They have no wine," He stopped her by saying, "What do I have in this that concerns you?" (v. 4). This means Mary had nothing to do with it. At the well of Sychar the One who asked for water produced thirst in the woman and then met her thirst. In chapter five there is the story of the impotent man who had suffered for thirty-eight years. The Lord Himself asked, "Do you want to get well?" (v. 6). It seemed as if there was not any hope in the man's heart. But the Lord said to him, "Rise, take up your mat and walk" (v. 8). Nicodemus did not come with a question. It seemed as if he only came to show forth his own knowledge (3:2). The Lord told him straight out that he must be born anew. It was the Lord who took the positive line. In the sixth chapter there is the story of the feeding of the five thousand and of the twelve baskets that were left over. In chapter nine, "He saw a man blind from birth" (v. 1). In response to His disciples' question, He said this man was

blind so "that the works of God might be manifested in him" (v. 3). Without any appeal from the blind man, Jesus made clay and anointed his eyes, and the man saw. The Lord wanted to do miracles, not just in response to the request of man, but because He was God. If we recognize God, we will see that He does above what we seek or ask. I believe in prayer, but I also believe in God. There are many things that He does in order to show forth His glory. He is the Creator, and He wants to create. When the Lord was with Martha and Mary, He wanted to perform a miracle on Lazarus. Yet they were so blind. Martha did not even want the stone to be removed! The Lord initiated everything.

God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. He is God. When I think of this, I want to worship. If God withdrew all that He has done for us apart from our prayers, we would have very little left! We should come to Him and say, "Lord, I believe You are God." When we feel that we cannot even pray and that we have waited in vain, having no hope, let us say, "Lord, it is not my prayer that matters, only You matter. I believe in You, in Your throne, and in Your mercy." "It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Rom. 9:16). We need to see that God is bigger than our prayer and our thoughts. When we can pray, let us pray, but when we come to the point when we cannot pray, let us look to God and declare that He is God. We are so small; we need to learn to look to God to accomplish things by Himself! If God believes in Himself, then we also should believe in Him. Hebrews 6:13 says that God swore by Himself. People always swear by one who is greater than they, but God swore by Himself. He is God. Not only do we have to confess that we cannot do anything because we are so weak, we also need to confess that we cannot even grasp God's strength. God is not limited by our feeble prayers. He works above what we can ask or think. Just as the Lord's return will come at a time that we do not know, even now He comes and works when we do not know it. He supplies our needs according to His riches, not according to what we ask. Not long ago a man did a job for me. I asked him for his bill, but I could not get him to give me one. Finally, he said, "I will take what you can give me." I could have just given him a few cents, and he would have taken it. But I would have only received the glory that comes from a few cents! God cannot suffer His glory to be limited by our apprehension, conception, or thoughts of Him. Let us say to God, "Do for me what will glorify You." It is better to believe that He is God rather than spending our time crying to Him. Our prayers can come to an end and our seeking can weaken and tire us, but God

cannot tire or come to an end. The measure of our conception of God is not the measure of His working. We can say, "Lord, here is a tired person who puts himself into Your hand." We can be impatient, but it will not hasten matters at all. We just need to look to Him and trust in Him. God says it is not of him who wills or runs but of Him who shows mercy. Let us humble ourselves under His hand. All of our struggles, prayers, and sighs avail nothing. He is a God who cannot deny Himself. He abides faithful.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN

THE TWO WILLS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Matt. 17:24-27

"Take that and give it to them for Me and you."

It might seem as if the Lord was wrong when He instructed Peter to pay the temple tax, because according to verse 26 "the sons are free." God does not make any demand on His sons; therefore, it is not His mind or will for sons to pay. They are free! In God's mind payment should not be made, because this would put the Lord in the false position of a stranger. Yet in spite of all this, Jesus Christ paid the money! Some might think that He was not according to the mind of God in doing this. Why then did the Lord pay the tribute? He paid for this and only this reason: "That we do not stumble them." He did it so that they might not be offended. Jesus Christ did not act on the basis of rights but on the basis of grace. This is not a matter of the will of God but a matter of the cross. The cross has to work in us to such an extent that we are willing to do what is not necessary lest we stumble others. We stress the fact that we need have no fear of man, that the fear of man is a snare, and that we must be delivered from it. In regard to our duty, the fear of man must never come in, but in regard to our privilege, the fear of stumbling man must come in. In the incident of the tribute money, it was not a matter of evading duty but of sacrificing privilege. This is the cross. The principle of this passage is deep and important.

It is according to God's mind that we be exempt, but it is also God's mind that we not give offense. When these two principles clash, we have to follow the will of God in not giving offense, instead of insisting on our rights and privileges.

There are many things that God has shown us personally that we should or should not do. We might call this God's will A. If we try to carry it out, we may have difficulties with our parents, family, elders, or the brothers. What are we going to do? Which will are we going to follow? A second matter, which we may

call God's will B, is also the mind of God because He has spoken of obedience to parents and husbands, and of submission to one another in His Word. We cannot just ignore these commands. It seems as if God's will A and will B clash! We always prefer will A to will B, because will B brings in a human element which is contrary to us, and we would rather not have it. We want to hang on to will A, which is in the principle of not paying the tribute money. Yet more than just the human element is involved because God has brought in will B as well. Whenever provision is made in God's Word for will B, the principle of God is that we should follow it to do will B before will A because we are members of the Body. The Son Himself acted in this way and so must we!

We get so involved with will A and are so keen on pushing it through that we find we are kicking against everything and everyone in the way; thus we lose our rest and blessing. It is the same principle with the Lord in choosing between the will of God and the cup. The Lord prayed, "Let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). He could go to the cross or not go to the cross, but it was impossible for Him not to do God's will. We must always hold on to God's will, not the cup. If we are involved with the cup, that is, God's will A, we will get taken up with a thing and miss God's will.

As soon as we try to push things through, we get away from the cross. Our attitude should be, "God has shown me something, but I am perfectly prepared to be contradicted, limited, checked, and to abide by God's time. I will trust God to bring about will A. It is not necessary for me to push that through." This is bearing the cross.

Bearing the cross has two aspects: (1) The cross crosses out our own will; and (2) when it is the will of God for us to do something, our heart and will respond to it. However, when God's will A and our will are both crossed out, we do not like it. This is another experience of the cross. When I was still at college, God showed me that I should go to an island which was infested with pirates and preach the gospel there. It was quite a struggle for me to obey. I visited the island and found the people willing. After much difficulty, I rented a house, repaired it, and prepared everything. A hundred brothers were praying for me and had also given me money toward the expenses. During this time my parents said nothing, but five days before I was to go and everything had been packed, they suddenly stepped in and forbade me to go! The house was ready, the money was spent, and the will of God was burning in my heart. What was I to do? My parents said no, and God's Word says, "Honor your father and mother." I sought light from the

Lord, and He said to me, "Yes, going to the island is My will, but it is not My will for you to force My will. Wait and I will work out My will; you must submit." I had no liberty to explain to others the reason for my change of plans—that my parents had stopped me—and everyone misunderstood me. The one whose opinion I valued the most said, "It will be difficult to trust you in the future."

In God's time the way was opened and souls were won. But this taught me a deep lesson. I had a preference for His will! Not going was a cutting feeling for me; it was difficult for me not to go. This shows that God's will had become my will. I became too much involved with it. I had made up my mind to go. If I had a pure desire for God's will alone, it would not have touched me. There would have been a detachment of spirit. God allowed all this to happen in order to teach me this lesson.

We have to submit to the things revealed in the Word of God. If we find that the revealed will of God is contrary to other indicators, we must wait for Him to bring will A to pass. We must trust Him to work it out. He needs no help to bring about His will. God is seeking to show us that we do not need to push. It is so easy for the self to come in to do the will of God. God has His time and He will do it. The self is fed and nourished when it can boast, "I am doing the will of God." We think that nothing on earth should stand in our way, but God Himself lays something across our path in order to counter this attitude. The most subtle and difficult thing for the cross to accomplish is cutting across our zeal and love for the will of God.

The cross the Lord bore was God's will B; that is, it was something revealed in the word: "That we do not stumble them" (Matt. 17:27). We may be one hundred percent sure of will A, and yet the cross will cut in.

Verse 27 ends with the phrase "for Me and you." It was as if the Lord said to Peter, "I am not the only One going this way; you are going this way too. You have to submit." This relationship comes in especially in the church, the Body. It is a deep lesson. Many times we do not mind giving in to the Lord, and we do not mind our personal will being crossed out, but giving in to others is harder.

Matthew 17 shows the only miracle performed by the Lord for Himself, and half of it was for Himself and half for us! It takes a miracle to supply this need and enable us to do His will. He Himself has to do it. (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-EIGHT

THE WILL OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:41; Heb. 10:5, 7-9; John 6:38; 12:27; Mark 10:45; Gen. 22:1-2, 10; 1 Sam. 15:21-23

When our Lord was in Gethsemane, He prayed, "Not My will, but Yours" (Luke 22:42). In our pursuit to please the Lord, two things are set before us: the cup and the will. The cup should always be secondary to the will. The Lord came to be crucified, and yet He prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42). Why? This is inexplicable to us (cf. John 12:27). It was possible for the Lord to pray, "If You are willing, remove this cup from Me." But was impossible for Him to pray, "If possible let Me not do Your will." We have no direct connection with the cup, only with the will. We do not take the cross for the cross's sake but only because it is the will of God. "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22).

The cup represents things which are related to God's will, and we get so taken up with them. However, the Lord was wholly taken up with the will of the Father. He drank the cup, but He did not drink it because of the cup, but because it was the will of God for Him. If we seek the will of God, our greatest danger is being taken up with something He has shown us, and it can become a kind of obsession. Even to the last moment, however, the Lord could give up the cup.

Are we holding on to the things which God has shown us? Is the will of God everything to us? We should be fully bound up with the will of God. Our attitude should be, "I am for His will. I am not for anything." Abraham knew God and His will, yet he received two different commands. What did Abraham say? Did he say, "You commanded me to sacrifice Isaac; therefore, I am going to sacrifice him"? God does not call us to a life of offering Isaac, but to a life of doing His will. We must not think that because we have gone through the motions that we are necessarily doing the will of God. Even on that last night the Lord still checked about the cross. If God shows us that this is His will, we should trust that His power will carry it out. We should keep ourselves in direct touch with His will. It should matter little to us whether or not we will do something, and it should matter little if we have to wait. We have to ask God to detach our hearts from the things and hold us to His will. "Father, is this Your present guidance?" If we try to carry a thing out, we will have to use a power that is not spiritual. We should be really flexible. We should not be afraid to stop and take a step back, or even appear to undo things. God is a living God, and He has a living will. One day He

may call us to offer up Isaac. The next day He may call us to take Isaac back. We should not be occupied with the killing of Isaac. If we are concerned only with the will and not the thing, we can be stopped without any pain. If the stopping causes pain, this shows that something of us has crept in. "Lord, I want nothing for myself. I only want Your will." We have a peaceful life when there is no expectation of things, because there are no disappointments.

Our trouble is that we are often so certain of what we should do. We should instead pray, "Lord, I am apt to miss Your will." We can never say that we have come to a place where we are above mistakes. Every cup should be held very loosely. It is a blessed thing to be able to be turned back. This attitude keeps us in the most pliable state before God. There are stops in the life of Paul that are recorded in the book of Acts! How many of us can be stopped by God? Brokenness and pliability are more important than sacrifice. We must have no connection with things. We want to love what He wants, not love what He has shown He wants. There must be readiness to do the present will of God.

John 6:38 says, "For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." God's will has nothing to do with our makeup. Many times we can know a person by the kind of guidance he has supposedly received, because the natural strength often intrudes into the will of God. Nothing is more serious than this. The pure will of God is where we are ruled out. So much of the guidance among the children of God has a personal taint to it. A timid brother is always "guided" to take a back seat. A forward brother is always "guided" to take a front seat, and yet both claim to be "guided." "Not my will" means that it has nothing to do with us. I must not color the will of God for my own sake. We must come to the end of our natural strength. The natural strength cuts very deep and must be thoroughly purged. How good it is for one to come to a place of purity, a place where there is no mixture. The Spirit discerns all things (1 Cor. 2). The natural life must be severed from the divine things, and the natural strength must be destroyed and its backbone broken. We should be so filled by the Spirit that those beside us have no way of telling how the Lord is leading. It is only when we have something natural with us that others can discern us.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-NINE

THE SUPPRESSION OF AFFECTIONS

Scripture Reading: Col. 2:16-23, verse 18 refers to doing one's own will in humility; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Tim. 4. Knowledge of these passages will equip us to help others.

In the Scripture three words are used for life: zoe (spirit), psuche (soul, strength of nature), and bios (physical life). Many times we confuse psuche with bios. We must repudiate the psuche. But the Bible does not tell us to repudiate our bios. Many make the mistake of confusing the bios, the physical life, with the psuche. They try to control meat and drink, and they think that they are denying their psuche. But doing this is the same as making John the Baptist greater than the Lord. Meat and drink are things that belong to the bios, the physical life, they do not touch the psuche, the natural life. If we deal with the bios, we are dealing with things only. God does not require that we cut off our bios. In fact, the only way to cut off our bios is by committing suicide. If we only deal with our bios, we are dealing with things. Instead of touching the natural life, we are strengthening it.

The essence of the teaching in Colossians 2 is dealing with things of the world in self-chosen lowliness. The result is being puffed up to the satisfaction of the flesh and the nourishing of the self. This occurs because we think that we are doing it. The one who works gets the glory. If we are the ones doing it, we feel that we should get the glory. Do we get the glory or does the Lord get the glory? Have we overcome the temptation by our own resistance or by believing in God? Colossians is about bringing things into Christianity that are not Christianity. God must open our eyes to see the difference. God wants to touch the psuche life which is independent of Him (Gen. 2); it is the life which can act without Him. We may deal with a thousand things without touching our natural life. If we meet a good Roman Catholic priest or Buddhist priest, we would conclude that he was not worldly. It may be true that he is not worldly, but he is not heavenly either. He is not spiritual. In suppressing himself, only the body (bios) has been touched, not the life (psuche).

Second Timothy 3:3 is a verse to Christians, not to unbelievers. Being "without natural affection" is a state that will be found among Christians in the end times. Verses 2 and 3 deal with the natural affections. Being without natural affection is a sign of the end times. Some think that they are so spiritual that they do not want anything to do with their family! There was a brother who thought he was spiritual because he did not mind leaving his family and going away to work for

the Lord, when in fact he had never cared for them! True spirituality is not void of natural affection. It is caring yet at the same time letting the cross deal with anything against the will of God. If there is no cost it is not spiritual. There is a place for the family life to be sanctified and for the old natural life to be touched and dealt with.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY

THE PRESENT WILL OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Num. 14:29-30, 40, 44-45; 20:10-12

The passages concerning Moses striking the rock a second time are quite serious. They speak of a Potter and a marred vessel; they also speak of God changing His mind. In these passages, the vessel that was designated for God's original plan was marred. It was not marred by the Potter but by something in the clay. However, the vessel was only marred; it was not broken.

Moses is a very prominent man in the Old Testament, and great attention is given to the details of his life. But Moses failed to "sanctify [Jehovah] in the eyes of the sons of Israel" (Num. 20:12). Moses was the meekest man on the earth, but he was rash when he said, "Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10). He brought God into the wrong light; therefore, God changed His plan concerning him. God had to vindicate Himself; therefore, He had to prepare another vessel. When Israel was told of its punishment for refusing to go into the land, they decided to go in according to His original command. But God had changed His mind. They went to their death, for the Amalekites smashed them to pieces.

We must not hold on to something that God spoke to us last year. We must always hold on to God and live in the present will of God because God may change His mind. We must know Him in a more intimate way and avoid any carelessness in life and service that would cause Him to change His mind. However, if a second will has been ordained, there is only death in striving to be according to the first. The Israelites were slain when they insisted on holding on to the first will of God. We cannot play with the will of God. There is no way to tell whether or not God will change His mind and ways. The fear of God is the most important thing in the Christian life. Our attitude should be, "Lord, what is Your present will? Keep me near to You and fearing You. Keep me for Your best, but if something in me has caused You to change Your mind, I am willing to be according to Your second will. If setting me aside vindicates Your holiness

among Your people and if Your punishment shows Your children a clearer way, I am willing." God's glory must be vindicated, even at the expense of our pleasure and happiness. We must be pliable and ready to take the second place. We must bow to His governmental hand, and one day He may restore us. "Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

We must live in the present will of God. We must not be proud of our past. A present relationship is necessary. We must be pliable and must always be open to Him. If we have really learned the cross, we will prostrate ourselves before Him before the judgment seat is even here. God's glory must be vindicated, even at the expense of our happiness. The solemnity of the possibility of God changing His mind demands that we walk softly before Him with open minds. We need grace to overcome everything which would resist Him, because there is always the possibility of being cast aside in service. Let us presume and assume nothing. Our God is a consuming fire. He is our loving Father, but He is also sovereign in His governmental ways.

"Lord, I will learn to fear You. I will never have anything in my life that would resist You."

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-ONE CONFORMITY

We cannot live in Philippians 3 unless we first know Romans 6 in our vital experience. Philippians 3 speaks of the death of the new man, and of taking the resurrection life back to the cross and having the stamp of death placed upon it. Resurrection life constantly gravitates to the cross. After His baptism Christ was on resurrection ground, yet He was constantly under the shadow of the cross: "Not My will, but Yours" (Luke 22:42).

We live to die. We live through cycles of life and death as we become conformed to His image through deeper and deeper experiences of dying. The good self often intrudes into divine service; therefore, it has to go through death. For example, we cannot let our eloquence intrude into the teaching of divine truth. Suppose Brother A can preach and Brother B can manage affairs. If Brother A is asked to preach, he will go forward with confidence; but if he is asked to manage affairs, he will be driven to his knees. We must have no confidence in our natural ability; instead we must put our natural ability to death and be willing to die to it.

No one has an advantage over anyone else in spiritual things. The only difference is in the extent of our faith and obedience! Our attitude toward natural wisdom should be: "Lord, I refuse to understand Your Word by myself or by my natural intellect. I prefer to remain in ignorance unless You will be wisdom to me." We must be willing to wait for revelation. "Lord, I refuse to love anyone with my own love. I am willing to let my self be limited in order to gain Your approval."

The cross is both a fact and a principle. In regard to salvation, it is a fact. In regard to victory, it is a principle. Death deals with sin and self, and life deals with resurrection life. Therefore, in regard to victory, the cross is a principle, not a fact. There must be many experiences of death and resurrection, that is, cycles of death and resurrection which take us through death and life. We should often say to the Lord, "I refuse to live by this and that. I confess that this or that has to go, and I accept Your verdict." This is going through a new experience of death and coming out in a realm of greater resurrection that has the stamp of death upon it. Victory needs only faith; conformity requires obedience. We should set ourselves against ourselves. "I'll kiss the chastening rod," Madam Guyon said. Paul said that conformity was something he desired to attain to. "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue" (Phil. 3:12).

The flesh profits nothing. We have to pray, "Lord, give me light. Reveal what the flesh is to me." The revelation of the flesh is a crisis, whereas the daily putting to death of the flesh is a process.

The joy of victory is exuberant, but conformity to His death is different. As one hymn says, "Let the spirit praise Thee,/Though the heart be riven" (Hymns, #377).

Salvation and deliverance are free gifts, whereas conformity costs us everything. It is a joy to be healed, but a greater joy to bleed.

First Corinthians 2:2-4 indicates that we should have conformity in our service. "For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified...weakness...fear...much trembling." Enduement gives self-confidence, and very often the carnal man is fed through such enduement. This is the reason so many Pentecostals do not go on to the stage of conformity and do not even know deliverance. It is not enough to receive enduement alone; one must go through death and receive the stamp of death.

Conformity to His death leads to the fellowship of His sufferings. Miss Barber once said, "Lord, I die because I want to leave the field for others to die. Let me stand in the place of death that others may pass into life."

Every new light is for the whole Body. It may mean death for us, but life for others (2 Cor. 4:11-12, 15). "For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (v. 11). This "dying" or killing is His killing work in us.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-TWO

THE FOUR ASPECTS

OF THE LORD'S DEATH

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:13; Rom. 6:6, 11

The imparting of life was not an afterthought on the part of God. God did not desire to impart the divine life to man only after the fall. This thought was in His very heart from the beginning. Even before the fall, God wanted to give His Son to man. God's eternal purpose is for there to be a race of beings who can share His uncreated life. He offered His life to Adam in the form of the tree of life before sin ever came in. Adam was innocent, being neither sinful nor holy. He was a man living by his natural life; he was a living soul. When sin came in, Adam and God were separated. Adam was afraid of meeting God. There was a need for redemption only after sin came in. Before the fall man's need could have been supplied by simply receiving life. But instead of receiving life, he chose something else. When sin came in, God had to do something in addition to His original purpose. Redemption is not an end in itself, but it is a necessary means to reach God's end because of sin.

The work of the Lord Jesus was twofold: (1) bringing about the purpose of God, and (2) bringing about the redemption of man. The latter aspect was remedial. The death of the Lord Jesus was not just remedial in nature. It also included a positive aspect quite apart from the matter of sin. Remedially, it dealt with what man had brought in, and positively, it carried out the original purpose of God.

There are four aspects of the Lord's death. Two of these four aspects are for the undoing of the devil's work and man's sin, and two are for the bringing about of God's purpose. These four aspects include: (1) the blood for remedy, (2) the crucifixion for remedy, (3) the flesh for God's purpose, and (4) the bearing of the cross for God's purpose.

What is man's need? As soon as disobedience came in, the question of guilt had to be addressed. Because of guilt, God and man became separated. A blockage came between them, and this gives Satan ground for attacking. Therefore, there is a need to have that guilt—the ground of attack and condemnation—removed so that man can be brought back into full fellowship with God. Before Adam

sinned, he was a natural man; after the fall he became "the old man." We not only have "products" on the street, we also have a "factory" of sin. Sins have to be done away with so that there is no case before God, and I—the factory which produces the sins—also have to be done away with so that there will be no more cases! First, the blood is for sins. Second, the cross is for me. Third, the flesh releases His life into me (which was represented by the tree of life). Fourth, the bearing of the cross is the working of death that keeps the natural life or soul-life in its proper place.

THE BLOOD

The blood is toward God, man, and Satan. Primarily, the blood is for God, not for man. It is required by God, but if we do not realize the value of the blood to God, we will not realize its value to us. In the Old Testament the blood is mentioned over four hundred times, and in each case, it is always for God Himself. On the day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled before the Lord seven times, and no man except the high priest, typifying the Lord Jesus, was allowed to draw near to the Lord. In Egypt the blood was smeared on the outside of the door for God to see; those who were in the house could not see it. The life is in the blood, and God requires blood to satisfy His righteousness. The blood was God's portion and was never allowed to be eaten. Sometimes we feel our sins are more real than the blood, yet we have to accept God's valuation. We have to believe that the blood is precious to God. If God accepts it for our redemption, then we can believe that the debt is paid. First John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." In the business world, if I pay a debt, the one to whom I pay the money has to see that the money is good! If God says the blood is enough to satisfy His requirements, then it must be. Our valuation of the blood must be in accordance with His valuation. The result will be that our hearts will be purified from an evil conscience (Heb. 9:14). (The blood cleanses our conscience, not our hearts.) We know how important it is to have a clear conscience, because without this we are unable to believe. If our conscience condemns us, faith leaks out. The temptation to many is to think they must live up to what they regard as God's standard before they can come with confidence to God. But the blood is the way of access, and our approach is always with boldness because it has nothing to do with our attainment or holiness. The blood is the only thing that is needed; it is absolutely sufficient. The first time we came to the Lord, we were made near by the blood, and every subsequent time that we come to Him, we are made near by the blood. Penance will not make our

approach any easier. The blood is our only plea. Since our conscience is cleansed before God we have "no more conscience of sins." From this ground we can face the enemy and all of his efforts to bring us under condemnation. The blood puts God on our side, and we can be fearless. The fall brought in something which gave Satan some footing. Furthermore, man was put outside the garden, and God was outside of man. The blood restores us to God and God to us.

The blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses us not only from sin but from every sin. As He is in the light, we can walk in the light, and the blood will cleanse us from every sin—those which we think are unforgivable and even those which we are not conscious of. It is only as our conscience is clear that we can overcome Satan. His attacks are based on his accusations, and if we accept these accusations we will go down. Why do we come under his accusations and believe them? It is because we still hope to have some righteousness of our own. We often may be disappointed in ourselves, but God is never disappointed with us because He expects nothing from us! If we accept God's verdict that no good thing dwells in us, and judge ourselves to be worthy of nothing but death, and if we see that the blood more than pays every time, Satan will have no ground of attack. Our attitude only will be, "Lord, I cannot hope to be any better, but Your blood is always sufficient."

THE CROSS

The Lord also died so that we might die. As the last Adam, the representative of the whole Adamic creation, He gathered every son of Adam into Himself, and in His death He brought the whole race to an end as far as God was concerned.

Note the order in Romans 6. We know and then we are able to reckon. With some there is an undue emphasis on "reckon" in verse 11, suggesting that we must reckon in order to produce the death which we must have, and that it all begins with us. But the Lord included us in His death. He has done something, and we are included in His crucifixion. The order is: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him...reckon yourselves to be dead." We do not reckon in order to be dead. When we see that we are dead, we are in the position to witness to it by baptism. What is the most common thing to do with a dead body? Bury it! (Some use burial as a means to die. We should never be baptized unless we have seen we have died. Our burial is our answer to the death on the cross; everything is based on this. Unless we see this as a basis,

everything we do will be in the nature of works.) Baptism is not a testimony of our faith in Christ for our salvation, but a revelation of our union with Him in death and resurrection. God included us in the death of His Son so that we could be identified with Him "in Christ." "Of Him you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30). God put us into Christ just as I might put a piece of paper into a book. Our old man has been crucified. We can look in vain for any reference to future crucifixion. Now it is a matter of faith. The secret of reckoning is the revelation of what the Lord has already done. It is not reckoning toward death, but reckoning from the fact of death. The way to reckon is to be in Christ Jesus.

The two remedial aspects of the Lord's death—removing our sins before God and removing ourselves from us—deal with everything that came in with Adam. Through these two aspects, man is brought back to Adam's state before the fall.

THE FLESH

In Genesis we have Adam, Eve, and the rib (2:18-19, 21-24). In Ephesians we have Christ, the church, and the water (5:23, 25-27, 29-32). In John we have water, blood, and the side (19:34).

God wants more than a remedy for what came in with Adam, He wants to have a race into whom He can impart His own life. For them to have His very life and to be one with Him in life is the only thing that will satisfy Him. It is the only thing that will defeat any possible uprising of the enemy.

Ephesians 5 is the only chapter which tries to explain Genesis 2, and in Ephesians we also have something rather peculiar. We have been taught that we are sinners and need salvation, but God wants more than just a remedy for what came in with Adam. He wants a people who possess His own life. We have thought that saved sinners are the church, but saved sinners as such are not the church, because they bring in something negative from the past. The church is the Body of Christ: "The church which is His Body." Sin is not mentioned in connection with it. Christ has to have a Body which can express His life. In Ephesians we have one aspect of His death which is quite different from other places in the Scripture. The "love" that is spoken of in Ephesians 5 is the love of a husband for a wife, not the love of Christ for sinners. It is the church which is in view and not sinners. Paul uses Genesis 2 to illustrate the point. If our eyes are opened to this we will certainly worship. In the Old Testament we have many types of the death of the Lord, but in Ephesians 5 Paul used only the one in Genesis 2. This is the one type which has nothing to do with sin because it was before sin came in. Adam was not put to sleep because someone had done

something wrong; he was put to sleep in order that something might be taken out of him and be made into someone. The creation of Eve was in view when a rib was taken out of him. This aspect of the Lord's death has nothing to do with atonement or remedy. This aspect is for the purpose of creating the church for the bringing in of the Body for the expression of His own life. Eve is a type of the church. Adam was put to sleep. This aspect of the death of the Lord relates to sleep. Christians sleep; we do not die. Whenever death is mentioned, sin is in the background. Adam's sleep refers to a death with no sin in it. It came before Genesis 3, before the introduction of sin.

Eve was taken out of Adam. She was not a separate creation. Eve is a type of the church taken out of the body of the last Adam to be His bride. Putting it another way, God is seeking to turn His only begotten Son into the Firstborn among many brothers. He is seeking to turn a grain of wheat into many grains. God's heart's desire is to have many sons.

John 19:34 speaks of a pierced side and of blood and water. The blood speaks of the atoning death of Christ, and the water speaks of the life released by the non-propitiating aspect of His death. It came from His side, His heart. God's purpose is that we should all share His life.

The blood came in to blot out sins, whereas the cross came in to blot out us. Furthermore, we were not created to be redeemed. Redemption was only necessary to bring us back to the eternal purpose of God, which is sonship—the sharing of God's life. The Lord Jesus brought us back to God's purpose by His death, and in His death He released His life. In accepting the Lord Jesus, we receive something which Adam never had! For Adam never had the life of God as represented by the tree of life.

John 12 and Luke 12 make it clear that there is an aspect of death which is only for the release of life. One alone had God's life, and He had to die in order to release His life. There was life in the grain of wheat, but it had to die in order to produce many grains. The death of the first grain is not to propitiate for the other grains but to produce them.

Luke 12:50 says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" The Lord was pressed, squeezed, and held up. What was the way out? "I have a baptism to be baptized with." The Lord had to release Himself by death so that we could receive Him. He said He came to send fire on

the earth, that is, the fire of the Holy Spirit, so that all might have His Spirit in them. Christ is not only with us but in us.

There is another aspect of the flesh. In the eating of the Passover lamb, the blood was for God and the flesh was for the household. The blood was not to be eaten; it was for God to see. But under the blood we need to take the flesh to prepare for the wilderness, so that we might have the strength to go out. In the Levitical offerings the flesh was always meant for the priests and Levites. John 6 puts the emphasis on the flesh, not on the blood. Of the four instances in which the flesh and the blood are spoken of together, the flesh is spoken of first. In these four instances, "eat" is spoken of first, not "drink"; the emphasis is on the flesh. The flesh in this chapter is something positive, "And the bread which I will give is My flesh, given for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Bread is something related to the purpose of God, whereas blood is related to the remedy of God. We always talk about the Lord's supper as the breaking of bread, not as the drinking of the cup. The bread is always put before the wine because the bread is according to the purpose of God, whereas the wine is remedial. The flesh includes the blood. If there had been no blood on the door, there could have been no flesh in the house.

The Lord said, "So he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57). To "live because of Me" means to live on account of Me. Do we know anything of this? Outside of Him we have no life, we cannot do anything. He is always trying to strip us and put us in difficult situations so that we can learn to live by Him. Some of us have a keen mind and brain, and we have never learned the lesson that we cannot understand God's Word without God. He has to strip us of our wisdom, our mental powers, our keen brain, etc. Then we can learn to live by Him and because of Him. We have to take life from Him even for our body. We live because of Him. The Lord drew the parallel, by saying, "As...I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me." God does not give us power to be strong; rather, the Lord's life in us makes us strong. Difficulties multiply for the sole purpose of stripping us of our own resources. When we are put into hopeless situations, we ask for the situations to be removed. But the Lord wants us to learn, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). Our grace is not sufficient, but "My" grace is sufficient. Paul was always weak. The Lord has to bring us to a place where we say, "Lord, I simply cannot exist." A brother once said, "The Lord is always trying to knock the bottom out from under me." Through one experience after another we learn to live by the

Lord. When the Lord puts us into the most difficult situations, we may try to meet them, but eventually we are brought to the place where we cannot do anything about them. Our attitude should be, "I cannot; therefore, I am not going to try. I refuse to do anything about it. Lord, You must do it for me." In this way we can learn to live by Him. It is He who has done it, and as we multiply this experience, daily it becomes our life attitude. God's life is not merely a parcel or a sum of capital. First John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." The life is in the Son and nowhere else; it cannot be possessed apart from Him. If we have a proper relationship to the living Lord, His life will become ours automatically.

There are people who believe that all of our salvation and holiness lie in the blood. Some go further and believe that God will deliver us from the old man. There are others who feel that we must consecrate ourselves to the Lord. We must have the blood, our old man must be dealt with on the cross, and we must give ourselves over to the Lord to produce in us what He wants. Our attitude should be, "Lord, I trust You to create in me whatever I need and to be whatever I need." Faith brings Him in. Faith says, "Lord, I cannot do it; be to me whatever I need."

First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Christ Jesus is made unto us all that we need. He is our patience, etc. God does not give us a dose of sanctification. Holiness is simply the Lord living His holy life in us. We must believe this. The secret is not trying but trusting. The difference between trying and trusting is the difference between heaven and hell! We say, "Lord, I cannot; therefore, I will not try. I trust You to do this." This is drawing our life from Him. It is not passivity, because it involves active cooperation and faith.

THE BEARING OF THE CROSS

The fourth aspect of Christ's death is allowing the cross to be the ruling principle of our life, daily allowing it to undercut our natural life and power (Matt. 10:34-39; Mark 8:32-35; Luke 17:32-34; John 12:24-26; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Phil. 3:10). In this way the natural life and power will not act according to itself or assert itself. In order to touch the very core of our problem, we must deal with the question of the soul. In this way the dying or killing of the Lord Jesus will release and manifest His life in us.

The Lord has taken great care to show us that we can live only by His life. Trials and difficulties are brought in to prove this point to us. The real meaning of the Christian life is nothing less than Christ. He is the life.

What does it mean to live under law? It means that God demands something from us and we try to do it. What does it mean to live under grace? It means that God still demands something, but Christ does it in us. This life is not an end in itself, but a means to fully secure God's purpose.

We need to distinguish between the "old man," the sin producer, and the soul, that is the natural power and ability to act according to one's self independent of God. Self is not necessarily sinful, but it always stands apart from the will of God. There are times when the self is quite righteous, almost holy! If our sins and our "old man" have been dealt with, we are back to where Adam was before the fall. Our problem then becomes Adam's original problem—the problem of the soul acting independent of God.

What is the soul? Jesus Christ was a sinless man, but He had a separate personality from God: "I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30). The real significance of the Lord's temptation was Satan's efforts to make Him act according to Himself and thus relinquish His complete dependence upon God. When man acts according to himself, that is the soul. "The Son can do nothing from Himself" (John 5:19). This means that nothing originated from Him. The matter of the soul is not related to sins as such; it is related to independence—something we do without the help of God. The danger for us is that we can live by our own power: "I can plan, and I can decide." Therefore, God shows us another aspect of the cross which deals with the soul through the bearing of the cross daily.

We need to distinguish between the two sides of the cross: (1) the crucifixion of the cross which dealt with the flesh, and (2) the bearing of the cross, which deals with the self in a daily process. This second aspect of the cross deals with the soul. The cross is brought to bear on the soul so that the mold of death, the mark of the cross, is constantly conforming the soul into subjection to the Spirit.

Matthew 10:37-39 indicates that the soul is the seat of our affections. Many actions and decisions are influenced by our affections. As a consequence, the Lord said, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me," and "He who loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it." We have to lose our soul-life. This means that we cannot fulfill its wishes. We have to ignore what the soul is

asking for. Some secret love may cause us to deviate from our course of fully following the Lord.

In Mark 8:32-35 Peter said to the Lord, in effect, "Have mercy upon Yourself!" The Lord's reply was a strong rebuke. The soul's desire is self-preservation; but in order to go on with God, we have to go against ourselves. Are we afraid of the will of God? Do we like the will of God? Miss Barber once said, "Lord, I am willing to break my heart so that I can have Your heart." When there is no mixture of soul and spirit, and everything is out from the Spirit, then God's will is all, and we will shed no tears in sympathy for our soul-life!

The soul-life is occupied by the things of the earth (Luke 17:32-34). What will be our reaction to the claims of our home, the interests of our service, etc.? If we are living according to the soul-life, our reaction will not be proper.

Fruitfulness comes from the loss of our soul (John 12:24-26). What part of us must be lost before there can be "much fruit"? The soul! There is so little expression of the life within us because the power of the soul is wrapping and enveloping it. We are living, doing, and acting out from ourselves. The cross must come in before the soul-life can be lost. Verse 25 is in connection with the losing of the soul. In times of temptation, the self wants to resist, but any victory won on this basis is a counterfeit victory. Only what the Lord does in us is real deliverance. Our attitude should be: "Lord, I cannot do anything. Therefore, I will not try to do anything. Lord, You do it."

This dredging up of the natural life begins with a definite crisis. Some souls are stronger than others. But the Lord must come in to break all of them until no self-confidence is left. As long as there is anything for us to confide in, we will have self-confidence. This is why God must dredge up all the ground of self-confidence. Brokenness is only possible when we lose our self-confidence. Moses was once "powerful in his words and works" (Acts 7:22). Yet he had to be brought to the place where he confessed, "I am not eloquent" (Exo. 4:10). Those whose soul-lives have been dealt with by the cross are marked by a spirit of fear and trembling. They are certain of nothing but the Lord, and they walk very softly with Him.

We cannot know Him and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10) unless we are willing to allow the stamp of death—the cross—to be sealed to our soul-life. We must be brought to the place where we have no confidence in our self. This is a life process, a daily taking up of the cross. All self-trust must go.

Any teaching on holiness or victory is inconsequential unless the self, the soul-energy, is first dealt with. The Lord is after utter dependence. He does not want anyone to act independently of Him. He is not asking us to do something for Him. God is the only Doer, the only Originator. Our part is simply to concur. We can do nothing else.

We must know His death in its fullness in all four aspects. In the cross we see God's true estimate of us. We are only fit for death; therefore, we should not even try to please God. This is not passivity; it is active faith. We refuse to live out from our self. We choose to live in complete dependence upon God, and we will allow the cross to do an ever deeper dredging work in us so that we will be "conformed to His death."

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-THREE

FOUR KINDS OF DISCIPLINE

Scripture Reading: Matt. 18:15-20; Titus 1:13; 2:15; 1 Cor. 5:2-8; 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 16; John 15:1-2; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 3:6; 2 Thes. 3:6

Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." The object of Scripture is fourfold: "for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In reading these words we cannot help but notice that the purposes for which the Scripture has been given are chiefly negative. The negative element outweighs the positive. This indicates the corruption of the human heart. The tendency in man is always to go astray, so there is the constant need of correction to bring him back to the way of righteousness. Man does wrong continually, so he has to be dealt with continually. Sometimes God deals with His children through circumstances, sometimes through His Word, and sometimes through His other children. Today we shall consider four different ways of discipline: (1) discipline by the brothers; (2) discipline by the fathers; (3) discipline by the Son; and (4) individual discipline.

In contemplating the matter of discipline, a thought immediately presents itself: How totally out of place it is for one sinner to discipline another. The more we realize our failures and weaknesses, the more we are convinced that we are altogether unsuited for this task. Yet we have to admit that God has committed this very thing to man, which by nature, he is so unqualified for. Before looking further into this subject, let this fact be clearly established: We are weak, utterly weak, and in ourselves we do not have the status to discipline our brothers. If we have any part or lot in this ministry of correction, we can never exercise it on the

ground of our superiority over those we seek to deal with. All have sinned. The only difference between them and us is that our sin has been dealt with by the grace of God, while theirs has not. We deal with them in the hope that grace may be shown to them as it has been shown to us.

THE DISCIPLINE BY THE BROTHERS

Matthew 18:15 shows that the first mode of discipline is that of a brother dealing with a brother. We should note that the one who is exercising the discipline is the offended party. This is not a case of one brother wronging another brother, and a third party taking up the case. No, if your brother offends you, you are the one who is appointed to deal with him. But the vital question is: How are you going to do it? On what ground are you going to discipline him? You can only discipline him on the ground of brotherhood. Your attitude toward him should be one of a brother dealing with a brother. If a brother offends me, there are two ways of dealing with the situation that are according to convenience: I can either lose my temper and vent my wrath on him, or I can forgive him and forget the whole affair. Getting angry with him is a very simple matter, and forgiving him is also a very simple matter. However, both of these ways are far too cheap and easy, and neither of them is the God-appointed way. If I simply flare up at my brother, I am treating him as an enemy. If I simply gloss the matter over, I am treating him as a stranger. In neither case am I treating him as a brother. In the first case I am putting myself in a distant relationship to him; in the second case I am putting myself in a superior position to him, that is, I am making myself magnanimous by pardoning him. He is not helped any more in this way than in the previous way, because the trouble is not disposed of; it is only covered over. When he sees me he will remember that he wronged me, and when I see him I will remember that I have forgiven him. We naturally think that passing over an offense committed against us is a sign of strength; as a matter of fact, it is a sign of weakness. It is a weakness to treat such a matter as though it did not exist; it is a strength to face it squarely and deal with it fully.

How then should such a matter be dealt with? We should treat it exactly as we would had the offense been committed against another and not against ourselves, that is, we should deal with this case as though we were a third party. We should take our brother aside and seek to point out his fault. Nevertheless, our attitude should not be that of the offended party bringing a charge against the offending party, but of brother dealing with brother for the specific purpose of gaining him. "You have gained your brother" (Matt. 18:15) is the goal before us in

all discipline. If our brother responds, then we have gained him; if he fails to respond, then we should take two or three other brothers with us and seek him out again. Remember, in taking two or three witnesses, our attitude should still be the same as it was the first time, that of seeking to win our brother, not of seeking to win a case. If on this second occasion he is still unresponsive, then bring the matter before the whole assembly. However, we should still seek to gain him as a brother, not as bringing a charge against him. If he refuses to listen to the church, then we should treat him "just like the Gentile and the tax collector" (Matt. 18:17), because refusing to heed the church is refusing to heed the Lord. This does not imply excommunication; it merely means that the offending brother is ignored. Even at this stage of the brother's discipline, judgment is not an end, but merely a means to the end. The end is the brother's restoration.

THE DISCIPLINE BY THE FATHERS

Our Lord said, "My Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). There is a discipline which might be termed parental discipline, in contrast to the brotherly discipline of which we have just spoken. In the latter case the one corrected and the one who corrects stand on equal footing; in the former case the one who corrects is in a place of spiritual seniority. This is indicated in Paul's word: "You who are spiritual restore such a one" (Gal. 6:1). But even one who is spiritually more advanced than another should never take a "better-than-thou" position, as if he is looking down from a pedestal to correct an inferior. On the basis of spiritual seniority he can draw on his past experience to help the offender; but he should recall the injunction: "Restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, looking to yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). This mode of discipline is the most precious of all, yet it is the kind that is most sadly lacking in the church. There is a simple reason for this: the church lacks "fathers," that is, mature Christians with ripe spiritual experience.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SON

The discipline of the Son is commonly termed "excommunication." In the two previous forms of discipline the individual is the one taking the initiative; in this instance the church rises up to purge the church. We know that the church is the house of God, but it is the Son who administers the affairs of God's house (Heb. 3:6). The house of God demands righteousness and holiness from all who abide there; it also demands order and subjection to authority. But it should be clearly recognized that it is the Son over God's house who exercises all authority in the

house; the church has no authority whatsoever. Determining whether or not a member shall be excommunicated does not rest with the church. The church simply bows to the authority of the Head and gives effect to His instructions. The excommunication of any member should never be merely a matter of business; it should be a matter of heart-concern for the whole church. It is an abominable thing to see the excommunication of any child of God carried out in a trifling manner, as though it were a light thing. It is no less abominable to see it carried out in a serious manner, if the seriousness is only that of a law court. How tragic it is to witness brothers excommunicating brothers, as though one were witnessing the procedure of a law case! The matter of church discipline is on a plane far different from that of enforcing the righteousness of the law. No excommunication should be without grief and tears on the part of those who exercise discipline; and no excommunication can be without grief and tears on the part of those who exercise discipline if they have clearly seen what the church is. In 1 Corinthians 5:1 Paul wrote, "There is fornication among you." Paul did not locate this sin in any individual believer; he located it in the church. He also said, "You are puffed up? And have you not rather mourned?" (1 Cor. 5:2). This sin was not just the sin of one member, but of the whole Body. Therefore, the shame was not just the shame of one member, but of the whole Body. Consequently, the mourning should not be just the mourning of one member, but of the whole Body. In church discipline we need to see the oneness of the Body of Christ and the potentiality as well as the fact of sin. We must first locate in ourselves the sin that is manifest in our brother, and not until we have judged it in ourselves should we dare judge it in him. By the grace of God we may not have committed the same act, but we have within us the same sin that provoked the act. If we express any personal sympathy when a brother has been excommunicated by the church, this is a clear indication that we have not judged that sin in ourselves.

INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINE

This type of discipline is exercised by individual Christians, and this discipline is a matter of simply avoiding the offender. "Turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). "From these also turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). "Keep away from every brother walking disorderly" (2 Thes. 3:6). There must be no element of personal grievance in this form of discipline, because even though it is relegated to the individual, it is never exercised on individual ground. The reason we are told to avoid certain classes of believers is because their intercourse with us is not only of no help to them,

but is obviously of no help to us. It may even be distinctly harmful. By such intercourse there is no hope of gaining anything, and there is the possibility of losing much. It is a blessed situation indeed when a brother dealing with a brother, "fathers" dealing with "children," or the church dealing with an offending member proves effective in the restoration of the sinning one. However, when other modes of correction prove futile and there is no way of helping a brother, then he should be avoided lest he contaminate others. This form of discipline consists simply in steering clear of the offender. But let us again beware lest we adopt a "holier-than-thou" attitude.

This kind of discipline is exercised when sin has become clearly manifest. The discipline of the fathers is exercised when sin is still hidden. As a consequence, it is the most difficult form of discipline, but at the same time, it is also the most precious because it can hide a multitude of sins. We should not want to wait until sin comes to full fruition so that the church must deal with it openly. The fathers should nip it in the bud. Ninety percent of the work of recovery in the church lies in the hands of the fathers. Pity the local church that has no fathers! It will either have to excommunicate most of its members or be able to excommunicate none. In the cases of discipline by the brothers and discipline exercised by the fathers, it is the individual who takes the initiative, not the church. If the brothers and the fathers would bear responsibility regarding the weaker members of the church, the necessity for excommunication would be obviated in many cases. If the individual shirks responsibility and waits for the church to act, it may be too late, for the church does not deal with sin until it is clearly manifest. The fathers deal with unexposed sin; the Son deals with exposed sin. Our Lord knew well who Judas was, but as the Son He could deal only with proven sin. Judas was under the discipline of the Father right up to the point when the Lord handed him the morsel. The measure of his iniquity was full by then; therefore, he came under the discipline of the Son at this point.

In closing let me emphasize the fact that discipline is always a remedial measure. The ultimate object of discipline is the recovery of the one disciplined. From the standpoint of the church, discipline is a matter of judgment; but from God's standpoint it is a means of recovery. Even if the church disciplines a member by delivering him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, it is with the view "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:5). Where God's children are concerned, there is mercy in all His judgments; and when we judge any of His children on His behalf, whether we are acting as the whole church or

as individuals, we should be full of mercy in our judgments. Even if the outward act is one of discipline, our inward attitude should be one of love.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FOUR

FIVE KINDS OF FORGIVENESS

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:32; 1 John 1:9; John 20:23; James 5:15-16; Matt. 6:14-15; Gal. 6:7; Luke 6:37-38; 2 Sam. 12:9, 14

According to Ephesians 4:32, we were forgiven by God in Christ. According to John 20:23, the disciples have the authority to forgive: "Whoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven." According to 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins, He will forgive us. According to Matthew 6:14-15, if we forgive others, God will forgive us, and if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven. According to James 5:15, if we have sinned and we ask the elders to come and pray for us, we will be forgiven. By reading these five passages we note that they all speak of the matter of forgiveness. They also speak of five different kinds of forgiveness, not just one kind.

THE ETERNAL FORGIVENESS GRANTED

BY CHRIST JESUS

The first kind of forgiveness is eternal forgiveness because God forgives us for Christ's sake. If we have this forgiveness, we are saved for eternity; we will never perish. If the Lord forgives our sins, we know that we are saved for eternity; therefore, this is eternal forgiveness.

INSTRUMENTAL OR PRONOUNCEMENTAL FORGIVENESS

In John 20:23 the Lord told His disciples that the sins they forgave were forgiven and vice versa. Rome has built a system of forgiveness on this verse, teaching that their priests have the authority to forgive or retain sins. We know that this is false. What did the Lord tell the disciples that they had authority to do? What is the meaning of this passage? We know that the Lord is the only One with authority to forgive. When He was on earth, He said to one man, "Your sins are forgiven" (Matt. 9:5). The Jews objected because they thought that God was the only One who had authority to forgive. John 20:23 does not speak of eternal forgiveness, but of forgiveness granted by the church. What does this mean? If you are a sinner who believes in the gospel and applies for baptism or the Lord's supper, the church has something to say. If the church believes you are truly the Lord's, they will receive you, but if not, they will reject you. This forgiveness is an

instrumental forgiveness. God uses the church to pronounce whether sins have been forgiven or not. Moreover we must connect verse 22, which says, "Receive the Holy Spirit," with verse 23, which says, "Whoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whoseever sins you retain, they are retained." This shows that if the church is in the power of the Holy Spirit and they say that a man is saved, he is saved. If they say that he is not saved, he is not saved. This does not mean that the church can cause a man to be saved or unsaved, but that the church is the instrument of God to pronounce whether or not a man is saved.

So far we have seen two kinds of forgiveness: eternal forgiveness and instrumental forgiveness. But we need more than this.

RESTORATIVE FORGIVENESS

After we have become a Christian, we often fall. We know that we should not and yet we do. The sins of the past have been forgiven and yet we sin again. What should we do? We must go to God and apply for new forgiveness. Our position as to eternal forgiveness is settled. No question can ever be raised regarding eternal forgiveness. Once God has forgiven our sins, He will not revoke His forgiveness. But if we sin after we have been saved, we lose our communion with God. We are still His sons, but we cannot look into His face. If your son sinned against you, he would not be disinherited because of his sin, but he would lose his fellowship with you. There would be a barrier. As a Christian we cannot lose our life, but we can lose fellowship with God. It is impossible to lose eternal life, but it is possible to lose our fellowship. If we sin as Christians, we must get new forgiveness; otherwise, we cannot have communion with God. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins." (Remember that 1 John was written to Christians; therefore, he is dealing with the sins of the saved, not the unsaved). The Word says that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven. If a saint sins, he must go to the Father and confess, "I have sinned, please forgive me." "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (2:1). He is at the right hand of the Father for us. He presented His whole work before God. In His merit we can look up to God, confessing our sins and accepting His forgiveness. This forgiveness differs from eternal forgiveness; it also differs from instrumental forgiveness. When the church says that we are saved, it is an instrumental pronouncement of salvation, but this forgiveness restores our fellowship. Therefore, we can call it a restorative forgiveness. Forgiveness is for sins in regard to eternal salvation. Forgiveness is for our position among the people of God. Forgiveness also restores us to

fellowship with God. The first is a matter of salvation, the second is a matter of the church, and the third is a matter of life in the family. We now have forgiveness in regard to eternal life, the church, and the family of God—three different kinds of forgiveness.

KINGDOM FORGIVENESS

In Matthew 6:14-15 the Lord said, "If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also; but if you do not forgive men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses." In Matthew 18:23-35 the Lord speaks of a man who was forgiven. He was a slave of the king. After he had been forgiven, he saw another brother, a fellow slave, who owed him money. He owed his master ten thousand talents, but his fellow slave only owed him a hundred denarii. Yet the slave tried to exact that sum from him. What did his master do? He delivered him to the torturers until he had paid all that was owed, and Jesus said, "So also will My heavenly Father do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts" (v. 35). This matter is certainly not of salvation, because eternal salvation is based on the Lord Jesus, not on human effort! We are saved by grace and not by works. We are saved by the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Our sins are forgiven because of the shed blood, our sins are not forgiven because we forgive others. But after we have become Christians, after we have been called a brother, a "slave of the Lord," we must forgive our brothers. If we do not forgive, God will deal with us when the Lord Jesus comes back. During the kingdom age the Lord will allot to us what He considers just. We will not be lost, but He will chasten us according to what we have done. Eternal salvation is secure, but our place in the kingdom, the millennial age, will depend on our conduct today. God will deal with us according to what we have done to others. God will deal with us according to His justice. This forgiveness can be called the millennial or kingdom forgiveness. In addition to these four kinds of forgiveness, there is still another kind of forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS UNDER

THE GOVERNMENTAL HAND OF GOD

We want to emphasize this fifth kind of forgiveness. James 5:14 says, "Is anyone among you ill? Let him call for the elders of the church." When the elders come, they will anoint the sick brother and pray for him. They will not only pray for him, but confess one to another. When they pray, "The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick...and if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him" (v. 15).

This is rather a peculiar kind of forgiveness. Have you ever heard it said that if the elders pray for you, you are forgiven? If we sin, we pray to God, and He forgives us. Why is it necessary for us to call the elders, confess one to another, and ask the elders to pray for us so that we can then be forgiven? What kind of forgiveness is this? Before answering I would like to deal with something else and then come back.

In Scripture there is a something known as the government of God that applies not only to the unsaved but also to the saved. God has a way to deal with every child of His. If you are a father, you take pains to educate your children. In all your plans and doings you have a purpose behind the education of your children. How much more so with God! This is one of the most important things God is doing. He governs us according to certain principles. We call it the government of God. The chief principles of the government of God are spoken of in Galatians 6:7 and Luke 6:38. Galatians 6:7 says, "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Whatever we sow, we will reap. This is certain; we cannot dodge this. If we sow wheat, we will reap wheat; if we sow beans, we will reap beans. We cannot reap anything other than what we have sown. God has ordered it so, and nothing can reverse this law. It is true of Christians and it is true of unbelievers, but it is more true of Christians than of unbelievers. Luke 6:38 says, "For with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you in return." If we are stinted in measure, what we get back will be stinted; if we measure liberally, we will get back liberally. Galatians is a matter of kind; Luke is a matter of degree. The first is a matter of quality; the second is a matter of quantity. We all are reaping what we sowed in days past. What we are reaping in 1938 is what we have sown in 1937 and before. All that we experience comes into our life well-measured and ordered by God—in family, personal life, and business. Whatever we meet today is something we have sown in the past, perhaps many years ago. Nothing comes by chance. God's purpose in causing us to reap what we have sown is to educate us. Here is a man who is very critical and always finding fault with others. He is very censorious, always thinking and speaking harshly of others. This is what he is sowing, but soon he will begin to reap. Sometimes people criticize us. We resent it and feel that they are all wrong. But have we not done the same thing? God is trying to bring us to our senses. If we do not like being criticized, what about our criticizing others? I knew a brother who was very critical. A special word was always in his mouth—"The hand of God." If someone was sick, he would say, "It is the hand of God on him." One day a brother lost a

son. This brother wrote a letter saying, "It is the hand of God on you." I saw the letter and asked why he was so hard on the other brother. Instead of comforting him, he criticized. Within two weeks he lost his own son. Then the temptation came to me. I took up my pen and wrote, "If that brother's son died because the hand of God was on him, what about you? Are you willing to admit that the hand of God is on you?" I finished the letter, and then I was rebuked. I was doing the very thing I was rebuking him for doing. He had said, "It is the hand of God upon you," and now I was saying the same thing. I tore up the letter. Since I did not want to reap this, I did not sow. If I do not want a certain measure measured to me, then I must beware of measuring with that measure to others.

We must be very careful not to invite the governmental hand of God on us. Once the governmental hand of God is on us, it is difficult to remove. Forgiveness to restore us to fellowship with God is easily procured, but the forgiveness that causes God to remove His governmental hand is quite difficult to obtain. This fifth kind of forgiveness can be called the governmental forgiveness of God. The governmental forgiveness of God means that He takes His hand from me without making me reap what I have sown. Restorative forgiveness is often given to us, but governmental forgiveness is often withheld. For instance, a little boy is allowed by his mother to go into the park every afternoon on the condition that he behave himself. He is told that he is not to fight with other boys or throw stones at the windows. He is quite good for several days, but then one day he has two fights with another boy and also throws stones and smashes several windows. Though his mother knows nothing about it, he does not want to see her when he goes home. At supper time he does not seem hungry, and he is strangely silent. The relationship between mother and son is not broken; he is still her son, but the fellowship has been broken. He sits still and does not speak, and his mother thinks he must be sick. So she asks, "What is the matter? I am afraid that you need some medicine." The trouble, however, is not with his body but with his conscience. The relationship is still there, but the fellowship is gone. How is it restored? It is restored when he makes a clean breast of everything and makes a full confession. So it is with God. Our relationship is eternal and can never be changed, but our fellowship with God is conditional, depending upon our sinlessness. If there is sin, then there must be confession before fellowship can be restored. When the son confesses, the mother will forgive. Does this mean that his mother will let him go back to play in the park? It is one thing to embrace him and say, "I forgive you," but it is another thing to let him play in the park the

next day. She may say, "I am so glad that you have confessed, but I cannot let you go and play out there. You must come straight home for a week. If you are good and obedient, I will let you go to the park next week." Do you see the difference between restorative forgiveness and governmental forgiveness? So it is with God. If we sin and we confess, He will immediately forgive, but He may chasten our bodies. He may let something happen in our family or business to chasten us so that we will not lightly sin again. Until He sees that we are safe, He will not take His hand off. We must see the difference between restorative and governmental forgiveness. We see this clearly in 2 Samuel 12. David committed two terrible sins—murder and adultery. David was deeply repentant. We see this in Psalm 51. When God sent the prophet to him, Nathan said, "Jehovah has also put away your sin." David could have thought, "Hallelujah, God has forgiven me. All is well." But we should not be so quick! Nathan said he was forgiven, but he also said that the sword would not depart from his house and that God would raise up trouble against him within his own house. Fellowship was restored, but the hand of God was still on David. Restorative forgiveness was granted, but governmental forgiveness was still withheld.

Some of us ate many sweets and chocolates when we were young. Now our teeth are decayed. We have become Christians, and we confess, "Previously, I ate too many sweets. Please forgive me." But do our teeth grow anew? Our teeth may be impaired for life.

Praise God, there are many things that He is willing to forgive governmentally, but we must learn to fear God. Praise God that all is grace, but in grace He is educating us to know His holiness. Let none of us try to live as we like. Nothing may happen today; but remember, if we sow today, the reaping time is coming even though it may not be tomorrow. In James 5 there is one who did not know whether his sickness was because of a breach against the laws of nature or whether it was God's governmental hand upon him. No one knew, so he called for the elders and they came. They confessed one to the other, saying, "He has been acting as an individual and now we bring him back to the fellowship of the Body." They anointed him, bringing him under the anointing which is upon the whole Body (cf. Psa. 133:2). "And if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him" (James 5:15).

We must learn to differentiate between the five kinds of forgivenesses in Scripture, concerning: (1) eternal salvation, (2) our position in the church, (3) our fellowship with God, (4) our future position in the kingdom, and (5) our living in

the world, whether in prosperity or adversity. God will not let one of His children escape His governmental hand. Everything that comes to us today has been measured for us by God. He is educating us so that we can have a share in His holiness. Therefore, we should fear Him. God is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). Paul said we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to what we have done, whether good or bad. The next verse says, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

If there is anyone here who is conscious of sin before God and who acknowledges that sin before God, there will be instant forgiveness. There is no question and no delay in God's restorative forgiveness, but there is a question as to His governmental forgiveness. In regard to difficulties in our circumstances and physical life, we should be willing to submit ourselves under His hand. Then it will be easier for God to remove His hand. We may murmur, we may kick, and we may say, "Why should I have this difficulty? Why do others prosper and I do not?" The more we kick, the more the hand of God will be upon us. One day we will confess, "Father, it was right that Your hand was on me." We will one day say with Madam Guyon, "I will kiss the chastening rod," and when we say this, it will be removed. May our heart's attitude be, "Father, You can never be wrong, whatever I meet with is all right, I praise You for all that comes to me." "Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-FIVE

EXPOSITION ON LUKE 17:20-37

Scripture Reading: Luke 17:20-37

In verses 20 and 21 the Pharisees asked a question "as to when the kingdom of God was coming." The Lord answered, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you." But the Pharisees were blind. The Lord made it clear that it could not be said, "Behold, here it is! or, There!" This sentence is the key; it is used in verse 23 as well as in verse 21. The Pharisees asked when the kingdom of God was coming, and the Lord simply answered, "It is in the midst of you." But He reserved the explanation for His disciples. He immediately turned to them and explained. Note, however, that the Pharisees' question referred to the kingdom, yet in His explanation the Lord referred to the Son of Man (v. 22). This is

because the Son of Man is the kingdom of God. Whenever you have the kingdom of God in power, you have the Son of God in presence.

Verse 24 speaks of a day of manifestation. If you have the presence of the Lord today, you have the kingdom today. The kingdom is not a thing; it is the Lord Himself. Where His presence, power, and glory are manifested in the earth, there you have the kingdom of God. At present it is a matter of extent, not of quality or nature.

In verses 26 through 29 the Lord uses two illustrations from the Old Testament—Noah and Lot. He relates them to the days of the Son of Man. We are all familiar with the term "Son of Man." This term is used in Hebrews 2 which speaks of Christ as the Inheritor of the earth (vv. 6, 8). Everything God has is going to be deposited in Him. As God's "one new man," the corporate Man, He will receive His inheritance. He will be glorified and will possess the earth. However, something will happen to bring in the day of the Son of Man. There will be judgment on the earth and deliverance for the people of God. Noah left and the flood came; Lot left and then the fire from heaven came. The Lord tried to draw some definite lesson from these two instances for His disciples.

Verse 31 is an exhortation to not go down into the house. Verse 32 is a warning to "remember Lot's wife." Verse 33 points out that the way of escape is to lose the soul-life. A day is coming when all the "Noahs" and "Lots" will be taken. The "Noahs" and "Lots" will go by a specific call—a shout, the voice of the archangel, a trumpet (1 Thes. 4:16). The case of Noah does not illustrate partial rapture, for he and his whole family were delivered. The Lord did not draw His lesson for the discourse from Noah's story but from the story of Lot. He based His exposition on the story of Lot, and the warning is drawn from Lot's wife.

We are told that if we have goods in the house, we should not come down to take them away; if we are in the field, we are not to turn back to the things behind. It is all a matter of reacting to the divine call to "Come up here" (Rev. 4:1). Lot's wife received the call to go; she did not commit any sin, but there was a reaction of looking back, of turning back to her goods. Rapture will produce no miraculous change in us. It will only be a stepping away, and it will be a question of our attitude.

The things in verse 28, which occupy the lives of the people—eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building—were not sinful in themselves. They were perfectly legitimate, but there was no detachment from them. It is not

necessarily sins which will be the hindrance. No, perfectly legitimate things will be the hindrance.

We must come to a point that when the call comes, the instant response of our heart will be, "It is the Lord!" Whether or not there will be a reaction to the Lord depends on the attitude of our hearts. We want a perfect detachment from our work or anything that occupies us and from anything that is short of Himself. When the call comes, will there be the thought, "But what about the work?" If so, then we may very well stay behind to do it! We may not perish in Sodom, but we may not get up to the mountain. A backward glance tells the whole history. It is very easy to get attached to the gifts of the Lord; therefore, Isaac had to be given up. Are we taken up by what we have been given? Can we say that the Lord has all the place, that we want nothing for ourselves? "Lord, You are the One, the only One who can effect such detachment." When our Lord went to the disciples, Peter heard, "It is the Lord," and all else was forgotten (John 21:7). The instant reaction was to go to Him.

According to Luke 17:33 this detachment can be effected by the losing of the soul. This is a definite condition for readiness for the Lord's coming. There is a necessity to lose our natural man, the part of us which desires, feels, and is always out for itself. The Holy Spirit is here to show us this natural life, because it will come out one day if it is not dealt with now. It will show itself, and we will have the wrong reaction. Therefore, the cross must cut into our life day by day. What is the sphere for the work of the cross? It is anything in us that is outside of the Lord. The Lord must stand alone. He must be all.

In verse 34 one will be taken, that is, alongside the Lord. When the Lord speaks of Noah and Lot, He is dealing with the question of rapture. Where do we stand with the Lord? Our attitude should be "as though they did not possess" (1 Cor. 7:30), "as though" we did not have this and that. We should not be ascetics; we are still in the flesh, but we have to be "as though" we are not using them at all. We possess them, and yet there is a detachment from everything that is not the Lord. This can be done only by the inner work of the cross.

When the call sounds to go in, we will react one way or another, and the way we react will be according to what we are. (Recorded by P.D.)

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIX

ROMANS 14:1—15:7

God does not sanction any division of His church except on the ground of locality. Therefore, in this place there must be only one church. Yet how can everyone in this place be truly one when their experiences, views, and doctrines differ so much? One believes in baptism by immersion, another in baptism by sprinkling; one believes in the pre-tribulation rapture, another in the post-tribulation rapture. There are many different beliefs among the local Christians, and these different beliefs lead to different practices. The human mind seeks to solve the problem by insisting on unity of action. We want everyone else to conform to our mode of thinking and acting. We believe that we have the guidance of the Lord, but we refuse to allow others to have His guidance too. We trust the working of the Spirit in our own hearts, but we do not trust the working of the Spirit in the hearts of others. This was not Paul's attitude, as revealed in Romans 14:1—15:7, which deals with a very important principle in regard to the church life.

Two difficulties had arisen in the church in Rome—vegetarianism and Sabbatarianism. The vegetarians maintained that men began to eat meat only after the fall, and for that reason the eating of meat was wrong. There is no harm in ruling meat out from one's diet, but there is no salvation in it either. Vegetarianism is Cainism; it is bloodless. The Lord said, "My flesh is true food (i.e., eatable), and My blood is true drink (i.e., drinkable)" (John 6:55). If we do not eat "meat," we cannot be saved. Vegetarianism suggests that man has no sin. Adam's food in the garden was herbs, but no sin was present. When sin came in, God altered man's food. There is the need of atonement; therefore, the blood must be shed. There is need of strength from God; therefore, the flesh must be eaten.

Considering the implications of vegetarianism, Paul might well have argued that these vegetarians were not Christians. He might have argued just as clearly that the Sabbatarians were not Christians. What would we have done in the face of such conditions? What assembly today would allow some of its members to keep the Sabbath, others to keep the Lord's Day, others to keep both days, and still others to keep no special day at all? What did Paul do? Did he try to bring them all into conformity of action? No! He did not say that the members who disallowed the eating of meat were strong Christians; he confessed that they were weak, but he also said they should be received. They were weak, and their

weakness should be taken into account by the stronger members, who must discuss nothing with them but fundamental matters (14:1). Provided that a man is "in faith," we should certainly "receive" him, "but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his considerations."

Furthermore, we must not despise him (v. 3). We may naturally think, "Oh, what a weak Christian he is! He is a vegetarian! He is just like a Buddhist!" But such an attitude is all wrong. We may regard the man as weak and call him carnal, but if we think that we are strong, are we not also carnal? If we despise others, it is certain that we think too much of ourselves. It is easy for the vegetarian to say, "Oh, these people are given over to worldly lusts, they are 'gluttonous' and 'drunkard[s]'" (Matt. 11:19). We are more spiritual than they because our bodies are kept under control." How easy it is to condemn one another! Therefore, Paul exhorts each party to refrain from judging the other because "God has received him" (Rom. 14:3). We have fellowship with others on this basis alone: that they have fellowship with God. If God has received anyone, then we receive him as well. If any Christian comes into our assembly, the question is not whether he believes exactly what we believe or has the same experiences, but this: Has God received him? If God has received him, then he belongs to the same church as we do.

Paul does not say that vegetarianism is right. He does not deal with the question of right or wrong but with the question of Christian fellowship. He makes clear what the basis of this fellowship is. The point to be stressed is not whether a man's views are right or wrong, but whether God has received him. If I meet a Roman Catholic, I do not ask whether he is right or wrong but whether or not God has received him. If God has received him, then I recognize him as my brother. If I meet a Seventh-day Adventist, I can only ask whether or not God has received him. If God has received Him, then I must receive him as well. My receiving of him does not mean that he is right, but it does mean that he has a vital relationship with God. In matters of right or wrong we should seek to deal with our fellow believers in love. But we must first receive them without raising any points of controversy because this is distinctly forbidden in the Word of God. Unfortunately, when Christians meet they generally discuss the points on which they disagree. There are numbers of things we have in common, but instead of meeting on positive ground, we often get on negative ground and discuss our differences. Carnal means can never bring about spiritual ends, and reasoning is

carnal. We should love our brothers and pray for them, and if God gives opportunity, we can speak a word to them.

ROMANS 14

Paul is very strong in verse 4. "Who are you?" he asks. (In Greek the pronoun "you" is emphasized.) In effect Paul is saying, "What authority do you have to judge another person's servant? You are not his master." According to Paul, we are not merely judging our brother when we judge another believer, we are judging the Lord's servant. He is responsible to the Lord alone, not to us. We are very presumptuous if we take such matters into our hands, playing the role of a pope and seeking to regulate all the affairs of the church.

Remember that Paul was not arguing for vegetarianism at all. His reasoning was simply, "Do not meddle with the Lord's business; leave it to Him. If God has been able to open your eyes, can He not open the eyes of others? Leave them to Him. You must be patient with others just as the Lord has been patient with you."

"The Lord is able to make him stand" (v. 4). We should trust God and show our trust in Him by leaving the situation in His hands. Just as we believe in the Holy Spirit in us, we should believe in the Holy Spirit in our brothers. We need not try to act like the lord of all the saints and seek to put them right, as though God could not care for His church without us.

Verse 5 says, "Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind." What should we do? Should we insist that the Lord's Day be kept? Should we write a book and attack the Seventh-day Adventists in our midst? Should we not do something about this? Will not the unity of the church be endangered if we do not take things in hand? This was not Paul's thought. According to him, we have no business meddling with thoughts of others. Our business is to be clear in our own mind. We always try to get order by rules and regulations, but Paul did not try to regulate things. He did not put the emphasis on things, but on the Lord.

In verse 6 the phrase "to the Lord" is important. If a vegetarian sought fellowship with me, I should ask, "Do you refrain from eating meat because it is an idea of yours, or do you do it to please the Lord?" If he said, "To please the Lord," then I should reply, "If you can serve the Lord better this way, praise His name; go ahead." We must always seek to stress the central point of Christianity, that is, that those who live should live to the Lord and those who die should die to the Lord. Wherever we see that the central point is right, we should praise the Lord and not stress externalities. We should never lay emphasis on the technical side

of Christianity, but always on the fundamental matter of doing everything "to the Lord." We must never seek to lead those who differ from us to think and act as we do, but simply seek to lead them closer to the Lord. The chief point is not whether we eat meat, but whether we are living to the Lord. We must help the saints see their responsibility to the Lord alone. If their relationship with Him is right, everything else will adjust itself. Alas! many are not seeking to lead others to a closer relationship with the Lord, but to a closer conformity to certain things. They are working for outward correctness; this is Pharisaism. The Pharisees had much in the way of outward form and outward correctness, but they had no relationship with God. Even if we make alterations and adjustments and eventually reach a point of perfect correctness in outward things, nothing has been gained in God's sight unless our relationship with Him is right. Augustine said, "In things essential, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, charity." We naturally want everyone to be like us, but if others differ, this is our opportunity to bear the cross. If we make the Lord the center of life, even if there is some divergence in external matters, everything else will be well. David went into the tabernacle and ate the showbread, the penalty for which was death. But it did not matter because David was for the Lord; his heart was right toward God. We must continually bear in mind that the central point of Christianity is the lordship of Jesus Christ. If Jesus is your Lord and Jesus is my Lord, then everything will be all right between us. The whole question is this: "Is the Lord the center of all in your life and mine?"

Verse 8 repeats the phrase "to the Lord." We do not want to lead our brothers to a point of perfect outward correctness, but to the point of living "to the Lord" and dying "to the Lord." This point should be repeatedly emphasized. If a person comes to me and argues strongly against baptism by immersion, I should not argue with him, but obey Paul's injunction in verse 1 and "receive [him], but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his considerations." This does not mean that I should keep silent, but that I should only ask, "Are you living to the Lord? Do you think that by not being baptized you are glorifying Him, or do you have a controversy with Him over the matter? Are you resisting Him by not being immersed, or are you doing it to please Him? I only care whether your relationship with the Lord is right." If you are not immersed, then I can ask, "Are you not immersed out of fear of man or to please the Lord?" If you are immersed, then I can ask, "Are you immersed to please man or to please the Lord?" We do not want to stress technical correctness but spirituality. Of course, we want to be

technically correct as well because we want to serve the Lord as those who are "approved to God" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Romans 14:9 speaks of the Lord's position. Because He died, He is Lord of the dead, and because He lives, He is Lord of the living. We are neither lord of the dead nor of the living, so we dare not take it upon ourselves to regulate people's outward actions according to what we believe is right or wrong. Our only responsibility is to seek to bring them into a more intimate relationship with the Lord.

In verse 10 two things are forbidden among the children of God—judging and despising. The former is an outward act; the latter is an inward attitude. Sometimes we do not judge, but in our hearts we think, "He is a Christian, but he is not immersed. There must be something wrong with him; I must be better than he." How often we secretly pity those who do not see as we do! But one day all of us are going to be judged, so none of us should judge today. "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (v. 10). The judgment seat of God is in the future, so we should not set it up now. Our brother is going to be judged, but we are also going to be judged. If we truly believe in the judgment seat of God, we do not dare to judge others. If we are good judges of others, the Lord will be very severe in His judgment of us. With the measure that we measure out to others, it will be measured to us in return (Luke 6:38). If we can so easily discern right and wrong so as to be able to judge others, then it is only just that we be more severely judged than they.

Romans 14:12 speaks of our own coming before the judgment seat of God. We will be asked to give an account concerning ourselves, not our brothers.

Verse 13 says, "Let us judge one another no longer." We should avoid both the "stumbling block" (an open attack) and the "cause of falling" (a secret trap).

If we only read as far as verse 13, we might conclude that Paul thought that it was all right for believers to be vegetarians. He was persuaded in his own mind, as he had exhorted others to be (v. 5), but he did not force his convictions on them. But in verse 14 he says, "I know and am persuaded...that there is nothing unclean of itself." He makes his own position perfectly clear, but he added, "...except to him who considers something to be unclean; to that man it is unclean." If you think that something is unclean, then it is unclean to you, and if you eat it, you are sinning against your conscience. Paul had keen discernment between right and wrong, but he did not wish to be overbearing, nor did he wish

to stress externalities. He continually emphasized the fundamental matter of the believers' relationship with the Lord. In meeting our brothers on any point of difference, we can always say, "To me it is...but I do not wish to impose my convictions on you. I must live to the Lord, and my only desire for you is that you live to the Lord." Many of today's divisions in the church are due to the fact that Christians have disregarded the injunctions of Romans 14:14.

Many Christians are bold in teaching others by their actions as well as by their arguments. For example, there may be a brother with a very weak conscience which does not allow him to eat meat. In his presence we may eat as much meat as possible, thinking, "I will teach him what Christian liberty is!" We do not argue with him, but we put meat here and meat there in order to demonstrate the nature of Christian liberty to him. Verse 15 does not say, "Do not destroy by your argument." Instead, it says, "Do not destroy by your food," that is, with the actual thing. So if we see differently, we should keep the difference well in the background and not make him conscious of it. We must do nothing whatsoever to hurt him, because Christ died for him.

In verse 16 Paul admits that our eating of meat is good but warns that we must not let our good be slandered. After all, what is eating and drinking?

In verse 17 eating and drinking stand for all that is outward, while God's kingdom is inward. We must stress the spiritual, not the technical side of things.

According to verse 18, we serve the Lord and please men in the matter of righteousness, peace, and joy, not in the matter of eating and drinking. We must discern clearly between right and wrong, but we must never make others the victim of our discernment.

ROMANS 15:7

This portion of the Word relating to the church life begins with "God has received him" in Romans 14:3 and ends with "Christ also received" us in Romans 15:7. Here we see the basis of all our fellowship with others—they belong to the Lord and we also belong to the Lord. This is enough. Christians should not have fellowship with each other because, for example, some belong to the Church of England and others also belong to the Church of England, nor because some have had a special experience and others also have had the same experience, nor because some hold certain views and others also hold the same views, nor because some belong to a certain mission and others also belong to the same mission. Christians should fellowship on the basis of belonging to the Lord.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SEVEN

HOSEA 14:5-8

"I will be like the dew to Israel;/He will bud like the lily /And will send forth his roots like the trees of Lebanon./His shoots will go forth;/And his splendor will be like that of the olive tree,/And his fragrance, like that of the trees of Lebanon./Those who sit under his shade will return;/They will revive like grain/And will bud like the vine;/His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon."

Verse 5 refers to life, verse 6 refers to work, and verse 7 refers to fruit. When there are all these, then everything belonging to idols will cease.

"I will be like the dew to Israel" is the beginning of everything. Everything is Christ. He is made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Dew is the most important thing for trees and flowers. Once we have this dew as the foundation, He will bud like the lily and will send forth His roots like the trees of Lebanon. Here the blossom of the lily is coupled with the roots of the cedar of Lebanon. The lily speaks of the simple, unsophisticated life, the frail life of faith and trust, which God has planted. The cedar has roots which are very deep and hidden, and typifies the need of going down and being deeply buried. It typifies the cross. The lily is the part above the ground and is seen, but there is a hundred times more underneath. How much of our life is seen? Does our life have anything that is not seen by man? Does it have something secret with God? This is the reason some great revelations have to be covered and not told for years. Man sees the lily—a small weak thing—but God sees the roots. Are our roots like those of the cedar?

Verse 6 says, "His splendor will be like that of the olive tree,/And his fragrance, like that of the trees of Lebanon." Fragrance is a smell, and smelling is the most delicate sense. Smelling gives an impression without sign or touch. Where there is fragrance, we do not need to say anything; it cannot be hidden. The olive typifies the Holy Spirit. When we carry His splendor with us, people will smell it, and it cannot be hidden. Lebanon equals strength; the Lord is strength.

According to verse 7, all the people who come under Christ's power will revive as the grain, which typifies food, and bud as the vine, which typifies the display of life. The vine blossom is the most insignificant and short-lived blossom. It is gone almost before it is noticed and quickly turns to fruit. There are three kinds of plants: (1) those that blossom without fruit, (2) those that blossom and bear fruit, and (3) those that have no beauty and only bear fruit. The vine is of the last kind. It speaks of beauty that is hidden from man and of fruit that is for the Lord. There

is a temptation to try to show something, to blossom before man. But our aim should be to live only before the Lord by the knowledge of the cross and by abiding in Him. The wine comes last and speaks of power. If we have all of these, there is no place for idols: "What have I yet to do with idols?" (v. 8).

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-EIGHT

THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

Scripture Reading: Gen. 3:14-15; John 16:13-14; Rev. 1:1—3:22

This book of "the revelation" concerns the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This book not only makes known future events, it also makes known the person of Jesus Christ. Many people read Revelation for the sake of prophecy, but while there is prophecy in it, it is not a book of prophecy. This book is specifically designated to be "the revelation of Jesus Christ," because its object is to make known who Christ is. It is the "Apocalypse," that is, the unveiling of the Lord. It draws aside the curtain and unveils the person of Jesus Christ. It is not that Christ reveals something through this book, but that this book reveals Him. It is not that He makes known certain things, but that this book makes Him known. It does not reveal how Christ saves or how Christ empowers; it reveals how the Lamb of God in the purpose of God is related to the throne of God. We think that if we know Jesus Christ as our Savior, then we have had a revelation of Him, and that if we know Him as our power, then we have had a revelation of Him. But the revelation of this book is a revelation of Him in relation to the throne of God. At the beginning of this book we see the Lamb before the throne, at the end of the book we see the Lamb on the throne. The purpose of this book is not to show coming events; it shows coming events only in so far as they reveal who Christ is. Many study Revelation because they are prompted by intellectual curiosity, not by a desire to know the Lord. This kind of study has no spiritual value. The primary object of Revelation is not to enlighten us regarding coming events, Satan, Antichrist, the resurrection of the Roman Empire, the rapture, or the millennium, but to reveal Christ so that we may know Him. If we are clear in regards to the Lord, we will know coming events. The divine order is not getting to know future events, but getting to know the Lord first. Then we will know future events without any difficulty. John wrote of "all that he saw," and these things were comprehended in "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:2). Coming events are declared to make known "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." The word of God is the revelation of what is in the heart of God.

As Christians we have two cares—the past and the future. What if salvation only reached to this present point? The purpose of Revelation is to answer this question, not to answer questions regarding the great tribulation or the Antichrist. In the beginning of Genesis we see a serpent. What is going to be the end of him? In the beginning we see a curse. What is going to be the end of that curse? In the beginning we see a tree of life. What is going to be the end of this tree? In the beginning we see death and sin. What is going to be the final issue of these things? We see their beginnings, but what is their end? What is going to be the end of us? God has made a beginning with us, but what is going to be the end?

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, He who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty." "I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever" (1:8, 17-18). We know Christ as the Alpha, but Revelation tells us that He is also the Omega. We know Christ as the First, but Revelation tells us that He is also the Last. We know Christ as the Beginning, but Revelation tells us that He is also the End. Christ is our Beginning, and He is also our End. Christ is our Alpha, and He is also our Omega. Jesus Christ is the answer to all of our questions. The book of Revelation is not a matter of seals and trumpets. It is not a revelation as to whether the rapture is partial or complete. It is not an answer to our intellectual speculations, but it is an answer to our spiritual need. What is the outcome of this world? What is the outcome of the political situation? What is the outcome of us? Everything has its outcome in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every issue is settled when He is settled on the throne of God.

Who is qualified to study Revelation? We can find the answer in John's history. The first revelation John had is recorded in Revelation 1:12-18. The first vision he had was not of things, nor of events, but of the person of Jesus Christ (1:9-18). No one is qualified to study the subsequent visions recorded by John if he has not seen the first vision recorded by him. The first vision reveals who the Lord is; the visions that follow are of coming events. These are the issue of His being what He is, and they make way for the universal revelation of Him as He is. Unless we have this revelation first, a knowledge of coming events will only stimulate our curiosity and puff us up, producing confusion or even unbelief. The purpose of the book is to lead us to know Jesus Christ, not to know Him merely as Savior or Sanctifier, but to know Him as King on the throne. Only those who have seen the King on the throne and who have fallen as dead at His feet are qualified to study prophecy.

Even John, who rested on the bosom of the Lord, had to have a revelation of the Lord that shattered him in the dust before he was qualified to see the further vision of Revelation. This first seeing is fundamental to all other seeings. Not until we know the Lord as He is revealed in Revelation 1 can we understand the events revealed in the subsequent chapters. Only then can we see the reason for these events and the rightness of them.

John knew the love of the Lord, but he did not know the majesty of the Lord. He knew the Lord as a compassionate Savior, but he did not know Him as a glorious King. This was the Lord who was revealed in the midst of the churches. We can know this Lord today. Not until we see Him in this manner are we equipped for conflict. It is this vision of the Lord that makes us warriors. The message of the church today is salvation, but our burden is not just to proclaim the salvation of the Lord; it is to proclaim the battle of the Lord. Revelation shows that the Lord is not only the Savior, He is the King, and as King He proclaims war on all that is contrary to His kingdom. If a person does not see the love of the Lord, he cannot proclaim salvation. If a person does not see the majesty of the Lord, he cannot proclaim war. The purpose of coming events is to destroy the enemy and to bring in the King. They are not revealed to provide food for curiosity, discussion, and gossip.

In the book of Revelation God wants to show through John an aspect of Christ that was not shown in his Gospel. In the Gospel of John we see Christ as the Savior; in Revelation we see Christ as King. In the Gospel of John we see the Alpha; in Revelation we see Omega. In the Gospel of John we see His love; in Revelation we see His majesty. In the Gospel of John we see the Lord girded about the waist, that is, for service; in Revelation we see the Lord girded about the breasts, that is, for war. In the Gospel of John we see His mild eyes melt Peter; in Revelation we see His eyes as a flame of fire, enlightening and consuming. In the Gospel of John His voice is gentle, and gracious words proceed from His mouth; in Revelation His voice is as the sound of many waters, and a sharp two-edged sword proceeds out of His mouth, bringing judgment on all His foes.

It is not enough to know the Lord as the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world; we must also know Him as God's Christ, as God's King, and as God's Judge. When we see Him as the Savior, we say, "How lovable!" When we see Him as King, we say, "How fearful!" When we see Him as Savior, we lean on His bosom. When we see Him as King, we fall at His feet. The first issues in thanksgiving; the

second issues in praise. Seeing Him as the King is like seeing another Christ; it is like experiencing another salvation.

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE

REVELATION 1:9

"I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus." It is significant that John calls himself a partaker in the endurance of Jesus at the beginning of a book which specifically deals with judgment. The book of Revelation brings us to a point where God sets endurance aside and executes judgment. As soon as judgment is carried out there is no more need for endurance. Endurance is only needed when judgment lies in the future. John, as he is about to write on the subject of judgment, declares that he is still living in the realm of endurance. Before God opens up His judgments, John secures a spirit of endurance.

In Revelation 6:10 we hear the cry, "How long?" Those who utter this complaint find it difficult to exercise any more endurance. Who are they? Perhaps they are the Old Testament saints, but certainly they are the pre-tribulation saints. They cry for vengeance, for the execution of judgment. If impatience is justified in any, it is justified in the dead saints rather than the living, for they have waited longer. But even those who have waited so long are told that the time of endurance has not expired. God has determined to avenge all His saints at one time, and the martyred saints are told to wait patiently until the number of martyrs is complete. God's wrath is not poured out until the seventh trumpet sounds. (The seven bowls are included in it.) Officially, the time of God's patience is not over until then; therefore, His saints need to exercise endurance until then. They must not exert force. At the time of Antichrist the children of God will readily fall into the snare of resorting to force, as seen in Revelation 13. But God's appointment for His children during the day of His patience is non-resistance. The saints are to submit to being overcome (v. 7). If ever there was a holy war, it is the war against Antichrist. If ever there was reason for resistance, there will be a reason then. If ever there was a righteous cause to fight, it is to fight against Antichrist. But God's Word on this very point says, "If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he is to be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:10). Matthew 24 makes it very clear that at the time of Antichrist the children of God have only one responsibility, that is, to flee. When the power of Antichrist nears its climax, all the saints must leave the cities and flee to the country,

because government is related to the cities. We must be prepared to flee without our possessions, because we will be unable to escape if we take time to collect them. Note the need of detachment. The warning to nursing and pregnant mothers and the exhortation to pray that our flight be neither in winter nor on a Sabbath emphasize the urgency of the matter of fleeing in the day of Antichrist's authority. There is no guarantee that those who flee will not be slain, but the best measure of security lies in fleeing. It is our responsibility to warn men to flee if they fall under the power of Antichrist. Flight under such circumstances will not in any way reflect on the dignity of God's children; it is His distinct command. Fleeing will not present a problem to those who see the absolute spirituality of the church, and it will not be a hindrance to the functioning of the church, for a spiritual church can function in the simplest manner.

CHAPTER TWO HUNDRED

WORSHIP

(Notes from a conference given in Shanghai in 1940)

ONE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:3-11; 32:8; 34:14; Deut. 4:15-19; 8:19; 11:16-17; 17:2-5; 29:26-27; 30:17, 19; 1 Kings 9:6-7, 9; 2 Chron. 29:28-30; Neh. 9:3-6; Matt. 2:2, 11; 4:9-10; Rev. 4:10-11; 5:14; 7:11-12; 9:20-21; 11:1, 16-17; 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:7, 9, 11; 16:2; 19:4, 6; 20:4; 22:8-9

The Importance of Worship

as Seen from the Temptations of Christ

Many people give more importance to the Lord as the Savior than to Him as the Creator. It is true that we must first recognize Him as our Savior before we can know the Lord as God. But it is not enough to know Him only as the Savior; it is not enough to know only His redeeming work. His redeeming work is to lead men to know Him as the Creator.

The blood is first in order but not in importance. God's motive is not that we should just know Him as Savior. In Matthew 4:10 the Lord added the words, "You shall worship the Lord your God," to the first commandment in Exodus. God wants worship. The meaning of the word worship in Hebrew is "to kneel down." The meaning of this word in Greek is "to go forward to kiss the hand" and give everything to Him. Many do not know the secret of worshipping God. Yet we have to know that the Lord is God.

Jesus is God. How precious this fact is! God wants man to declare that He is God. The Lord's prayer is connected with the Ten Commandments. He told the disciples what God wanted. "Your name be sanctified" (Matt. 6:9). This tells us the first thing God hopes to see. What does it mean for the Lord's name to be sanctified? The word holiness or sanctification means to be set apart for God. For example, if I buy a Bible, it becomes mine. It is set apart for me, and I can say that it has become holy unto me. The name of God is set apart for God; it can be used only by God. This is the meaning of "Your name be sanctified." Now the name is being used by others; now it is general. One day it will be specific. Only Jehovah will be called God; nothing else will be called God.

God's demand of men is that they know Him as God. The Lord said to Mary after resurrection, "My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17). The word Father speaks of an individual relationship, whereas the name God speaks of a universal relationship.

Worship is confessing that He is God. Deuteronomy is the epistle of the Old Testament. It is Moses' epistle to the Israelites. In Deuteronomy he told them to worship God and nothing else. If they worshipped something else, they would be stoned to death.

What is the work of the devil? In Eden we cannot see what the work of the devil is. Isaiah shows us the devil wants to be like God; but we do not see what his purpose is. In Matthew 4 we can see his purpose. The devil tempted the Lord Jesus. In the first two temptations the devil had no special emphasis, but the goal of the third was that the Lord would "worship me." This was the devil's motive. The Lord quoted from Deuteronomy: "You shall worship the Lord your God." For six thousand years the devil has been seeking worship. God wants worship, and Satan also wants worship. All of the worship of idols is actually the worship of Satan. Satan fears for men to be saved because they will worship God. This is why he hates for men to be saved. In the book of Revelation we see a special line—the line of worship. In chapters four, five, and nineteen, we see the elders and living creatures worship. In chapter thirteen there is the contrast of the beast and his image being worshipped on earth. Satan wants to obtain on earth what God is receiving above. Satan's motive is not only just to make man sin but to make man worship him. Satan's kingdom is maintained by man's worship. The result of this worship is sin.

Satan's happiest day will be when Antichrist calls himself "God" (2 Thes. 2:4). This is what Satan has wanted throughout the past six thousand years. The

worship of the beast is the worship of Satan. Revelation 13 shows that the beast wants worship. The message of the "eternal gospel" in 14:6 and 7 is to "worship Him." In Revelation 22 the last commandment in the New Testament is to worship God. Since God's motive is to obtain worship and Satan's motive is to obtain worship, what is the duty of a Christian? It is not enough to just have salvation. What will satisfy God? It is not enough to just pray or preach. God needs our worship of Him, and what Satan fears is our worship of God.

Worshipping is giving God that which one day will be exclusively His. Christ is the firstfruit. We give Him now what one day the world will give Him. We should not wait for the new heaven and new earth to come before we worship God. Now in the old creation, we can worship Him. At this time we want to give special worship to God, because Satan is getting worship for himself more and more. If we are defeated in worship, we will be defeated in other things.

TWO

Scripture Reading: Psa. 5:7; 29:2; 66:4; 86:9-10; 132:7; 138:2; Isa. 66:23; Zech. 14:16-17; Deut. 26:10; Rom. 1:25; Isa. 27:13; 2 Sam. 12:20; 2 Chron. 32:12; Gen. 24:26, 52; Exo. 4:30-31; 12:27; 24:1; 34:5-8; Josh. 5:13-14; Judg. 7:15; 1 Sam. 1:27-28; Job 1:20; Matt. 2:2, 11

The object of creation is that God may receive worship, while the object of Satan's work is to receive worship as well. The Ten Commandments reveal God's heart and His demands. In the Ten Commandments idolatry is prohibited. What are idols? They are objects of worship outside of God. Through idolatry Israel lost its position as a nation of priests. After that, only the Levites had the position of priests. The most serious punishment is not going to hell but losing the position of priests. When God loses the priesthood, His people also lose their blessing. Canaan soon had high places, altars, and other gods, resulting in dispersion. During the great revival under Hezekiah, worship was recovered. The next revival under Nehemiah also was a revival of worship.

Not very long after Nehemiah's revival, the Lord Jesus came. Matthew 2 records the wise men coming to worship. Only those who had the eyesight could see that the small child was God. The greatest revelation of the New Testament is found in the temptation in the wilderness. It opens our eyes to see what Satan wants—the worship of man. We have what God wants and what Satan wants; what heaven wants and what hell wants. Both heaven and hell are fighting for worship.

Two thrones are now at war. What are they fighting for? They are fighting for worship. Matthew shows us in particular that Jesus is King. This is why Matthew specially speaks of those who worship Him. The Lord Jesus received what God should receive from His people. God wants to get a people who know Him and who are for Him. God wants to get a people, not just children. We must first know the Father to know God. Our beginning is a father-son relationship. Then we go on to know Him as God. The knowledge of Him as Father is a personal relationship. The knowledge of Him as God is a knowledge of His official standing in the universe. Many know the Father, but not many know God.

What is worship? It is a recognition that He is God and that we are men. We were saved when we saw He was the Father. We are finished when we see that He is God; we can only fall down and worship. It is all a matter of seeing. Worship comes from seeing; it takes revelation to worship. Praise is objective, whereas thanksgiving is subjective. When we know God, our hearts will be filled with glory. When we know the Father, our hearts are filled with joy. Glory cannot be explained; only those who see God know what glory is. Consider the experience of Mrs. Penn-Lewis. One day God revealed Himself to her. She just fell on her face. In 2 Corinthians 5:11 Paul said, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord." God is lovable; yet He is also fearful. Those who are proud and who condemn others have not seen God. True humility comes from seeing God. The humility which comes from knowing God is unshakable. We need a new revelation of God and a deeper knowledge. If we do not have revelation and knowledge, we only have doctrines.

Two things are needed to worship—holiness and fear. "Worship Jehovah in holy splendor" (Psa. 29:2). No one who has seen God can allow sin or any unrighteousness to remain. When we go before people, our first thought is of our clothing; the same is true when we go before God. We must worship Him in holy splendor. Those who live under the glory of God say, "I am a sinner." Those who see God, fear Him. "Our God is also a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). Everything that can be burned, He will burn. God cannot consume those who have passed through drastic dealings by the cross. However, it is dangerous for those who do not know the work of the cross to meet God. Fire could not consume Daniel's three companions. Once a person sees God, he will spontaneously fear God.

What should we do since God wants worship and Satan wants worship? The life of God's people should be a life of worship. Every day of our life should begin with worship. Often it is necessary to kneel in prayer. God wants us to worship

Him in everything. We will find that the more we worship, the more reason we will have to worship. The more we know what eternity is, the more we will worship. We should never begin anything without first worshipping God. We should first give God His portion before asking for our portion. If the church gives God His portion of worship, the result will be the establishment of God's worship on this earth. In the new heaven and new earth, all flesh will worship God. Now He does not have the worship of everything; He only has the worship of those who will worship Him. We should not look lightly upon work, prayer, etc., but we must realize that God highly esteems worship.

THREE

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:27; 2:7; 3:5; 46:27; Matt. 2:3; 5; 10:38-39; John 4:19-24; 1 Cor. 2:14; 1:26-28; 6:17

In order to understand worship we must understand John 4. The special question in view is worship in relationship to man's creation and man's salvation. Just being a good Christian is too small. John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness." God is Spirit; therefore, we must use our spirit to worship Him. If we do not use our spirit, we cannot worship Him. The creation of man is unlike the rest of creation. Man's constitution has a part that is like God's constitution. If man has a question about his spirit, he will also have a question about worship. First Corinthians 6:17 says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." If we pour water into water, the result is water. But water with oil does not mix. We are joined to the Lord because our spirit can be mingled with His Spirit. When we are joined to Him, we do not become one body but one spirit. Flesh and blood and will and feelings are useless to God; only our spirit can touch God the Spirit. When God created man, He put a spirit within him. This is the only part of man which is like God. Man has an element in him which is like an element in God. He is Spirit, and a little part of us is spirit. This little part in us can touch God; it can touch eternity.

The lower forms of created life have feelings; they can choose, but they cannot worship, because they have no spirit. Although man is very small, he is very precious. He is a special creation. If man wants to use his spirit to worship God, he must live in the spirit. He must maintain his fellowship with God, his communication with God. Man's fall not only resulted in wrong acts; it affected man's whole constitution. In the fall we see the record of human behavior and the change in the human constitution. Man ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil, and as a result, his will changed, his feelings changed, and his thoughts changed. Then he was able to understand the difference between good and evil. Through their sin, Adam and Eve changed the constitution God had created in them. Before the fall man had a spirit and could touch God. After the fall his spirit died. Sin affected his constitution. Man became different. Biologically, he was changed. He added his own feelings to his power of decision. If Satan wants worship, he needs something in man that will worship him. Through his soul, man can worship Satan. Satan did not keep his original position. He said, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). When he deceives man, he induces him to abide by his soul, not his spirit. It takes the life of God to enliven and nourish the spirit. Satan originally had a spirit. After he sinned, his spirit was cut off from fellowship with God. Satan now lives by his "I." As such, he works through the self, the "I" of man. We must see the difference between the spirit and the soul. The soul is now a faculty that can decide for itself. Man can be independent of God. In this way Satan receives worship.

This is the meaning of the story in Eden. Before the fall man had to trust in God for everything. After the fall it was no longer necessary for man to trust in God; he could decide for himself. Man was never created with such power, but through the fall his constitution was changed.

The spirit is forever tied to dependence; whereas the soul is forever tied to independence. The man God created was of no use to Satan; he had to have an independent and proud man for his purpose. When man lives by his soul, he has an arrogant attitude, and Satan gains his worship. Every means is used today to enlarge man's soul through education, knowledge, etc. This generation of men is very independent and stubborn. God wants people who are dependent upon Him. Satan wants men who can do everything by themselves. So we must learn how to live by the spirit and ask the Lord to deliver us from the power of the soul. If one is spiritual, there will be humility; if he is soulish, he will be proud.

What is salvation? Salvation not only deals with our sins, but also restores our constitution. Man is wrong both inwardly and outwardly. This is why he needs both the outward restitution as well as the inward restoration. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This is regeneration in our constitution. When a man is saved, he is cleansed outwardly as well as changed constitutionally.

The soul cannot understand God; only the Spirit can. We must learn to lose our soul. It is a daily work to lose our soul. God does not deal with our soul in the same way that he dealt with our sins in his substitutionary work. We must lose

our own souls, and we must bear our cross daily. What does this mean? It means to come to God and not make any judgment by ourselves.

First Corinthians 1:27-28 says that God has chosen the foolish, weak, and the lowborn. This is because they are those whose souls are not enlarged. If we live according to the spirit, God will gain our worship. But if we live according to the soul, Satan will gain our worship.

FOUR

Scripture Reading: John 4; Gen. 22; Isa. 27:1; 2 Sam. 12:20; Psalms 132:7; Zechariah 14:16-17; 2 Chronicles 32:12

Because of man's fall, worship was ruined. Without salvation man cannot worship God. John 4:23 says that "the Father...seeks such to worship Him." Who are these "such"? They are the ones who are "born anew" (3:3). The Father wants such to worship Him. John 4:24 tells us of an eternal principle: God is Spirit. Since man's spirit was poisoned, he could no longer come to God. He could have feelings and thoughts about God, but he could not worship Him. After the fall man became twisted in his feeling, reasoning, and thought.

"Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness." The word "truthfulness" can also be translated as truth. Only that which is of the spirit is truth. Using thoughts or feelings to praise God is not worshipping in truth. According to the Old Testament, the proper worship was at Jerusalem. The sacrifice of Isaac was on Mount Moriah. The Old Testament records many times that worship should be in Jerusalem. Even in the kingdom, the nations will worship in Jerusalem. The temple, altar, and sanctuary were all in Jerusalem. Yet these were but shadows. People forgot what they spoke of. In actuality it is all a matter of the spirit. The reality of Jerusalem in God's plan is the spirit. It is not enough to worship God in Jerusalem; we must worship Him in spirit.

We must also realize the position of Jerusalem in God's plan. Jerusalem represents God's purpose; it is God's inheritance. God will inherit Jerusalem as His dwelling. Ephesians tells us that the saints are God's inheritance. However, what in us can we give to God? There is one thing which God will inherit in us; it is our free will. Satan is doing his best to hinder our free will from being occupied by God. He is doing his best to frustrate God's purpose and to destroy any worship to God. When our free will is taken up by God, we render God the proper worship.

In Jerusalem there is the temple on Mount Moriah. Where there is the reality of worship, there is the need of the cross. "And I, if I be lifted up" (John 12:32). "So must the Son of Man be lifted up" (3:14). Worship and the cross are related. If we do not know the cross, we cannot worship God. God must touch the natural life before He can secure in us the proper worship. When the cross touches man, his constitution is changed. On the one hand, we are dead with Christ, but on the other hand, the death of Christ is killing us daily. In order for God to gain our worship, we must go to the cross. The special characteristic of the cross is its stripping us of our trust in ourselves. The cross makes us dependent. If we do not take a position of dependence, we cannot worship God.

The Old Testament temple is also a type of the New Testament church. In the Old Testament, no one could worship outside the temple. the temple was the container of God. Today worship is realized in the Body of Christ. Apart from the Body, it is difficult to have the proper worship. Worship in the New Testament is a corporate matter.

Once I went to Fukien to preach the gospel, but I knew that the Lord was not in my endeavor. Yet the result was marvelous: two hundred souls were saved. Later, I read John 15:5, which says, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." It was quite hard for me to believe this verse. According to my thought, there were many things that could be done without Him. Yet we will not be judged by how much we can do, but by how much we are doing things by Him. The principle of the fall in Eden is to boast that we can do what God can do. Such an attitude must go if we are to worship God.

In the temple there is the incense altar, which signifies that everything that we are and have belongs to God. All that we have is God's. If we can say, "Lord, I want nothing for myself," God will get the glory. When all that we have is offered to God, He will gain the glory. The ultimate point of the Lord's prayer is that God gains everything. The kingdom is His, not ours or Satan's. The power is His, and the glory is His. If we stand in this position, God will receive worship.

In summary, worship is typified by: (1) Jerusalem, which is God's central purpose, (2) Mount Moriah, which includes the dealing of the cross on our soul, and the (3) incense table, which signifies that everything that we are and have belongs to God.

FIVE

Scripture Reading: Gen. 24:12-14; Exo. 4:31; 12:27; 34:8-9; Josh. 5:13-14; Judg. 7:13-15; 1 Sam. 1:27-28; 2 Sam. 12:20; Job 1:20-22; Matt. 2:9-11

We can trace a line right through Revelation and see what the devil is fighting for. In the first chapter of Revelation we see Christ as the Lord of war, not as the Head of the church or as the Savior. Previously, John laid on His bosom, now he lay as dead at the feet of the Lord. The Lord is revealed as a man of war. Out of His mouth proceeds a sword, and His eyes are like a flame of fire. He is a Lamb who is filled with wrath. In Revelation we see two thrones at war. Heaven and hell are in conflict. They are fighting to obtain the worship of man. Revelation 1—3 reveals Him as Lord, the One to be worshipped. Chapters four and five are not prophetic; they do not speak of future things; rather, they are a picture of the eternal scene in heaven (Rev. 4:1-4, 6, 9-11; 5:6, 12-14). In heaven there is only one throne, which is for worship.

Everything has its beginning from the throne. John saw the throne and the One seated there who was worthy of all praise. The throne has never changed. The elders represent all spiritual beings and the four living creatures represent the whole creation. (The twenty-four elders are not part of the church. The number of the church is twelve, not twenty-four. The elders also have crowns and thrones, and they were enthroned and crowned before the Lamb was. If it was possible for the church to be enthroned and crowned before the Lamb, then the twenty-four elders could represent the church. However, the church was never enthroned and crowned before the Lord was; therefore, we cannot say that the twenty-four elders represent the church.)

Since the sphere is the universe, the twenty-four elders are the twenty-four elders of the universe. The church is "the brothers of the Lord"! David set up twenty-four groups to minister to God, so the twenty-four elders are a band who serve God. They are kings and priests, and they represent the angels. They are a special group who serve God.

The living creatures represent all of God's creation, including man. This picture shows us that from eternity to eternity God has His throne and continual worship. In zoology we have men, domestic animals, beasts, birds, fish, and creeping things. In Genesis 1:24-26 we also have six kinds of creatures: man, cattle, beasts, fowl, fish, and creeping things. Only four are represented in the four living creatures; two kinds are missing. Fish and creeping things are not represented. The creeping things represent demons and the dragon, and fish represent the unsaved. In the new heaven and new earth there will be no sea, so the creatures

of the sea are not represented in this scene of worship. The creeping things are headed by the dragon and, of course, are not included in this worship. God does not need creeping things and fish to worship Him.

On the veil of the temple, which represents the body of Christ, the four living creatures—the lion, the bird, the calf, and the man—are embroidered. When the veil was split, everything on it was also rent. By the death of Christ all of creation is redeemed. In His body He redeemed all creation.

The worship in Revelation 4 did not begin when John saw it. God has had this worship from before the foundation of the world. On the earth it is possible to have sin and the work of the devil; the earth is the sphere of the devil's activity now. Eventually, the sea will be his sphere. All that transpires on the earth, however, does not move the throne. On the earth men can worship lions, birds, and calves, but in heaven only God is worshipped.

God rests on His throne and that is the place of our rest too. Men of the world say, "Where is your God?" He is on His throne receiving worship. Revelation 4 is a picture of eternity. In Revelation 5 time enters in. John saw the Lamb come. Who can obtain for God what He wants? Only the Lamb can restore what God is after. God's throne is from eternity to eternity in the heavens.

In Revelation 5 we see a throne. Around the throne there are representatives of the physical and spiritual creation, and in the midst of it the Lamb comes upon the scene. Philippians 2 is the Lamb in time. Revelation 5 is the Lamb's return to heaven. In Revelation 4 we see that because of creation God receives worship. In Revelation 5 we see that because of redemption God receives worship. Revelation 5 is the coronation of the Lord.

The rest of Revelation deals mainly with the three and a half years of the tribulation. Revelation 6—19 deals with the tribulation. It speaks of the tribulation because it is the last war; it is the end of the war between God and Satan. Satan wants the great tribulation so that He will receive worship through the beast, the dragon, and the image. Satan is not ignorant of the events of Revelation 13 through 19. He works up to this for the sake of worship. He risks the lake of fire and the bottomless pit for the sake of worship. At the present time, he does not receive direct worship through idols, but during the tribulation men will worship the dragon. There will be direct worship.

Revelation 13:8 says, "All those dwelling on the earth will worship him." Satan will receive universal worship. Verse 12 tells us that he will make the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast. Many say that they do not worship

anything now, but then all will worship the beast. The devil has a spirit, and by it he will move men to worship him. Verses 14 and 15 speak of the worshipping of the image of the beast, the false Christ, which is Satan himself.

In chapter fourteen three angels from heaven declare God's will. In verse 6 the eternal gospel is proclaimed. Verse 7 tells us that this gospel is to fear God and worship Him. God also stops men from worshipping His enemy. In verse 8 the second angel proclaims the fall of Babylon, and in verses 9 and 10 the third angel proclaims God's wrath upon those who have worshipped the beast. In chapter fourteen God makes a distinction between two kinds of men, according to whether or not they have worshipped Satan.

Chapter fifteen speaks of the victory over the beast and the song of the Lamb (vv. 2-4). Salvation is the human portion and worship is the divine portion of the spoils of victory. By then "all the nations will come and worship before You" (v. 4).

In chapter sixteen there is a picture of the unsaved. In verses 1 and 2 we see God's judgment upon the worshippers of the beast. In verses 9 and 11 men still have not repented, and in verse 21 they blaspheme God.

Chronologically, chapter nineteen follows chapter sixteen. In verse 4 we see the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures worshipping God again. In verse 5 His slaves are praising Him. There is no mention of salvation in verse 6 because it is improper to mention salvation in such a praise. Verse 20 tells us that all those who have worshipped the image are cast alive into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:4 speaks of those who did not worship the beast or his image; they reigned with Christ a thousand years. Whether or not these ones enter the kingdom depends on whether they have worshipped Satan.

Revelation 21:1-3 speaks of His people, which relates to God's position, His Godhead. Verses 4 through 7 say that God will be God to these ones and they shall be his sons. In order to know Him as God, we must know Him as Father, but the highest knowledge of God is not of His Fatherhood but of His Godhead. Verse 7 says, "He who overcomes will inherit these things." This overcoming is the overcoming spoken of in 1 John.

Revelation 22:8-9 contain the last reference to worship. When John saw all these wonderful things, he fell down to worship the angel. The tendency to worship something other than God is always in us. "Worship God" is the last command in the Scripture. Genuine worship is acknowledging our limitations and

acknowledging that God has no limitations. We must bow before Him; He is beyond us in everything.

CHAPTER TWO HUNDRED ONE

PRAYER

Many prayers are not answered because our faith is too big! God requires faith only as large as a mustard seed and no larger. We may feel that we have little or no faith. We may be before Him with no confidence in our own faith, in fear and trembling, and with no assurance whatever, but this does not matter, because God answers according to what He is. Our feelings have nothing to do with whether or not God will answer. We may feel that we have great faith for a thing, or we may feel that we are weak and full of doubts. But these are nothing but feelings, exterior and superficial. True faith will always be like a mustard seed, deep within our spirits, springing out of brokenness and weakness, but knowing that God is God and that He has His perfect plans and ways and that He will accomplish His work no matter what we are. He is faithful, and He must ever act in faithfulness, according to His character and His sovereign will.