

《Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship(Vol.2)》

CONTENTS

CONFERENCES, MESSAGES, AND FELLOWSHIP (2)

1. Preface

SECTION FOUR: CONFERENCE IN AMOY, OCTOBER 1936

2. Foot-Washing (1) (Chapter Thirty-One)
3. The New Testament Prophet (Chapter Thirty-Two)
4. The Foremost Condition for Spiritual Progress (Chapter Thirty-Three)
5. How to Know God's Will (Chapter Thirty-Four)
6. On Assuming Headship in the Family (Chapter Thirty-Five)
7. Foot-Washing (2) (Chapter Thirty-Six)
8. Knowing Christ and the Power of His Resurrection (Chapter Thirty-Seven)
9. Talks (1) (Chapter Thirty-Eight)
10. The Flesh and the Work of God (Chapter Thirty-Nine)
11. Talks (2) (Chapter Forty)
12. In Christ (Chapter Forty-One)
13. In Adam and In Christ (Chapter Forty-Two)
14. Absolute Obedience (Chapter Forty-Three)
15. The Subjective Aspect of Being in Christ (Chapter Forty-Four)
16. The Iniquity of the Sanctuary (Chapter Forty-Five)
17. The Resurrection of Christ (Chapter Forty-Six)
18. Co-Workers' Meeting (Chapter Forty-Seven)
19. How to Be in Christ (Chapter Forty-Eight)

SECTION FIVE: CONFERENCE IN FOOCHOW, DECEMBER 1936

20. Talks (1) (Chapter Forty-Nine)
21. God's Way of Accomplishing His Purpose in Creating Man (1) (Chapter Fifty)
22. God's Way of Accomplishing His Purpose in Creating Man (2) (Chapter Fifty-One)
23. The Blood of Christ (Chapter Fifty-Two)

- 24. The Cross of Christ (Chapter Fifty-Three)
- 25. The Life-Releasing Death of Christ (Chapter Fifty-Four)
- 26. Man-Made Victory (Chapter Fifty-Five)
- 27. The Characteristics of the Overcoming Life (Chapter Fifty-Six)
- 28. Brief Exposition on the Sections of Ephesians (Chapter Fifty-Seven)
- 29. How to Experience the Overcoming Life (1) (Chapter Fifty-Eight)
- 30. How to Experience the Overcoming Life (2) (Chapter Fifty-Nine)
- 31. Taking Up Our Cross (Chapter Sixty)
- 32. Talks (2) (Chapter Sixty-One)
- 33. Talks (3) (Chapter Sixty-Two)
- 34. Talks (4) (Chapter Sixty-Three)

PREFACE

Volume 42 of The Collected Works contains two sections that include various messages given by Watchman Nee in 1936.

Section Four is comprised of messages and fellowship given by Watchman Nee during a conference in Amoy in October 1936. The messages in the mornings were directed toward the workers and their work. The fellowship in the afternoon was divided into two groups: (1) free talks and (2) a series of meetings in which Watchman Nee gave his testimony (published as Watchman Nee's Testimony in Volume 26 of The Collected Works). "In Christ" was the subject of the evening meetings. The topics of all the meetings are listed below. In Section Four, however, the chapters are arranged chronologically in the order that the messages were delivered.

MORNINGS:

October 14: The New Testament Prophet

October 15: How to Know God's Will

October 16: Knowing Christ and the Power of His Resurrection

October 17: The Flesh and the Work of God

October 19: Absolute Obedience

October 20: The Iniquity of the Sanctuary

October 21: Co-workers' Meeting

AFTERNOONS:

October 15: On Assuming Headship in the Family

October 16: Talks (1)

October 17: Talks (2)

October 18: Watchman Nee's Testimony (1)

October 20: Watchman Nee's Testimony (2)

October 21: Watchman Nee's Testimony (3)

EVENINGS:

October 13: Foot-washing (1)

October 14: The Foremost Condition for Spiritual Progress

October 15: Foot-washing (2)

October 17: In Christ

October 18: In Adam and in Christ

October 19: The Subjective Aspect of Being in Christ

October 20: The Resurrection of Christ

October 21: How to Be in Christ

Section Five is comprised of messages and fellowship given by Watchman Nee during a conference in Foochow in December 1936. The topics of the messages include God's way of accomplishing His purpose and the overcoming life.

SECTION FOUR

CONFERENCE IN AMOY,

OCTOBER 1936

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

FOOT-WASHING

(1)

Date: October 13, 1936, evening

Place: Amoy

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17

During the past few days, I have been considering foot-washing in John 13. Some time ago when Brother Luk was in Shanghai we read this portion of the Word together. We felt that the most difficult aspect to understand was the Lord's word concerning the necessity of foot-washing. Our familiarity with this passage has not made it easier for us to understand its real meaning. At the same time, since there are so many interpretations of this passage already, it is difficult to receive new light. For this reason, we felt that it was necessary to thoroughly study this passage once more. However, we still did not understand it well because we were too familiar with the interpretation of this passage. Later, I set aside the interpretation that I knew and came to the Word in a fresh way, as if I had never read it before. Thank the Lord that He granted me some light, and this

chapter became a blessing to me. Last Lord's Day I spoke about it in Shanghai. Tonight I will speak some more about it.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE LORD'S WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET

This chapter speaks of the Lord's washing the disciples' feet and of His commandment for the disciples to wash each others' feet. First, we must ask: When did the Lord wash the disciples' feet and when did He charge the disciples to wash each others' feet? The Bible carefully records the history and the background of this incident. This information is very important. Let us consider this passage verse by verse.

The Hour Having Come to Depart Out of This World unto the Father

Verse 1 says, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father..." The Lord's washing of the disciples' feet happened before the Passover. The Lord said that the "hour had come for Him to depart out of this world unto the Father." If I were to depart out of this world unto the Father tonight, what would I do? I might have to clear my debt with my co-workers or to the sisters, or I might have other important things to take care of. I would have to settle all the unsettled matters. If I know that I will not depart from this world for five years, I may postpone these things until later. But if I know that I am about to depart from this world, I will surely settle and conclude all of my important business. I would surely not be concerned with insignificant matters, such as asking a child to go to the store and buy me some candy or going to a movie. Instead, I would do crucial and necessary things. This was true of the Lord. Before He departed from the world unto the Father, He washed the feet of His disciples, that is, His students, and charged them to wash one another's feet. There were many things in this world that He could have done at that time, but He chose to wash the disciples' feet. This shows that foot-washing is a very crucial matter.

Having Loved His Own Who Were in the World, He Loved Them to the Uttermost

The second part of verse 1 says, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost." If you do not love anyone in this world, you can allow many things to go unattended. If you have no relatives, friends, or children, you can die peacefully. But there were many whom the Lord loved. If I were close

to death and I had many loved ones, the final thing that I would do would be to give them my will. This is what man would do, but this was not what the Lord did. He washed the disciples' feet. The Lord loved His own who were in the world, and He washed their feet. He could do a thousand other things, but He did not. Instead, He chose to wash the disciples' feet. He did this because of His love. This makes the foot-washing a very wonderful matter. If the Lord had not loved His own who were in the world, foot-washing would not have been so wonderful. But foot-washing is very wonderful because the Lord did this to those whom He loved. The Lord, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the uttermost. Therefore, He washed their feet. This is an expression of the Lord's uttermost love.

Satan Having Already Put into the Heart of Judas the Thought to Betray Jesus

Verse 2 says, "And while supper was taking place, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he should betray Him." This was not a common occurrence. Here was a man who was going to betray the Lord, and the Lord knew this. He was facing a most difficult and critical situation. This is like a man who cannot leave his house even though he knows that it is going to collapse. Unlike many rich people in Shanghai, who give up their houses and move away when they collapse, he does not have any money and cannot move anywhere. What should he do? What would you do if there was a war in this place and the condition was critical? What would you do if you knew that danger was approaching in five minutes, that a bomb would fall or the enemy would arrive? Would you still be washing or shining your shoes? Of course not! We would not be doing insignificant things. Instead, we would be doing the most important things. During this critical juncture, the Lord washed the disciples' feet. What does this mean? Do you think that He was wrong to do this? Certainly not! Foot-washing must be a very important thing because it was done at the time when Judas was about to betray the Lord.

The Father Having Given All into the Lord's Hands

Verse 3 says, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all into His hands..." This refers to His exaltation, glory, power, honor, crown, and enthronement. The Lord knew that He was to receive all these things. If you knew that you were about to be exalted and would receive glory, power, and honor, what would you do? You would surely do something that prepared you for your exaltation.

Perhaps you would refurnish your house to make room for guests and friends. You would do some crucial things that would match your new status. The Lord knew that He was about to depart from this world, and He knew that the Father had given all into His hands. Yet He washed the disciples' feet. This shows that foot-washing must be a very crucial thing in the eyes of the Lord. He Himself washed the disciples' feet, and He also charged the disciples to wash one another's feet. Hence, we must not pass by John 13 easily; we should not look at this chapter lightly.

Before coming to the subject, I wanted to first consider the background behind the foot-washing. We have seen that this act was done when the Lord was about to depart out of this world to the Father. The Lord loved His own who were in the world to the uttermost; He knew that there was danger before Him because Judas was about to betray Him. He also knew that the Father had given all into His hands. Against this background, the Lord washed the disciples' feet and charged them to wash one another's feet.

THE MEANING OF FOOT-WASHING

The Feet Touching the Earth, Which Signifies the World

Now let us look at the meaning of foot-washing. We know that our feet touch the earth all the time. Our hands, head, and back do not have to touch the earth. But our feet come into contact with the earth all the time. We can say that as long as we are men, we have to touch the earth. As long as we live on this earth, we will come into contact with this earth. The head is for thinking, the hands are for working, the heart is for loving, the legs are for exercising, the back is for resting, and the feet are for contacting the earth. Here the Lord was not washing the hands. The Jews washed their hands before they ate. Yet the Lord washed the disciples' feet before they ate. He did not wash the head, the back, or the hands; He washed the feet. Why? This is a profound lesson, and I hope that I can express it adequately. Brothers, on this earth man is alienated from God because of sin. However, this problem is solved through the Lord's shed blood on the cross; the sins that we committed as a sinner have been washed away. After being saved and becoming a believer, the Lord's overcoming life enables us to overcome all sins. The judgment on sin was settled on the cross, and today the power of sin can be overcome through Him as the overcoming life within us. However, let me ask a question: Other than sin, is there anything else which

separates us from God? Those who are honest will say that there are many things which separate us from God. These things may not be sin, but there may be worldly elements that are produced through our contact with the world.

**The Defilement of the Feet Signifies Separation
from God through Contact with the World,
While Foot-washing Signifies the Recovery of
Spiritual Freshness and Fellowship with the Lord**

Suppose this morning you had a quiet time before the Lord; you read the Word and prayed. The prayer time was sweet and the Lord's Word was precious. You felt that heaven was so close to earth that you could almost touch it with your hands. This was between five and seven o'clock in the morning. By eight o'clock, numerous affairs of the day began to occupy you. Some have to conduct their businesses; others have to teach at school or go to their offices. Some have to go to school, while others have to visit the sick, shop, clean the house, or do laundry. There are many things which are waiting to be done. When you read the Bible and prayed in the morning, you felt that heaven was very close. But as a businessman who spends three to six hours in your office doing many seemingly "proper" things (you may not have lied or sinned at all), are you still as close to God in the evening as you were in the morning? No, you are not.

Students busy themselves in schoolwork at the schools, and housewives engage themselves in their household chores at home. Once a person occupies himself in these affairs, he feels as if heaven has moved away. It is no longer as close as it was in the morning. He may still be able to set aside some time to pray, but he has nothing to say. He can only touch the superficial letter of the Word; he can no longer touch the inward reality. When the prayer meeting comes, he may want to pray, but he is short of words. Even when he does manage to think of some words to say, his conscience bothers him. He may still shout hallelujah, and the words and sounds may still be the same, but the meaning and taste are different. He feels that something has separated him from God, but he cannot pinpoint any sin. It seems as if confession does not help the situation either. If he was separated from God through sin, he should deal with it through the application of the blood shed on the cross. But this does not seem to be a question of sin. He only feels somewhat dimmed and has lost the former brightness. There is the need of something else to deal with this problem. This is different from ordinary sins. What is needed is the foot-washing. What is foot-washing? It is dealing with everything apart from sin that separates us from God.

This happens to us all the time. We do not sin, but neither do we touch God. It is understandable when a person is separated from God through sin. But we do not know what to do when we have not sinned, yet cannot touch God. Thank the Lord that He has not only washed us of our sins, but washed our feet as well. This is not the washing of our hands; the hands signify the things we do. Whether or not we do things is our responsibility. This is not the washing of our head; the head signifies our thoughts. Whether or not we think certain things is our responsibility. This is not the washing of our backs. Whether or not we lie down is our responsibility. If our head, hands, or backs have a problem, we have sinned because the activities associated with these parts are under our control. Our feet however have no choice but to stand on the ground; this is something that is not up to us. What do the feet signify? The feet signify our contact with our family, business, and schools. These are unavoidable contacts in our daily life. As long as we are human beings and live in this world, we have to stand on the ground and touch the earth. This will continue until the day the Lord comes back to rapture us away. When Jacob was about to die, the Bible says that he gathered up his feet into his bed (Gen. 49:33). This meant that from that day on, he would no longer need to use his feet; he could go to his fathers. Before we go to our fathers, our feet are still on the ground; they are not gathered up into our bed. The feet signify our inevitable and non-sinful contact with the world. This contact is not sinful, yet it can separate us from God and make heaven less near to us and our prayers less sweet. While living on this earth, our feet are easily defiled. We have to use our feet whether we are standing up or sitting down. Of all the members of our body, the feet tire us out the most easily. I am not saying that the other parts of the body will not tire us out; but the feet tire us out most easily. In the same way, it is very easy for a spiritual man to become defiled. How many spiritual men sitting here tonight have feet that are defiled? I know that many of our feet have been defiled.

Now that you are clear about the significance of the feet, we have to go on to consider the meaning of defiled feet. Defiled feet are feet that have to be washed. It is not wrong for the feet to be defiled; this is something that is inevitable. This defilement has nothing to do with sin; sinning is something else. We are not talking about sin, we are talking about the things that separate us from God, the things that tire us out spiritually. This is having defiled feet. Suppose we come to the meeting and say something in an old and habitual way.

Although we have opened up our mouth, nothing is touching us inwardly. Or we may be reading the Bible and know what we are reading, yet we may have no feeling about what we have read. This is having defiled feet. We can summarize defiled feet with a few words—staleness in fellowship with the Lord. Clean feet, however, denote fresh fellowship with the Lord.

One day someone said to me, "Mr. Nee, when I was in Chuenchow, I had a wonderful time. I felt that the Lord was very precious to me. But today all those feelings are gone. I still believe in the Lord, I still pray to the Lord, I still love Him, and I am still consecrated to Him. I have not lost any of these things. Yet I must admit that something within me is not the same as it was before." This is having defiled feet. A man defiles his feet through contact and communication with the world, and through working and conducting business in that realm. If you ask such a one if he has sinned, he may answer, "No." Outwardly he is the same as he was before, but inwardly he is different. He can still say that the Lord is precious and that he loves the Lord very much. However, this only describes his condition last year, the year before last, or five or ten years ago. How many can say today that they treasure the Lord and love the Lord as much as they did five or ten years ago? Many people have to say that they do not have the same feeling that they had a year ago. Their feet are defiled, and they have become weary. This is spiritual weariness; it is the loss of spiritual freshness and vitality. This is why the Lord says that we need foot-washing. What does foot-washing mean? It means recovering our former feelings, bringing us back to the freshness of life, and giving us fresh strength to treasure what we previously treasured. This is the meaning of foot-washing. Thank the Lord that He washes our feet all the time.

Many times when we speak, our words do not match our inward feelings. Today many believers in Christ have become stagnant in their spiritual growth. They sing, praise, and pray reluctantly. Sometimes this is the result of sin, but many times this is not the result of any sin. They simply have defiled feet, and they have become spiritually enervated. We have to realize that the Lord wants us to be fresh all the time. This is why He says that He leads us to the green pastures (Psa. 23:2). We have a brother in Shanghai who is a manual laborer. He lost his job a few months ago but recently found another job. His work involves cutting grass. For every thousand catties [a Chinese unit of weight] of grass he cuts, he gets a dollar. After the grass is dried, it is bundled up into bundles of six hundred catties and sent to the dairy farms. He gets fifty cents a day for this. He cuts,

dries, and delivers all day long. Last month I met him while he was drying the grass and asked him about his job. He said, "I have to dry the grass and deliver it to the dairy farms. The farms store it in their barns and feed the cows with it in winter." I then said, "The dairy farmers feed the cows with yellow grass, but the Lord feeds us with green grass." The Lord wants us to be fresh; He wants us to be fresh every day. We may have been yellow yesterday, but we can be green again today. We may have been yellow this morning, but we can be green this afternoon. The Lord is fresh running water; He does not flow for five minutes and then stop. He flows continuously, daily, monthly, and yearly. There is not a minute in which He is short. He is always fresh, and He is constantly refreshing us. This is the life that the Lord is leading us to live. Here is power, joy, peace, and holiness. Only by living this way can we express the Lord's life. After the victory at Jericho, there is still the victory at Ai. After great victories, there are still small, daily victories. This should be our daily experience before the Lord.

The Bible says that Saul was taller than any of the people from his shoulders and upward (1 Sam. 10:23). Yet God was not pleased with his reign. Eventually, God did not choose him. Instead, He chose David to be the king. The Bible does not indicate David's height; it merely says that he was ruddy and of a beautiful countenance (16:12). This implies freshness, like the freshness of a newborn baby whose face does not have any wrinkles; there is freshness and vitality. God wants our life to be fresh. Psalm 1 says that the blessed man is one who is like a tree planted beside streams of water, yielding fruit in its season, and whose foliage does not wither (v. 3). We have leaves, which are our outward conduct. We may be patient, meek, humble, and perfect in our conduct and virtues. But the question is whether this conduct and virtues are green or whether they are wilting and yellow. Are they fresh, or are they old? Leaves denote our conduct. If we are not under the fresh operation of the Holy Spirit, we will be doing the same things that we have done in the past. The result will surely not be green and fresh, but dry and old. A person may have risen at five o'clock in the morning yesterday. He may do the same thing today. But yesterday he felt God's presence very near to him, yet today he does not touch Him at all. Outwardly, he is doing the same thing, but inwardly the feeling is gone. The inward freshness is gone because the leaves have dried up like the things in Noah's ark that belonged to the old creation. They are not like the fresh olive branch that appeared after the flood receded. Such people are of little use to the Lord.

Creating a Thirst within Man for God

Tonight I have a word specifically for the co-workers. We have to know why God has put us in the world. He has put us in the world so that our presence would create a hunger and thirst for righteousness in sinners, believers, and the world. In our work, we have to create a hunger within others. There must be an enigmatic freshness, power, nourishment, and supply within us that will drive others to seek after God by our presence. Others should have a desire to seek after God as a result of meeting us and speaking to us. If we always see others and communicate with them without creating a desire within them for God, it means that we have failed. If our reading of the Bible, prayer, service, and gospel preaching do not produce such a powerful hunger within man, our work has failed.

Many who know Miss Barber can testify that she was very different from others. Whenever someone went to her and sat in front of her, spontaneously he would realize how much he was off. He would realize that he did not have what she had and would aspire for what she had. Fifteen years ago (1921) when I first became a Christian, I was very proud. I thought highly of myself because I was able to read one or two chapters of the Bible a day with some understanding. (Very few people are proud outwardly; most people are proud inwardly.) I went to her to tell her about this. After I prayed a few words with her, I saw my pride before she even opened her mouth to rebuke me. I knew that I did not have what she had. This is foot-washing. My feet were washed by her presence. I met God. Prior to that I was living outside of God, and I was old and dark. But once I came to her, I was refreshed and enlightened. I often felt that I was washed by her presence. We often have the same sensation—we feel that we are washed after talking to certain brothers. Our spiritual energy is revived; we can touch and feel God once more. This is foot-washing.

A few days ago, I felt that my feet were defiled. At first I thought that I had sinned, and I proceeded to deal with my sins. But God was still very far from me. I felt that there was a separation between myself and God. I could do nothing about it. While I was praying I was secretly saying to myself, "You are just composing your prayer. This is not something from your heart." Later, I saw a sister who had been saved for only two or three months. She told me of her salvation experience and told me how she was persecuted by her family. She hoped that I would give her some help. When I heard this, I said, "Thank the Lord. When I came, my feet were defiled. But when I leave, my feet will be clean because your testimony has

washed away the oldness in my experiences." The book of Titus mentions the renewing of the Spirit (3:5). This is a very precious expression. We need the renewing of the Spirit so that we can always be spiritually fresh and invigorated. A bronze flower vase needs constant polishing to make it shine. If there is no polishing, there may not be any rust, but there will be a coating of dust and the vase will not shine. The same is true with us. We may not be sinful, but we may have a coating of dust that prevents us from shining. The Lord said to Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8). What does this mean? Having no part with the Lord does not mean perdition; it means having no part in the fresh fellowship of the Lord's life. If our feet are not washed, there will be a separation between us and the Lord, and we will not be able to enjoy the freshness of His life and the freshness of His supply. This is the meaning of having no part in the Lord. The Lord wants to wash our feet. Therefore we must be willing to be washed and renewed.

Aspiring to Wash Others' Feet

At the same time, we have to aspire to wash others' feet. However, we cannot wash others' feet unless we have the overcoming life and the Spirit's help to live out such a life. Some can wash others' feet, while others cannot. You may live with some for over a year and yet still not have your feet washed once. Washing requires that we live an overcoming life before the Lord. We have to be fresh all the time before we can wash others' feet.

Who are the ones who need washing, and who are the ones who have to wash others' feet? The Lord said, "You also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). This tells us that we all need the washing. Those who were spiritually fresh but who have lost their freshness need the washing. Every one of us needs our feet washed, and every one of us needs to be prepared to wash others' feet. The Lord said, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Among all the services that Christians minister to one another, nothing is more crucial or more precious than foot-washing. "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (v. 17). I love what Brother Yu has said many times: "The Bible today is more precious than the Bible yesterday." May we have fresh spiritual experiences every day. Romans 15:32 says, "I may refresh myself and rest with you." This is the result of foot-washing.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHET

Date: October 14, 1936, morning

Place: Amoy

Scripture Reading: Acts 21:4, 10-11; 1 Cor. 14:3-4

Today we want to see the first requirement of a worker. In order to see this we have to go back to the very beginning. First, let us consider the prophets in the Old Testament and their works.

THE WORK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

As far as I can remember, the Old Testament prophets did three things. First, they prophesied, which means foretelling things which were about to happen. Many prophets did this. Second, they spoke for God, announcing God's will to men. Some prophets not only prophesied, they were also sent by God to certain men to do a particular thing—to announce God's will to those who were ignorant of it. Both the prophets and the priests were intermediaries between God and man. In the Old Testament men could not come to God directly to worship Him; all matters of worship had to be done through the priests (cf. 2 Chron. 26:18). However, the priests were not the only ones who came between God and man; the prophets were also intermediaries. The priests were intermediaries from man to God, whereas the prophets were intermediaries from God to man. God did not speak to man directly; He spoke through the prophets. The Pentateuch says that God spoke to Moses, who then spoke to the people and gave them the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were passed on to the Israelites through Moses. Third, the Old Testament prophets also exhorted and comforted men. These words of exhortation and comfort covered general principles. They were like the message we gave this morning—announcing to men that God is righteous and that we should serve Him in holiness and righteousness. These are the works of the Old Testament prophets. They prophesied, they announced God's will to men, and they exhorted, comforted, and instructed men concerning general principles.

THE WORK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS

We must be clear about one very important matter. While there were three aspects to the work of the Old Testament prophets, there are fewer aspects to the work of New Testament prophets. The New Testament prophets only do the first and third aspect of the work of the Old Testament prophets; they do not participate in the second aspect of the work of the Old Testament prophets. If we

are not clear about this, we will be living according to the Old Testament even though we are in the New Testament age. The work of the New Testament prophets is to annul the second aspect of the work of the Old Testament prophets, which is to tell men what they should do. This was an important work of the Old Testament prophets, but the New Testament prophets do not do this. A New Testament believer prays, gives thanks, praises, or seeks after the Lord without the need of a prophet to act on his behalf. The greatest blessing for a New Testament believer is the ability to receive the leading of the Holy Spirit, as Hebrews 8:11 says, "And they shall by no means each teach his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all will know Me from the little one to the great one among them." We have many fellow citizens and brothers, but there is no need for them to teach us, saying, "Know the Lord." We have the Holy Spirit within us. The Spirit is our prophet today. In the Old Testament there was Nathan, Gad, and many other prophets, in addition to many "fellow citizens." But in the New Testament, we do not need all these "fellow citizens" to teach and guide us.

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit has replaced the work of the Old Testament prophets. Today we have prophets in the church. Some can prophesy, while others can exhort and comfort. But we do not have personal prophets to come and tell us what we should do. If anyone comes to tell us to do this or that, he is not a prophet, but a sorcerer. It is true that Agabus and the four daughters of Philip were prophets, and they did prophesy (Acts 11:28; 21:8-11), but the main work of the New Testament prophets is preaching and speaking for God. New Testament prophets seldom prophesy; their main work is the preaching of the Word. First Corinthians 14 specifically mentions the work of the prophets. Verse 3 clearly says that the main work of the New Testament prophets is for building up, encouraging, and consoling men. It does not mention any foretelling of the future. This shows that foretelling is an incidental work; sometimes it is done by a few, but it is not the principal work.

A prophet cannot give anyone personal guidance; this is the essence of the New Testament. In the New Testament there are no personal prophets. Everyone can know God directly and be led of God and know God's will directly. Do you have a prophet? I am ashamed that many people have considered me a prophet, that is, the kind of personal prophet mentioned above. The danger of a worker is to burden himself with the work of a prophet. When there are too many personal prophets, the proper place of the New Testament prophet is annulled. The New

Testament church does not need any spiritual giants to act as personal prophets to teach others what they should do. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, not the work of the prophets. The main work of the New Testament prophets is for building up, encouraging, and consoling men. This is the work that God's workers should do today.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A WORKER

There are some minimum qualifications of a worker: (1) He must be a person living in the New Testament, and (2) he must be able to know God's will directly. Without these two qualifications, a man is not qualified to work for God. If you find yourself unable to give guidance to the brothers without the help of a prophet, and if you find yourself unable to know God's will or render help to the churches without the help of a prophet, you are not living in the New Testament. If something happens and you have to write letters, send cables, or make long distance calls to consult others, then in reality, you are consulting the prophets and damaging the New Testament. Many people do not understand the meaning of Acts 21. I did not understand it before either. However, during the past two or three months, it suddenly became clear to me. Paul did not go along with the pleading of the saints from Tyre. Was he following the leading of the Spirit or not? He wanted to go up to Jerusalem, but the disciples were moved by the Spirit to advise him not to go. Why would Paul not take their advice? Were the saints in Tyre wrong in speaking? The issue is not whether they were wrong. The issue is that they wanted to be New Testament prophets to Paul; they wanted to show Paul his personal path. This breaks the principle of the New Testament. Paul would rather take the wrong way and fail to know God's will than to allow a New Testament believer become his personal prophet. He would not allow a "fellow citizen" to become his prophet, because he knew that he was in the New Testament.

Brothers, we are doing the same thing here. We can only speak about the general principles of the things of God. We cannot determine the personal path of others. We can exhort the brothers to be obedient, to not love the world, and to consecrate themselves. These are principles. But if I tell a brother to do a specific thing at six o'clock the next morning, I am doing something that is not found in the New Testament. In the New Testament, we can receive exhortations from men, but we cannot receive specific instructions from men. We can accept principles from men, but we cannot accept detailed injunctions from men. Today

we have the right to enjoy the New Testament blessing of the Holy Spirit. In everything that we do, we have to ask whether the Holy Spirit has first done an inward work within us, and whether we are doing this work as a result of the constraining of the Lord's love. If a worker is unable to know God's will directly, I would advise him not to be a worker. He is not qualified to be a co-worker because he is not even a Christian in a proper sense. A New Testament Christian must be able to know God's will directly.

NOT BEING PERSONAL PROPHETS

There are two very precious things in the New Testament. First, we can all be priests serving God in His presence. Second, the Holy Spirit is within us and we can know God's will. If we do not have the second thing, we are only Jews and outdated believers. The most important matter in the New Testament is that the Holy Spirit lives within the believers. When some among us receive the outpouring of the Spirit, they speak in tongues, prophesy, receive revelations, or experience many similar things. If a sister claimed that she had received a prophecy or a revelation, what would you do? Suppose something happened in your home. Would you go to this sister and inquire of her? Would you charge her to inform you of any revelation that she has received? If you did this, you would not only be relinquishing your New Testament right, but you would be opening the door to the deception of evil spirits. In the Old Testament there were the sorcerers, whose work was the same in principle as the work of the prophets. The prophets conveyed to men the will of God, whereas the sorcerers conveyed to men the will of evil spirits. Both were intermediaries. In the Old Testament, if a man claimed that he did not need a sorceress, he must have been an expert himself. However, in the New Testament, no prophet should occupy an intermediary position. Every believer can communicate with God directly. In the New Testament, as long as some "sorcerers" remain, the Holy Spirit will not convey God's word to man. If some brothers have some gifts of the Holy Spirit as a result of the outpouring, and if they tell you to do this and that, they are acting as Old Testament prophets and being an intermediary for you. You should not accept their words. The outpouring of the Spirit cannot replace the inner leading of the Spirit. Otherwise, an intermediary class of people will be produced and there will be "sorcerers."

THE NEW TESTAMENT WAY

Paul refused to take the word of the believers in Tyre in order to maintain the absolute authority of the New Testament. His going to Jerusalem was not a

question of right or wrong. He had to go no matter what would happen to him. It mattered little to him whether the believers of Tyre were speaking from the Spirit. The important thing was that Paul had to learn to know God's will within. This does not mean that others cannot know our pathway in the New Testament age. Others can know our path, but they cannot give us the direction. We can compare what we know with what others have said, but in the eyes of the Lord, we must know God by ourselves. We must understand His will by ourselves. We must be our own prophets, because the Holy Spirit is the Prophet. At the same time, we have to refuse to be prophets to others. We cannot tell others what they should do with their family affairs, what path they should follow, what things they should do, or how they should deal with the myriads of things in their daily life. We can only teach them the general principles of the Bible. If anyone comes and asks what they should do, we can answer, "This is the biblical teaching to me, but you have the Holy Spirit within, and you must seek for God's guidance."

We have to commit every brother and sister to the hands of God; we have to commit them to the Holy Spirit. If a person is not clear about God's will, it is better that he not do anything. It pleases God the most when we act according to His will. As workers we are not here to act as prophets for others, telling them what they should do. We should not be teachers to many. Our work should be for the building up, consolation, and encouragement of others. We should give others the biblical principles, but they have the Holy Spirit within them, and they can seek after God by themselves. This is the main work of the New Testament prophets. May the Lord be merciful to us and direct us to walk in the New Testament path.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE FOREMOST CONDITION FOR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

Date: October 14, 1936, evening

Place: Amoy

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:53; 11:9-10; Phil. 3:7-12

HUNGER

Before we were saved, we did not seek after God. The Bible says that God seeks after man. However, we began to seek after the Lord after we were saved. God gave us Christ in order that we might have eternal life; this is a work that was completed once for all. But after a man is saved, he will be of little use in God's

hands if he is still the same after a month or a year. If a man comes to the meeting today and he is the same way that he was before, he will not be of much use to the Lord. Why do some Christians advance while others always seem to remain the same? All spiritual progress depends on man's hunger. Luke 1:53 says that God has filled the hungry with good things. The Lord also said, "Ask and it shall be given to you" (11:9). The heavenly Father gives the Spirit to those who ask. In order for a Christian to advance spiritually, he must be hungry inwardly and constantly seeking.

The first condition for spiritual growth in a Christian is hunger. I have already spoken about this last year in Chuenchow, but today I will say the same thing again. God's principle is to fill the hungry with good things and to send the rich away empty. Today if you come to the Lord empty and go away empty, it means that you are already too full and too rich. Tonight many co-workers have come from faraway places. I will ask the same question that I asked when we were in Chuenchow: "What are you coming here for?" A man can experience grace by chance, but spiritual progress does not come by accident. It is not something that one picks up along the way. Salvation may come by chance, but the power of the Spirit, a holy life, the power of God, and the overcoming life are not things that are obtained by chance. God will only give these things to those who seek for them; He will only give them to the hungry ones.

PAYING THE PRICE

I have met many people who deal with spiritual matters the same way that they deal with their salvation. They think that all they need to do is to hear about it. Actually there is a big difference between salvation and spiritual progress. The ten virgins in Matthew 25 do not have to buy oil for their lamps, but they have to buy oil for their vessels, which are not the same as their lamps. Regeneration is free, but spiritual progress comes with a price. In Revelation the Lord told the church in Laodicea to buy white garments and eyesalve from Him (3:18). In order to buy white garments and eyesalve, there is the need to pay a price. A holy living is something that is bought with a price; it does not come to us free. A proven faith is also something that is bought with a price. If you see a Christian making progress, you know that he must have paid a price. Let me ask a question tonight: What do you want before God, and have you ever paid a price in order to attain more? We must pay a great price before we can live in Christ, receive answers to our prayer, trust God for our living, and possess spiritual insight to see what others cannot see!

What does it mean for God to fill the hungry with good things? It means that the riches are reserved for those who want them. Suppose I give this hymnal to you. You may take it even though you may not care for it. In that case, you are not very concerned for the gift. But if I give you a sum of money, your response may be different; you may take it immediately. What does it mean to be hungry? Being hungry is being empty in your stomach. If you do not have anything in your stomach, you will surely crave something. I am not afraid of people committing sins. I am not afraid of the co-workers being too weak to save souls or having too hot a temper or too difficult a disposition. What I am afraid of is self-contentment, selfsatisfaction, and satisfaction with the things of the past. When you feel that you cannot make it, or when you are faced with great difficulties, that is the time you experience great turns. That is the time you make spiritual progress. However, I have not met many who are truly hungry. Let me ask one question: Since January of this year, how many of your prayers have been answered? You may find it difficult to answer my question. If a man is truly seeking for God and praying to God, yet does not receive any answer to his prayers, there must be something wrong with this person. He must have a problem somewhere.

A brother may have a terrible temper. But as long as he will deal with God, God will give him grace and work on him to the point that he can live out the Lord's life. A person may know that he has some problem, but unless he asks in a hungry way, he will not be delivered from his problem. In order to have sustained progress before the Lord, we need a sustained hunger. The degree of our hunger determines the amount that we eat. Our experience of eating tells us that we eat when we are hungry; the hungrier we are, the more we eat. The same principle applies to the spiritual realm; one does not eat when he is full. Let me ask again: What do you want today? Are you hungry? If we are hungry and seeking, God will fill our hunger.

SEEKING FOR PRECIOUS THINGS

Next, you must seek after precious things. If you ask questions such as who were the sons of God in Genesis 6, who was Cain's wife, or where will man go after he dies, you are treating spiritual matters as objects of curiosity. Some people are only interested in strange things. They are not interested in how Christ becomes our life or how one can overcome sin. There is no point in asking curious questions. In the past I received many such questions. I often put these letters aside and felt sorry for those who only pay attention to these strange

things. On the one hand, we have to be very hungry for the spiritual things, and on the other hand, we have to be delivered from all curiosity. We have to seek after things that are spiritually precious. If we are as indifferent toward God as we are today, we will be useless in His eyes.

A PATTERN

A few months before Miss Barber died, I went to see her and spoke with her for a long time. I wondered why this sister had such profound spiritual experiences. I wanted to know the reason for this. I asked her why the Lord had been so gracious to her. She answered, "I do not know. I only know that I have always been hungry and I have always been eating. Since I was nine, I have always been hungry; I have never been content before the Lord for these many years. I might have received grace and revelation yesterday, but today I say to God, 'You have more, and I want more. I want more all the time.' I am forever hungry and yet at the same time forever satisfied." Her spiritual attainment was so deep that few have even scratched the surface of it.

Last year I met a sister in her thirties. She was an ordinary woman, but her experience in the Lord was not ordinary at all. Her experience was something that others do not have. She told me that once she was bitter against a person; she prayed and prayed to the Lord until the bitterness went away from her. Yet after her bitterness was gone, she realized that there is a difference between not being bitter and positively loving someone. She felt that she could not love the other person yet, and she continued to pray. We often become satisfied as soon as we receive something. But this sister said, "Lord, what You have prepared for me in Your gospel is not this small. I want everything. I want all the provisions that are there in the gospel." This kind of "covetousness" for Christ or "jealousy" as described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 will bring satisfaction to a person. Some people are good at preaching the gospel and saving men. The Lord answers their prayers all the time. They also have good dispositions. Others may be exactly the opposite—they see all the virtues in others, but have none of them in themselves. Yet they are not desperate enough or concerned enough. Such ones will never make any progress. Spiritual stagnation is the result of indifference to one's own spiritual lack.

Many brothers and sisters know about a couple who have rendered me much help in the past. I consider this couple to be forever hungry. I have known them for a long time. They have made much progress. When I met them the year before last, they were still very unclear about many things. (I do not mean that

they were evil; I mean that they were spiritually unclear.) Today they are still asking, seeking, wanting, and searching from place to place. Some brothers and sisters have criticized them for traveling so much, saying, "If you have Christ you have everything already." It is true that when we have Christ we have everything. However, there is an experiential side of having Christ as everything. For example, we can study geography and know the names of all the cities. We can know the locations of Kuling and Tsingtao, but we must personally visit Kuling and Tsingtao before we will know what these cities are like. While it is true that we have everything in Christ, we must also seek to have these things in our experience. I often pray to be as hungry as that couple. Before God we are beggars. Lazarus was a beggar all his life until he went to Abraham's bosom. In this respect we should never change our profession.

Our prayer should have the capacity of George Müller. We should be like Charles Finney in the way we save men. We should never be satisfied with what we have. The Bible says that we should open our mouth wide, and God will fill it (Psa. 81:10). We must open our mouth wide before God will fill us abundantly. Some have opened their mouths, but they are not opened wide enough. We must open our mouth wide before God will fill it. God is waiting for us to open our mouth. Whenever we seek after Him in a hungry way, He will answer us immediately. If we are hungry, the filling of the Holy Spirit will come.

GOD USING CHRISTIANS TO ATTRACT MEN TO ASPIRE AFTER HIM

Many people often say that they are not hungry. They are not hungry because there is no drawing power. The Song of Songs says, "Draw me, and we will run after thee" (1:4). How does the Lord draw men today? He draws men through other men. He works through us to draw men to Himself. If you are an experienced person and have received answers to prayers, God will use you to attract others to Himself. The way to attract others is to create a desire in them to seek after what we ourselves are seeking after.

Every time I have gained some spiritual experience, I have gained it because others have gained it already and I longed after it, not because I suddenly discovered something in my reading of the Word or in prayer. Others have experienced the overcoming life, and I desire the same. Others have received the outpouring of the Spirit, and I desire the same. I receive my experience of the overcoming life and the outpouring of the Spirit through others' experiences.

When others draw me, I run after the Lord. Today very few people have the power to attract others. If we, as workers of the Lord, do not have the power to attract others and if we can only give others teachings, we will not be of much use to the Lord. Men may admire us and like us, but we have to ask if they have the desire for the life that we have before the Lord. It is possible for many people to admire us today, but the question is whether or not we can draw them to God's presence. Today God renders help to men through Christians. We may hear that So-and-so in Tientsin or So-and-so in Chefoo had a certain experience, and we may desire to have the same. This will create a hunger in us, and this hunger will induce us to seek after the same experience.

COUNTING ALL THINGS AS REFUSE AND PRESSING TOWARDS CHRIST

What are the outward marks of a man who is seeking? We can find some characteristics of a seeker from Philippians 3. Paul said that he had given up all things and counted them as refuse for the sake of gaining Christ. He told us that he had a mark set before him, and that he was forgetting the things which were behind and pursuing towards the goal that was set before him. I like the few words: "suffered the loss," "count them as refuse," and "pursue." If we want to pursue, we have to settle many things; we have to suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse. Refuse is trash. Have you ever emptied out your trash? My New Testament may cost very little, yet I do not want to let go of it because I treasure it very much. However, it is easy for me to let go of the trash. One is not heartbroken when he throws out his trash. On the contrary, he is glad to get rid of it as soon as possible. When we put money into the offering box, we count it carefully before dropping it into the box. We do this because we treasure the money very much. The things of this world may be nothing but old rags to us, but to a trash collector, an old rag may mean quite a bit. It is trash to us, but it may be a valuable possession to them. God tells us that the things of this world are but an old rag. However, many people consider the things of this world as their enjoyment, right, and hope. If we see Christ, we will see that the things and objects of this world are nothing but trash.

I doubt how many of us truly know what sin is. You may consider many things in your daily life to be good and right. But if you know what sin is, you will realize that these seemingly good and right things are wrong. Many husbands never consider that they have wronged their wives. Many children never consider that they have wronged their parents, and many people have never thought that they

were the ones who were wrong in their family. If you carefully consider, you will realize that many of your relationships are wrong. If you are not conscientious, you will not deal with these problems. But unless you deal with these problems, they will not go away, and it will be difficult for you to make any progress. In order to gain anything spiritually, you have to pay the price. If you are willing to pay the price, seek the Lord in everything, and be conscientious to deal with the problems, you will experience a genuine revival. But if you hold back, keep many things in your hand, and do not let go of them, you will not gain the Lord and nothing much will happen to you. For example, if you have too much money in your hands, you should dispose of it. In the Old Testament, the books of the law were lost after the temple was defiled. When the books were found again, the people read them and the priests went to the temple and cleansed it. When the temple was cleansed of all its defilements (cf. 2 Kings 22:8—23:25), God's glory filled the house once more. May we be willing to deal with all the defilements and uncleanness so that we can be filled with His life.

How great, how rich, and how full are the provisions that God has prepared for us in Christ! Many people only know the Lord as their Savior. They do not know how much more the Lord can be to them. We pray too little. What God can give is far more than what we can ask or think. Is there anyone here who is willing to open his mouth wide to receive the riches of the Lord today? His riches are unsearchable. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psa. 81:10).

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

HOW TO KNOW GOD'S WILL

Date: October 15, 1936, morning

Place: Amoy

THE PERSON RATHER THAN TECHNIQUES

God's children can and should know God's will. The knowledge of God's will has to do with the person; it has nothing to do with techniques. When the Lord draws men to Himself, He draws some through their mind, others through their emotion, and still others through their will. Generally speaking, the least likely means for the Lord to draw men is the will. Many people love the truth of the Bible. They want to know more about these truths, and they hope that others will be edified by these truths. They study the Bible a great deal and know many things about Bible exposition. When they cannot interpret a passage, they feel frustrated. When they think they can interpret a passage, they feel happy. People like these

are touching the Bible with their mind. They are not necessarily living a proper Christian life. Of course, it is difficult to live a proper Christian life without a mind. But those who only have a mental understanding of doctrines are not necessarily those who live a proper Christian life.

There is another group of Christians who are not very smart. They do not know much, but they are very zealous. They laugh and cry easily. They are rich in emotion. When they touch the Bible, they are easily moved to tears or laughter. They work only when they feel a burning within. In their zeal, they preach to whomever they see and do not stop even when their voices become hoarse. Wherever they go they carry an air of excitement, but when their zeal fades away, even ten persons could not move them an inch. These people have a strong soul. They can be stirred up quickly, and they can stir up many people when their hearts are burning. They can cry with others or laugh with others, but when the tide of excitement subsides, they cannot bring anyone to the Lord. They touch others with their emotion. When they are stirred up, they think highly of themselves. But when they become cold, they will not move at all. Such Christians cannot be of much use to the Lord.

Suppose a man has a clear mind before the Lord, a proper emotion, good knowledge of the Bible, and zealousness in serving others. All of these things are wonderful, but if he has never been touched by the Lord, he cannot serve God in a proper way. He needs to be touched in his will. If a man's spirit is dead before God, he is totally useless in the eyes of God. The spirit must be regenerated. Thank the Lord that our spirit today is a new spirit, a regenerated spirit. This regenerated spirit is our inner man. Every Christian has received the same life from God in his spirit; there is no difference between him and others. The same Spirit who dwells in a weak brother also dwelt in Paul. As long as we are the Lord's, the new creation in our spirit is the same as in others. God is not a respecter of persons. However, when the inner man lives out the life of the Lord, there can be a big difference in the degree of expression. This difference has much to do with man's natural constitution. The mind, emotion, and will are the original and natural faculties of man. The Holy Spirit is within him, and his regenerated spirit has become the new man, the inner man. Yet he still has an outward man, the old man, the original man outside of him. This outward man belongs to sin. The old man has been dealt with on the cross, but the life of the old creation still remains. Since the inner new man can only be expressed through the outer man, the expressions and manifestations are different in

different persons. The inner life is frustrated by the outer man. Therefore, the outer man must be dealt with. Otherwise, there will always be obstacles that obstruct a man from serving the Lord.

THE OUTER MAN BEING DEALT WITH BY GOD

In order for a saved and regenerated believer to live out the Lord's life, there are two steps that he has to take. The first is believing, which is receiving the new life. The second is consecrating himself, which means committing his outer man to the Lord to allow the new life within to be expressed. This is like a property consisting of a house and a plot of land around the house. We can assume that the house is the inner man and the plot around the house is the outer man. If the house belongs to a person, but the plot of land does not, there will be trouble. Consequently, as soon as a man believes, he should consecrate himself to the Lord. Consecration is committing one's outer man to the Lord so that it will belong to the Lord in the same way that the inner man belongs to the Lord. Many believers today are neither in nor out. When you ask if they are saved, they answer yes. They are saved, but their outer man has never been dealt with. Their inner life is frustrated from being expressed. Hence, we must not just believe in the Lord, stopping at salvation and regeneration. We must also consecrate our outer man to the Lord. If a man is willing to consecrate his mind, emotion, and will to the Lord in an absolute way, he will live out the Lord's life.

The problem today is that many have consecrated themselves, yet their consecration is not absolute. They consecrate according to their own preference. They consecrate only when they want to, and they do not consecrate when they do not want to. Most people live in their mind and emotion, living for the satisfaction of their flesh. Many communicate with the Lord through their mind and emotion. Few communicate with the Lord according to their will. We can find many Christians who love the doctrines in the Bible. When someone expounds Matthew 24 or Revelation well, they love to flock around and listen. It does not take much effort to listen to a message and no price is involved. After they hear a good message, they happily return home, but nothing further happens. There are others who are very strong in their emotion. They are always actively working for the Lord. Of course, they are better than the ones without emotion, but they are so unstable that they are like the waves of the ocean. They may zealously prepare a sermon. After delivering the sermon, they may secretly consider in their heart how successful they were, how the people were touched, and how the

audience was persuaded. They may be so overjoyed that they cannot sleep that night. (Most people cannot go to sleep because of pain; but these cannot go to sleep because of joy.) They gratify themselves with the activities of the flesh. Although they are serving the Lord outwardly, in reality they are gratifying themselves. They have not committed their will fully to the Lord. They must consecrate their will absolutely to the Lord and be dealt with by Him. Before they can render genuine service to the Lord, they must also allow Him to control their mind and emotion so that they will not act according to their active mind or according to the impulse of their emotion.

CONDITIONS FOR KNOWING GOD'S WILL

I do not like to hear people asking how to know God's will. Every one of us should already be clear about this. God's will is revealed only to those who have consecrated their will to Him. He does not force us. He is always waiting for us to become willing. It does not matter much if a person knows God's will; it is more important that a person be willing to choose God's will. We have to say to the Lord, "Not according to my will, but according to Your will." When we lay down our selves, we will know God's will. Once in a sisters' meeting in Hangchow, two sisters asked me if God's will is based upon circumstance, upon the Bible, or upon other principles. When I heard this, my heart sank, and I answered in a harsh way (although my heart was not harsh), saying, "Knowing God's will is not a matter of method. You may have the right methods, and you may act faithfully according to these methods step by step, but you will still not know God's will." As I was speaking, my eyes were fixed on the two sisters. I then asked, "What kind of persons are you? Who are you? A person's knowledge of God's will has to do with that person himself. If a person is not right, no method will work. Can God reveal His will to persons like you? You do not have to ask many questions, and you do not have to ask God for methods. God can reveal His will in many ways; He can reveal it through the wind, the thunder, a child, or a donkey. You only need to ask whether persons like you are qualified to know God's will."

In Genesis 18 when God was about to destroy the city of Sodom, He came to Abraham because He could not hide this matter from him. Abraham was a friend of God (James 2:23). He was not a slave of God, because a slave does not know the mind of the master; only a friend knows the mind of a friend (John 15:15). There was no barrier between Abraham and God. This is why God could not hide what He was about to do. Lot was Abraham's relative; he might have had a great deal of spiritual knowledge, but God did not speak with Lot. He only told

Abraham. It would be a joke if Lot came to me and asked, "How can I know God's will?" Abraham was qualified to know God's will, but Lot was not qualified. It would be useless even if Lot had all the knowledge. Lot was still Lot. Who are you? Are you Abraham or are you Lot? Many people today pay attention to the method of knowing God's will. There is a need of learning the methods, but one must be an Abraham to learn the methods. If a Lot is learning them, the best methods will not work because he is a person living in the world. He has not dealt with the world and his position. Today we must apply God's light to see if there are sins in us, great or small. Have we committed any unrighteousnesses? Do we owe anyone anything? Have we been loose in our conduct or wrong in our words, gestures, and attitudes? Are we still holding on to something? All of these big and small sins affect our ability to know God's will.

THE STARTING POINT IN KNOWING GOD'S WILL— ABSOLUTE CONSECRATION

On the subject of knowing God's will, Paul said that we should not be foolish, but should understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17). There is a starting point in knowing God's will, and there is a continuation in knowing His will. If one does not have a proper start, he cannot know God's will. But even if one has a proper start, he still cannot know God's will if he does not have a proper continuation.

Was there one day in your life when you consecrated yourself absolutely to the Lord? I do not mean consecrating yourself to Him to be a preacher, but consecrating yourself to Him to do His will. You do not have to be concerned for what God's will is; you only have to consecrate yourself honestly to Him to do His will. You must realize that you should have a direct relationship to God's will; this relationship should not be affected by the brothers and sisters. If the Lord wants me to go to the east, I will go to the east. I will not be affected by any person, event, or thing. However, my eyes will not be set on the east, but on God Himself. The danger of God's workers today is the danger of making their work the center. We cannot build up any intimate relationship with the work, people, or any event. We must be directly related to God and set our eyes on Him alone. The seven Spirits in Revelation are sent forth into all the earth, but they do not have anything to do with the earth. The seven Spirits are before the throne of God (1:4; 5:6) and are related to God alone. We must consecrate ourselves fully to God at least once, for the carrying out of His will. This is the starting point in

our knowledge of His will. Without this starting point, we can never understand God's will properly.

THE CONTINUATION IN KNOWING GOD'S WILL— DEALING WITH ALL HINDRANCES

An absolute consecration is the starting point of knowing God's will. But if you want to advance in His will, you must deal with all the hindrances. If you have any stubbornness, jealousy, pride, or petty problems of a similar nature, you will be spiritually sick and unable to know God's will. If you want to stop your ear from hearing anything, there is no need to plug it with a rod or a desk; all you need is a little finger. The same principle applies in knowing God's will—a little hindrance will stop us from knowing His will.

Once I was taking a walk with Miss Barber in a garden. After some time the two of us became tired, and we sat down on some chairs under a tree. She said, "There is a bright star in the sky, but I cannot see it because a leaf has blocked the view. Brother Nee, if someone comes and tells me many ways to see the star, I still could not see it even though the ways he said were good. The reason is that my position is wrong; I am standing on the wrong ground." The words she said that night are still fresh in my mind today. She explained that a little leaf could block the light of a big star. Many times, God's will is frustrated by very small things. When you seek after God's will again and again and are still unclear, you should not change the method, but change the person. If you find that you cannot know God's will, it means that there is some blockage between you and God. It may be that God has spoken to you already, but that you are unwilling to obey Him. You have to remove these hindrances. After you have dealt with these problems thoroughly, you will know God's will. In knowing God's will, we have to pay attention to the person rather than the methods.

THE WAY TO KNOW GOD'S WILL DIFFERING ACCORDING TO THE PERSON

The same method may not be applicable to every person. David volunteered to fight against Goliath, and Saul gave him his armor. Yet it did not fit David. He could not walk, and he took it off (1 Sam. 17:32, 38-39). When I was in Shanghai once, I gave Brother Luk my coat. It was too small for him. He did not feel comfortable in the coat, and it did not fit him. The same coat, however, fit my body very well. We can only wear something that is made according to our size. Based on man's different conditions, God has ordained different ways for man to know Him. With some the way is difficult and with others it is easy. But God has a

way for every man to know His will. For this reason, we do not have to search for a way. All we have to do is consecrate ourselves to the Lord, deal with all the hindrances, and maintain a proper relationship with Him.

GOD'S WORKER MUST KNOW HIS WILL

I have offended many brothers many times. When they ask me how one can know God's will, I always answer by saying that I do not like such questions. What a blessing it would be if we could consecrate our all to the Lord for the knowledge of His will. What are we? Even though the earth, the solar system, and the universe are vast and immense, they can never be compared with the will of God! What a glorious thing that a sinner, a man of dust, can know His will! Once a man knows God's will, he becomes higher than a mere creature. This is the goal of the New Testament. Those who do not know God's will are not even qualified to be called a Christian; they are wasting His provisions. Those who do not know God's will cannot do God's work. If a servant does not know the will of his master, how can he be a servant? It is possible for an unbeliever to be ignorant of God's will, but it is inexcusable for us to be ignorant of His will. A Christian must first be a friend of Christ—one who knows His will, before he can be a slave of Christ—one who serves Him. We have to ask ourselves, "Are we a friend of the Lord? Is there any barrier between us and the Lord, and do we know His will?" Only after we have become His friends can we be His servants to work for Him.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

ON ASSUMING HEADSHIP IN THE FAMILY

Date: October 15, 1936, afternoon

Place: Amoy

SALVATION BEING A MATTER OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The family occupies a special place in the Bible. God's selection has to do with a nation, and eternal life has to do with individuals, but salvation has to do with the household.

ADAM HAVING LOST HIS HEADSHIP IN THE FAMILY

The first household mentioned in the Bible is Noah's household. Although Adam had children, the Bible does not mention his household, because after Adam sinned in Genesis 3, he lost his position in his family. God had appointed Adam to be the head of his family, yet he lost his headship, and the first family was damaged. The brothers are the head of their households. It is not enough to be a

husband and father; he has to be the head. In Genesis 3 Adam lost his place as a husband and a head. If there was a family there at all, it was Eve and her family, because Eve became the head there. Of course, this was not according to God's arrangement.

NOAH'S HOUSEHOLD

Then God mentioned Noah's household. Those in his household were not particularly better than Adam. This family consisted of one pair on top and three pairs below. The Bible does not say much about Noah's wife and the three daughters-in-law. Of his three sons, however, one was good, one was partly good, and the third was bad. The question is not whether Noah's sons were good. The question is where Noah stood. With respect to the flood, God only dealt with Noah; He did not mention his wife, sons, or daughters-in-law. Noah represented his whole family. God said that Noah was just and perfect (Gen. 6:9) because he was able to assume the headship. When he was saved, his whole household was saved. The giving of eternal life is to individuals, but the unit of salvation is the household. If a family does not have a head, God deals with individuals. But when a family has a head, God deals with the head. If you are standing in the position of a head, God only needs to deal with you.

It is an interesting thing that God divides the world into families. Today man has damaged God's arrangement—the family has been damaged. What is the situation today? Families are filled with rebellion—sons rebel against the father's authority, the wife rebels against the husband's authority, and servants rebel against the master's authority. The family is broken and the oneness is gone. Once the head does not stand firm as the head, the institution of the family is destroyed. In order for a family to please the Lord, the head must stand firm in his position as the head. If a family does not have a head, God can only deal with each individual in the family. Noah's household was the first family that God dealt with as a whole.

God dealt with Noah's household in a different way than other households because Noah was able to assume the headship. What his wife and daughters-in-law did was an entirely different issue. Noah was able to assume the headship; he did not break down the institution of the family. I dare not say that the other seven had not sinned, but I can say that his family was not damaged. Everyone was under the authority of the head. This is why the whole household was saved even though God only called Noah. If we do not understand this, we cannot understand the meaning of Acts 16:31, which says, "Believe on the Lord

Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." When we read this verse, individual faith and individual salvation come to our mind. Very often we change the unit and the numbers when our theology clashes with the Word of God. We consider something to be a heresy when it is actually God's Word. However, God's Word is very clear here. God grants salvation household by household. Of course, there must be a proper head to receive this salvation. Without a proper head, there cannot be household salvation. When a proper head is absent, the institution of the family is destroyed. If the wife, children, and daughters-in-law submit to the authority of the head of the house, the house will be saved.

THE UNIT OF SALVATION BEING THE HOUSEHOLD

What does Acts 16:31 mean? Suppose you are the head of your house and you have believed in the Lord. You may say that the head has believed in the Lord. But in reality, more than just yourself have believed in the Lord; you have believed in the Lord on behalf of your whole household. When you believe in the Lord, you have two standings. The first is your personal stand before the Lord; as a sinner you have believed in the Lord. The second is your stand as a representative of the entire household; you have believed in the Lord on behalf of your whole family. You can declare that your household is a household of believers and that God is the God of your house. You are serving the Lord on behalf of your whole family. Do you remember Joshua's word? He said that he and his household (not just himself) would serve Jehovah (Josh. 24:15b). We are short of these kinds of heads today.

Some may ask, "Does this mean that when the head of a household has believed in the Lord, that household is saved?" Yes, it does. Although everyone in the household has not received eternal life, they have all been saved positionally. The world sees this household as a saved household. Some time thereafter, every member of the household will also receive eternal life in experience, one by one. This is what it means to put the whole family in the position of salvation. The question is whether or not a family has a proper head who is assuming the proper headship. Whether or not the children are going along is a secondary concern. As long as the children are living in the house, and as long as you are the head of the house, you have made the choice for them already when you believe in the Lord. This is because the house is yours and not theirs. You are responsible for the house; they are not responsible for it. When you take such a

stand, others will follow; they will follow you to serve the Lord. This is a wonderful thing, and we can find many examples of it. When the head becomes a proper head, the whole household receives grace and is saved.

THE PASSOVER LAMB BEING ONE PER HOUSEHOLD

When the Israelites prepared the Passover lamb in the Old Testament, they prepared one for each household, not one for each member of the household. The Passover lamb was for the household, not for individuals. An individual did not kill a lamb; the household killed it. The blood was struck on the doorpost and side posts of the house, and the whole household was protected. The angel of destruction passed over the whole household and spared the whole house. This shows that the unit of God's salvation is the household. This is God's Word. When the head of the household chose the lamb, the whole household had no choice but to choose the lamb as well. Here we see that the Old Testament concept is centered around the household.

GOD'S JUDGMENT EXECUTED ON HOUSEHOLDS

Ahab's household in the Old Testament is another example. First Kings 21:22 says, "And [I] will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin." God dealt with the house of Ahab because Ahab offended God. The house of Jeroboam provides another example. First Kings 13:34 says, "And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth." Jeroboam set up the idols. God judged his whole household and cut it off from the face of the earth. Concerning the house of David, 2 Samuel 12:10-11 says, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." From these few instances we see that the household is not only the unit of God's salvation, but also the unit of God's judgment. God's judgment does not come to individuals, but to a house. The standing of the head is considered to be the standing of the whole household. Hence, we see the concept of the household clearly established in the Bible. God deals with man by households. The recipient of both salvation and judgment is the household.

**THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE
BEARING THE RESPONSIBILITY
OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Some may ask, "Does this mean that after the head of a household has believed in the Lord, his whole household will be saved regardless of what each member does?" No. The head has to bear the responsibility of every member of his household. Many have often remarked that there is no middle ground between salvation and perdition. But actually there is some middle ground. The Gentiles are in an absolute position—the position of perdition, and Christians are also in an absolute position—the position of salvation. In a Christian family, even though strictly speaking one cannot say that there is some middle ground, there do exist some neutral positions. This is because the children of Christian parents do have a closer standing than the Gentiles as far as receiving eternal life is concerned. I am not necessarily alluding to the family of pastors or those in the denominations, and I am not referring to those who are not assuming a genuine headship. I am referring to the children of those who are assuming genuine headship in the family. These children are standing on the ground of grace, and they are more apt to receive eternal life.

Paul said that the children can be sanctified because of the faith of the parents (1 Cor. 7:14). Why are we saved today? We are saved because Christ has become our head. When we submit under Him, we are saved. In the same principle we must be the head to our children. The real issue is whether or not we are the head of our household. If we are the head, God will hold us responsible for our family. God has not demanded that we bear the responsibility of our brothers, but He demands that we bear the responsibility of our children. When we stand before the judgment seat, those without a family will only be judged for their own lives. Similarly, the sisters will only be judged for their own lives. But those who have a family and children will not be judged merely for their own lives, but for their household as well. Whether or not we have actually assumed the headship, God still considers us as the head of our family. This is the difference between the male and female in the family. The male bears the responsibility of his wife as well as the whole family.

I know one brother in the Lord who is a real head in his family. Before his family believed in the Lord, he took the initiative to believe in the Lord. Without discussing the matter with his wife and children, he burned and removed every idolatrous thing in his house and then gathered his whole house together,

announcing, "Our whole family is going to believe in the Lord. Even if some of you do not want to believe, you are counted as having believed." What each individual in the family does is another issue. But the head of the family has the right to announce that his whole family is a believing family. The blood of the lamb was struck on the doorpost of the house, not on the doorpost of the rooms. Salvation comes to man with the household as the basic unit. In my observation, the brothers who are the proper head in their family always find their whole family saved. The only difference is in the timing; some in the family believe earlier while others believe later. But none in the family remains an unbeliever forever. It is always a household salvation; the whole family is saved eventually. All the brothers who are the head in their family should stand firm in this matter. First bring the whole family into a saved standing, and then every member will be saved one after another.

At Princeton University there was a highly educated college professor who was also a good brother. He believed fully in the teaching of household salvation, and he declared to his sons that his whole family was to be a believing family. When the children were small, he gathered them together every day for family worship. Later, when the sons grew up, they left home and gave up their faith, turning to evil works. The colleagues of the professor mocked him, saying, "Your conviction is wrong." But he told his colleagues, "My sons have not become old yet. I believe that my whole family will eventually be saved." Later the father died, and the sons still were not saved. But twenty years later, the sons gradually were saved one after another. We have to believe in the Lord. If we have faith in this matter, our whole family will be saved even if it means waiting for a few years or a few decades.

NOT ALLOWING THE WIFE TO BE THE HEAD

The reason I am speaking on this subject this afternoon is to show the brothers that they are the head of their household, and that God wants them to bear the responsibility of their house. We must not only be a good Christian, but must also be a good head. Those who do not have a family should first have the qualifications for being the head. Otherwise, they are not qualified to be a husband. Every father and husband must know how to deal with his own family. Once the male becomes loose in a family, the female will assume the headship. Our nation has a president and a vice-president. If the president does not do a proper job, the vice-president will have to take his place. Hence, husbands and

fathers must learn to assume the headship in the family. They cannot be too lazy or allow their wives to seize any opportunity to become the head.

Every male must learn to be a strong head. They should not be cruel, heartless, or severe. But if God has charged them to be the head, they should be proper heads. It is good for husbands to love their wives. But if they love them so much that they allow them to become the head, they have gone beyond God's boundary. A question that may arise is what a husband should do when the wife does not abide in her place. The real issue is that the husband must assume the headship. If he does not assume the headship, the woman will naturally become the head. A woman becomes the head because the man has given her the ground. Is the ground in your family vacant or occupied? As long as you leave a little crack, the woman will try to assume the headship. No one is more desirous of assuming the headship than the woman. The first woman Eve tried to assume headship, and every woman born of Eve is the same as her. Mankind fell to its present condition as a result of Eve assuming the headship. Hence, a man has to stand firm on his ground and not allow the woman to assume an improper standing.

DEALING WITH THE WIFE'S ASSUMING OF THE HEADSHIP

Confessing the Sin of Neglecting to Be the Head

What should a man do if he has given up the headship to a woman? First, before the Lord, he must know the reason that he has allowed her to become the head. He has to confess his sin of neglecting to be the head. It is a sin to instigate rebellion in a nation. It is a sin to be disobedient in the church, and it is a sin to relinquish the place of headship in the family. One must thoroughly deal with the Lord concerning such a sin and confess his sin.

Finding the Reason That the Wife Assumed the Headship

Second, a person has to find the area in which the woman has usurped his position. There can be many reasons for losing his headship. It can be caused by his decline in spiritual life, or his neglect of responsibility. I know of a family whose husband cannot be the head because he only knows to eat; he does not do anything. His wife supports him. As a result his wife spontaneously becomes the head. Another reason that a wife usurps the headship is because the husband cannot be trusted in his opinions. We do not allow some brothers to express their opinions in the church. But such ones think that while their opinions

are not accepted in the church, they probably can be accepted in their own family. Many people find that their opinions are unapproved and unacceptable outside their home, yet they try to impose them at home. Their wives cannot go along with their foolish opinions and naturally come up with their own ideas and assume the headship. A third reason that a wife assumes the headship is that the husband has sins which he has not confessed. Others may not know it, but the wife knows it and consequently despises the husband. If one does not have a clear confession, he cannot be the head in a clear way. There are specific reasons that a person cannot assume headship. It may be a difficult thing for a person to find the reason, but there is no alternative other than finding it and dealing with it thoroughly before the Lord. Only then will such a person be able to assume headship once again.

Being Firm in Attitude, Acting in Wisdom, and Earning Respect from the Wife

Third, a person must pray much and ask God to give him strength. Paul told the Corinthians that women should not speak in the meetings, and that they should ask their husbands at home if they wanted to learn anything (1 Cor. 14:34-35). The husband refers to those who can assume headship. If your wife asks you something at home, are you able to answer her? Today many sisters are better than their husbands. If Paul were to write again today, I am afraid that he may have to tell the husbands to go home to ask their wives! If you are not proper before the Lord, you will not be able to act as a head in a proper way. One cannot force his way to be a head; one is a head spontaneously. You have to reclaim your lost position. You cannot say that you are not smart and therefore cannot be the head. You may not be as smart as your wife, but do you believe in James's promise? James said, "But if any one of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and does not reproach, and it will be given to him" (1:5). I fully believe that you will receive, but you have to ask of God. It is useless to put on an air of authority at home. You have to be firm in your attitude, meek in spirit, and act in wisdom so that you can earn your wife's respect.

It hurts me to see many brothers losing their headship without knowing why they lost it. If you seek the Lord, you will find one interesting thing—there is a reason for every case of a loss of headship. After you have confessed your sins thoroughly and found the reasons for your failure, you should pray to recover your headship. Then you should call a family conference (of course, you have to

pray about it properly ahead of time) and confess to your wife saying, "During the past years, I have let you take over the headship. Please forgive my sin. From this point forward, I will no longer allow you to be the head." Then read what the Bible says about the matter of headship to her. Some women may not be able to take this; they may start arguing with their husbands. They may cry, refuse to eat, or smash objects around the house. They may lose their temper, but you cannot lose your temper. You cannot assume the headship with your temper. A head must be firm in attitude and meek in spirit. Your wife may cry or shout, but you should continue to smile at her. You have to deal with her with gentleness, but you have to apply the Lord's strength. You must not let this matter go. If she becomes agitated, you have to remain patient. No matter what she does, you cannot fight with her. Yet you must be firm in your attitude. As long as something should be done a certain way, insist that it be done in that way and never waver. Firmness is an expression of strength.

Firmly Asserting One's Headship

Unbelievers dominate their wives with their temper, arguments, or even threats. You do not need to do this, nor should you do this. Your wife may fight in many ways, but you have to exercise your strength to stand firm on your ground. She can scold you, but you have to continue to smile. At the same time, you cannot let your headship slip away through a moment of carelessness. You must never act according to your emotion. If your headship slips away through a moment of frivolity, it will be hard for you to regain it later. Every husband has to learn this lesson.

Remember that you will not only be judged for your personal life, work, and sins at the judgment seat; you will also be judged for your wife and family. Therefore, you should never be loose and always bear in mind the judgment on that day. It is easy to allow the woman to be the head, and you may even suffer less vexation this way. But you will lose many blessings from the Lord. We have to carefully deal with the matter of the wife assuming the headship.

DEALING WITH CHILDREN

Choosing God for the Children, and Not Provoking Them to Anger

In a family, in addition to the wife, there is another group of people who are hard to deal with—the children. How should we deal with our children? First we have to choose God for them. Freedom of religion can be practiced only after they

have moved away from home. As long as they are at home, we have to choose their faith for them. We have to be firm in our attitude on the one hand and gentle on the other hand. The mistake that fathers often make toward their children is provoking them to anger. Ephesians 6:4 says that the fathers should not provoke their children to anger. As the head we have the authority, but we must not provoke our children to anger. Except for Colossians 3, this is the only place in the Bible that teaches how to be a father. It is easy to be a father foolishly, but exercising authority and firmly dealing with children is not that easy; the children can easily rebel. This is why we must learn.

Being a Pattern, Nurturing Up the Children

Ephesians 6:4 also mentions nurturing. This means bringing up someone. Suppose I asked Brother Wu to bring a letter to someone. This is different from sending a letter to someone. Bringing a letter is having a person go with a letter, whereas sending a letter is having the letter go without the person. Suppose you bring your son to Amoy. You are going together with your son. This is different from sending your son to Amoy. The Bible says that we should "bring up" our children with the Lord's Word. This means that the fathers have to take the lead in the teachings and the Word of God. Many fathers do not bring up their children; they hope that their children will not do certain things, yet they do the same things themselves. This is sending up; this is not bringing up. Asking your children to follow your teachings while not practicing them yourself will not work. You have to bring them up until they are grown up. You have to be their pattern. Whatever you want them to be, you must first be yourself. This is the way to deal with children.

THE WAY TO DEAL WITH SLAVES

Ephesians 6:5 goes on to deal with the question of the slaves. It says, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to Christ." Whether or not a person is a believer, he is either a servant or a master. If you have an unbeliever as your master, you must obey him. If you have a brother as your master, you have a double responsibility towards him. On the one hand, you have to serve your Lord. On the other hand, you have to serve your brother who is your master.

Many families find it difficult to hire brothers and sisters as servants. I would think that saints would do a better job than outsiders, but many brothers today would not hire believers to work for them. This is a shame. Those who are servants should serve their masters well. If I had to travel and needed a tent, I would

surely have bought it from Paul in Corinth. I would surely want his signature to be on the tent that I bought. If Paul could not make better tents than others, I would not read his epistles. His needlework had to be good and his craftsmanship excellent. This is the way the servants have to be; they must do a better job than those in the world could do. At the same time, masters must know how to be masters. They must be loving, gentle, and humble towards their servants, and they must honor them. They must be firm in their attitude. If the servants do something wrong, they must ask them to do it over again. If they let them get by one time, the servants will not do a good job the next time. Whether you are a master or a servant, you have to be one "from the soul," knowing that each one will receive back what he has done, whether he is a slave or a free man, and also knowing that both their Master and yours is in the heavens; there is no respect of persons with Him (vv. 8-9).

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

FOOT-WASHING

(2)

Date: October 15, 1936, evening

Place: Amoy

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-17

FOOT-WASHING BEING A NECESSITY

In the Bible, foot-washing does not just refer to humility or to the washing away of our ordinary sins. It mainly refers to maintaining a fresh relationship between us and the Lord. There should be no barrier between us and the Lord. We cannot always practice the prayer of Matthew 6, shutting ourselves in our private room and praying with our doors shut. We need to go out and contact the things and people of this world. Therefore, it is inevitable that we will defile our feet. Our feet are defiled through our contact with the world, and this defilement becomes a barrier between us and God. This is why foot-washing is necessary. Foot-washing has nothing to do with our conscience. The conscience is related to sin, and when there is sin, there is the need of the washing of the blood. Foot-washing has to do with our spiritual vitality; it is for rekindling our spiritual vitality. Believers do not sin all the time. Yet every believer has times when he or she is spiritually enervated. This is why we all need foot-washing for the recovery of our spiritual energy.

TAKING OFF THE SHOES SIGNIFYING ONE'S CONTACT WITH GOD'S HOLINESS

In order to wash our feet, we must take off our shoes. In the Bible removing the shoes signifies one's contact with God's holiness. On Mount Horeb, Moses wanted to see the vision of the burning bush, but God said to him, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exo. 3:5). Why did God ask Moses to take off his shoes? It was because he could not touch God's holiness directly unless he took off his shoes. Hence, removing the shoes signifies one's contact with God's holiness.

There are two things that separate us from God. The first is sin, which is taken care of by the Lord's blood in washing us of our sins. The second are the things of this world, which are taken care of by the foot-washing. Today many people do not know how precious it is to have the Lord's presence all the time. These people must have the blood-washing in their conscience before they are qualified to speak about the foot-washing. My word tonight is for those whose conscience have been washed. Many times our conscience has been cleared, yet we still feel a separation between us and God. At such times there is the need of foot-washing. Foot-washing sustains an intimate fellowship between us and the Lord. The Lord loves us, and He loves us to the uttermost. He gave Himself and shed His precious blood to redeem us from sin. But this is not all. His great love also constrains Him to wash our feet so that there will be no barrier between us and Him, and we can continually draw nigh to such a holy God and enjoy His fellowship.

THE DEFILEMENT OF THE FEET SIGNIFYING SEPARATION FROM GOD AS A RESULT OF CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

I have observed that many brothers have similar experiences. In the morning they draw near to God and enjoy a sweet fellowship with Him. Heaven is so near to them that they can almost touch it. However, they lose this inner taste by the time they go to work, especially in the afternoon. Even though they are able to repeat the same intimate words of fellowship which they uttered in the morning to the Lord, the taste is gone. Those who have been through this experience know the pain that it brings. Those who have never been through this experience do not know what we are talking about. If one sins, there are ways to deal with it. But if one falls into this condition, it is very difficult to deal with it. The defilement of the feet is not a sin. The Lord never said that our feet cannot be defiled. He

only said that those who have bathed have no need except to wash their feet, but are wholly clean (John 13:10). For a Christian to sin is abnormal, but for him to have feet that are defiled is normal. No one can avoid having his feet defiled. The barrier that comes from defiled feet is not a matter of sin, but the result of our normal contact with this world. In order to remove such a barrier, there is the need of foot-washing.

**"WHAT I AM DOING YOU DO NOT KNOW NOW,
BUT YOU WILL KNOW AFTER THESE THINGS"**

The Lord was determined to wash the disciples' feet because He wanted the disciples to be in His presence all the time. Peter was not without shortcomings, but he also had his good side. He would not do what he did not know. He asked questions whenever he did not understand. When it was Peter's turn, he refused to be washed and asked the Lord, "Do You wash my feet?" The Lord answered, "What I am doing you do not know now, but you will know after these things" (vv. 6-7). This is a helpful word for us. Today there are many things which we do not understand, but we still have to do them. Later, we may understand. We should not just do things that we understand and ignore the things that we do not understand. We must be humble, pliable, and willing to accept the Lord's work on us. It is a blessing to allow the Lord to work on us without understanding what it means. Peter said that the Lord should by no means wash his feet. Whether or not he understood what the Lord was doing, he thought in his heart that he could never allow the Lord to wash his feet. John purposely recorded the incident of foot-washing to show its spiritual significance. We can learn many precious lessons from this. Many times, we are like Peter. We do not allow the Lord to do anything that we do not understand. If we are willing to obey and to allow the Lord to work on us even when we do not fully understand, we will eventually understand what He is doing. We should be humble and pliable. We should not argue like Peter, saying, "You shall by no means wash my feet."

"UNLESS I WASH YOU, YOU HAVE NO PART WITH ME"

After Peter said this, the Lord said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me" (v. 8). The Lord said "Unless I wash you"; He did not say, "Unless I wash your feet." Everyone who has a part with the Lord has been washed in His blood. Of course, the washing in this verse also includes the washing of the feet, because it was the Lord's answer to Peter's question. This word of the Lord means two things: on the one hand, it means that those who have not been

washed by His blood have no part with Him. On the other hand, it means that those whose feet have not been washed by Him cannot maintain a fellowship with Him. When a light bulb does not shine, it can either mean that something is wrong with the bulb or something is wrong with the light switch. One must first examine the bulb to see if it has burned out. If there is nothing wrong with the bulb, he must examine the switch. He may find that grease and dirt have gathered around the metal connectors and have prevented electricity from passing through which, in turn, causes the bulb to not shine. This is a picture of our relationship with the Lord. We think that if we are separated from the Lord, it means that we have committed some gross sins. Actually, a little separation is enough to separate us from God. Do we have a part in the Lord today? I am not asking if we are saved; I am asking if we have maintained our fellowship with the Lord. We might have said to the Lord in the past that Christ is ours. But can we say the same thing today? For example, last year we had a glorious time praying, praising, and thanking the Lord at the Lord's table in Chuenchow. But last week at the Lord's table meeting, was our prayer, praise, and thanksgiving as glorious as before? I believe many people would say that the taste was gone. If we cannot maintain a constant, fresh fellowship with the Lord, it proves that we need the foot-washing. Foot-washing is not for outward appearance, morality, or godliness; it is for maintaining the sweetness and freshness of our fellowship with God.

**"HE WHO IS BATHED HAS NO NEED
EXCEPT TO WASH HIS FEET, BUT IS WHOLLY CLEAN"**

When Peter heard the Lord's declaration that he would have no part with Him unless he was washed, he changed his tone, saying, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (v. 9). Peter's refusal and his consent were both marks of a novice. He agreed to be washed, but he wanted not only his feet to be washed, but also his head and hands. However, the Lord had washed his head and hands already. There is no need to wash the head and hands again; once is enough. The feet, however, are different. They touch the earth every day. They are in contact with the earth and are defiled by the world every day. The Lord could not grant Peter's request. Hallelujah! Crucifixion is once for all. The shedding of the blood is once for all. Many people want to be saved once more. Like those in Hebrews 6, they want to renew their repentance, but this is crucifying the Son of God afresh.

Many times I have considered the matter of salvation. A few months ago, a preacher came and spoke with me. He asked, "Is salvation once for all or does it come to us many times?" I asked, "Have you received the grace of God?" He said, "Yes." I then asked, "Is the grace of God free or does it come with a price?" He answered, "It is free." Then I asked him to remember two things. First, something that is free does not require a price. It does not require a price now and does not require a price later. Once a price is involved, it becomes a loan. Today grace is free, but if grace asks for a price tomorrow, it is a loan and no longer free. Second, grace is given as a gift. The Jews think that they must have good works before they can be saved. This is like a cash transaction. But for Christians, we first receive grace and then have good works. Our salvation and forgiveness are free grace; they have nothing to do with our works. Once we are saved, we are saved forever. Once the Lord washes away our sins, we are washed forever. If we want the Lord to wash our sins a second time like Peter, He will not do it.

There is only one baptism. In typology this means that there is only one washing of our sins. But foot-washing goes on continuously. Our feet walk in the wilderness of this world daily, and it is inevitable for our feet to be defiled. Foot-washing allows us to have a sustained joy of salvation. Do we want to be as joyful as the day that we were saved? Many people think that this is impossible. However, the Lord wants us to have such a joy. This is why He washed the disciples' feet. Foot-washing returns to us the joy of the bath. The joy of the bath can be lost through the defilement of the feet. Only foot-washing can recover for us this joy of the bath.

"YOU ALSO OUGHT TO WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET"

In verse 14 the Lord said, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." The Lord washed the disciples' feet. Today He wants us to do the same thing. The washing of sins by the blood is God's work, whereas the washing of feet by the water is man's work. God has not charged us to wash the whole body; He only charges us to wash the feet. We cannot give others a bath, because we cannot redeem them from their sins; we cannot save anyone or cause anyone to perish. The work of salvation is God's work alone. Our only responsibility is to preach the gospel. At the same time, the Lord wants to wash man's feet today. This washing is an indirect washing. He washes us through the brothers and sisters. With what does He apply the

washing? We have mentioned previously that the Lord washed by pouring water into the basin. What does water signify? When the Lord died, blood and water flowed out of His side. The blood signifies the redemptive aspect of His death, whereas the water signifies the non-redemptive aspect of His death. The blood washes away our sins, whereas the water becomes the source of our new life. In the Bible water sometimes denotes death and sometimes denotes life in the Holy Spirit. This life is the new life that we received at the time of our salvation. This life comes out of death. The water in the basin signifies that the life is in the Holy Spirit. When we sin, we need to go to the Lord for our washing. But when our feet are defiled, we need to go to the brothers for our washing. The Lord said, "You also ought to wash one another's feet." This shows that the foot-washing is carried out by the brothers and sisters, that is, by the church. No one can say that he does not need his feet washed. "One another" includes all the believers in Christ. Not only you and I need the washing, Paul and John needed the washing also. Every believer, as long as he lives on this earth, will find his feet defiled. It is different in the case of sin. Many believers can completely overcome sin. But no one in this world can avoid having his feet defiled.

HOW TO WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET

How can we wash one another's feet? Suppose you have completed your day's work and feel tired. You cannot utter any praises from your mouth. In the evening when you come to the meeting, someone asks you to pray. Halfway through your prayer, you cannot go on, and you stop. You feel as if your prayer is nothing more than a composition. However, perhaps one brother in the meeting has a fresh spirit, and his prayer refreshes your spirit. Your spiritual energy is renewed. This is washing one another's feet. Many times when we come to the meeting, we find the saints' spirit weak and downtrodden. We pray and read the Word, but nothing seems to work. The reason for this is that everyone's feet are defiled, and there is no basin to wash the feet. It is as if something is quenching our spirits. If someone would stand up at this point and wash everyone's feet by offering a prayer or saying a few words, the whole meeting will be refreshed. Without the basin and without the foot-washing, everyone's spirit is bound. The same is true in our family life. A brother or sister may unexpectedly drop by your home and fellowship a short while or give a testimony, and everyone in the family is brought into the presence of God. Before that time there was a separation between them and God, but after such a simple conversation, all the separation

is gone. This is washing one another's feet. Those who do this are precious in the Lord's eyes.

We should have an ambition before the Lord to wash others' feet. In order to wash others' feet, we must have the water, that is, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit and be in constant fellowship with the Lord. For this cause we must live in the Holy Spirit daily. Only then will we have the living water to wash others' feet. Every time we come to the meeting, we must have the living water to wash others' feet. We should never try to wash others' feet without water; that will only defile their feet even more. Those who cannot wash others' feet may still fellowship and communicate with God, but their spirits are definitely cold. Today the Lord does not wash anyone's feet directly. Instead, He charges us to wash one another's feet. We must all learn to be those who can wash one another's feet.

**"IF YOU KNOW THESE THINGS,
BLESSED ARE YOU IF YOU DO THEM"**

In verse 15 the Lord said, "For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you." The words "even as" mean to do exactly the same thing. Whatever the Lord did, we should do in exactly the same way. If we do this we will be blessed. Foot-washing is not only a thing in the spirit, but also an actual, outward practice. When the Lord washed the disciples' feet, He used a basin. We also must have our basin. If the Lord washed in a literal way, we should also wash in a literal way. The Lord was not merely performing a sign. He was actually washing with water. Since He washed literally, we should do the same; otherwise, we cannot express the spiritual reality behind it. When we are baptized, not only do we remember the spiritual significance, we also go into the water literally. The outward practice helps us to remember the inward, spiritual significance. Hence, on the one hand, we need to remember the inward, spiritual significance, and on the other hand, we need the outward practice. Foot-washing is a practice carried out in the family, not in the church. For example, 1 Timothy 5:10 mentions the widow receiving hospitality and washing the saints' feet. This, of course, was conducted in the home. We have to follow the Lord's example. We have to wash the feet of the saints physically with water and a basin on the one hand, and wash their feet spiritually for their renewal on the other hand.

There is one further point. We should note the time the Lord washed the disciples' feet. He washed their feet before the Feast of the Passover. We know that the Passover signifies our bread-breaking meeting. Why are we not fresh in

our table meeting? It is because we have not washed our feet before coming to the Passover feast. If some can bring freshness to a bread-breaking meeting, they are remembering the Lord in a real way. What is the result of such foot-washing? "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." The Lord blesses the foot-washing. This is something that is acceptable to the Lord and well pleasing to Him. If we do this, we will be blessed. May we all do what the Lord has done.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN
KNOWING CHRIST AND
THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

Date: October 16, 1936, afternoon

Place: Amoy

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8; Phil. 3:10

KNOWING THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
FOR THE PURPOSE OF TESTIFYING FOR HIM

The extent of the testimony we bear depends on the extent of our knowledge of Christ. No one can testify for the Lord without knowing Him. The extent of our knowledge of Christ determines the magnitude of the testimony we bear. Knowing Christ is knowing the power of His resurrection. When we know the power of His resurrection, we know Him. The knowledge of the power of His resurrection constitutes a major portion of our knowledge of Him. The power of the Holy Spirit is based upon resurrection. Without resurrection there cannot be the power of the Holy Spirit. We must know the power of Christ's resurrection before we can know Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit is for testifying for Christ, and the essence of our testimony is our knowledge of Him. The basis of our knowledge of Christ is the knowledge of the power of His resurrection. The essence of the power of the Holy Spirit is also the knowledge of the power of His resurrection. Only those who have received the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of resurrection can testify for the Lord. Those who do not know the power of resurrection are not qualified to bear His testimony.

This morning I want to ask an important question: Who among us is qualified to be a worker of Christ? Who is qualified to bear His testimony? The question is whether or not we know Christ and whether or not we know the power of His resurrection. It is easy to have the power of the Spirit, but having the power of the Spirit is not the goal. As long as we know the power of Christ's resurrection, the

filling of the power of the Spirit will come spontaneously. The filling of the power of the Spirit is the result of knowing the power of Christ's resurrection. One should not consider the filling of the power of the Spirit to be the goal. Although it is good to be filled with the power of the Spirit, this is not our goal. When we know Christ, we will have a testimony and spontaneously have the power to testify. Once we know Christ and the power of His resurrection, our testimony for Him will become spontaneous.

**THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
BEING BASED ON THE KNOWLEDGE
OF THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION**

A testimony is not a doctrine; we cannot come up with a testimony from our mind. A testimony is also not a theology; it is not a biblical exposition of the gospel. We can only testify of the Christ whom we know. We cannot testify of Christ beyond what we know of Him. The measure of the Christ we know is the amount of the declaration we make before men and before God. It is impossible to have the power of witnessing in Acts 1:8 without the knowledge of Philippians 3:10. This can never happen. One must have the experience of Philippians 3:10 before he can have the power of Acts 1:8. Once we know Christ and the power of His resurrection, we will spontaneously testify for Christ and spontaneously have the power of the Holy Spirit. This may happen within a second. There is no need for us to exert any effort. In the twinkling of an eye, we will receive all these things. All these things are based on our knowledge of the power of resurrection.

**THE QUALIFICATION OF THE LORD'S WORKER—
THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST**

In southern Fukien, a few young brothers wanted to give up their jobs to work for the Lord. I asked them what they would say to others when they went out, what kind of Christ they would present to others, and what and how much Christ had done for them. I asked them to tell me how much knowledge they had of Christ and what kind of knowledge it was. We may only know a few things about Christ. We may only know that Christ is the Savior. If this is all we know, we could say nothing more than this. If this is what we are, we are not qualified to work for the Lord. We should never think that we can teach others just because we have a smart mind. Men lack life; they do not lack knowledge. Men lack the Holy Spirit; they do not lack words of wisdom and persuasion. Men lack life and the Spirit.

Only those who genuinely know Christ can enliven others, and only they can impart spirit and life to others.

Today we may wonder who is qualified to be the Lord's worker, and what are the conditions for being one. Very often men think that as long as a person can speak well, can expound the Bible well, and has a clear mind, he can be a worker of the Lord. We think that these are the ones who can save others and be God's workers. However, a real worker of the Lord does not rest his qualifications on eloquence or knowledge of Bible exposition but on his history and experience before the Lord and his knowledge of the Lord. We should not assume that as long as a man can preach and lead others to repentance he is qualified to work for the Lord. The question is how much Christ we know. After we share what we have, how much do we have left? We claim that we know Christ, but when the Christ we know is preached, how much of Him do we still have within us? I am afraid that when many speak about what they know of Christ, nothing more is left within them. They have no Christ other than what they have released from the pulpit. This is a shallow life; this is not the testimony of one who knows Christ. No doubt we know that Christ is the Savior. But other than that, what else do we know? If we have been working for the Lord for a long time and can only say one or two things about Him, we are not of much use. The knowledge of Christ as Savior is the minimum requirement of every Christian; it is not a special experience. We must advance farther and acquire experience that others have not acquired before we can lead others on. If we do not have a deep knowledge of the Lord, what use will all the Bible expositions serve?

One brother came to Shanghai and wanted to work for the Lord, but I sent him home. He said to me once, "You have asked Brothers So-and-so (he mentioned three names) to preach. Please give me an opportunity to preach. If the three of them can do it, why can't I do it? You can listen to me. I can speak just as well as they did." I said, "You are smarter than the three of them, and you preach well. You are familiar with the Bible, and others like to listen to you. But you lack one thing which they have—they know a Christ whom you do not know. They have much experience, but you only have your experience of salvation." Please remember that eloquence, the ability to preach, scriptural knowledge, and skill in Bible exposition alone is not enough to make a person a worker of the Lord. A worker of the Lord must have his foundation based on the knowledge of Christ. You may be able to speak much, but such speaking is not a testimony for Christ.

A testimony for Christ is that which speaks to others the Christ whom you have known and experienced.

I know of a pastor in this area who preaches to others but has not experienced regeneration. He can speak to others about the doctrine of regeneration. He studied in a seminary and received much education in Bible teachings. He can tell others how a sinner can be saved, but he only wants theology; he does not want Christ. Many churches invite him to preach, and he can deliver many good sermons. But let me ask: If he were speaking on the podium now and you were listening to him, what would you feel? You may wish that he would be saved first. His message may be good, but he cannot say that Christ is his Savior. Such a person is useless in the hands of God.

I cannot say that we are free from such danger among us. It is vain to merely preach the teaching of the cross. We have to realize that knowing the cross of Christ is knowing Christ. What man needs is not the doctrine of salvation, but salvation. What he needs is not the teaching of overcoming, but the overcoming life. What he needs is not the teaching about meekness, but meekness. What he needs is not the teaching of Christ's resurrection and ascension, but the power of His resurrection and ascension. A man can preach about the filling of the Holy Spirit, self-discipline, and self-denial, but what is the real purpose of these teachings? Some people can only preach a doctrine, while others have the experience of what they are preaching. One is a theologian in a Christian institution, while the other is a witness of Christ. If you can only deliver sermons, but cannot testify of Christ, you will not be of much use.

Suppose a brother or sister from the countryside comes into our midst today. He may not have much knowledge and may not be that clear in his logic; he may only know how to trust in the Lord and experience Him as his victory. In talking to him, we may have to help him in the doctrine or prophetic interpretation of the verses he quotes. We may tell him about the doctrine of dispensationalism, the meaning of different words according to the original language, or the meaning of grace, the law, and the kingdom. But apart from all this knowledge, what experience do we have? What testimonies can we give? Can we give such a good brother further instructions? We may tell him that when he prays he has to pray in the name of the Lord. We may tell him that he needs faith, or that he needs to confess his sins, but God may already have been answering his prayers five or ten times a day. We may know the teaching concerning prayer, but he may have more experience of prayer in a day than we have in a year. We think

that we are qualified to be a worker and that he is not. We think that we can do this and that and he cannot, because we are qualified in so many things. However, his spiritual insight before the Lord may be much deeper than ours. We know the teachings about Christ, but he knows the living Christ.

The basis of our testimony for Christ is our knowledge of Christ Himself. Without a knowledge of Christ, we cannot be a witness of Christ. This does not mean that biblical teachings, ideas, and eloquence are bad and unnecessary. They are good and helpful. Nevertheless, our indispensable need is the knowledge of Christ; this is our goal. It does not matter much if we cannot speak that clearly about the blood. What is important is the experience of the blood cleansing our conscience. It does not matter much if we cannot speak about the teaching of the cross. What is important is the experience of the cross. We are witnesses of Christ; we are not teachers of doctrines about Christ.

A HISTORY OF KNOWING CHRIST

Those who know Christ surely have a history of the knowledge of Christ. If you do not have a history of the knowledge of Christ, you cannot say that you know Christ. If you have to teach others about bearing the cross, can you relate to others the reality of bearing the cross? If you have to speak to others about the power of resurrection, do you have the experience of the power of resurrection? You can tell others about humility, but do you have the humility that is different from your natural disposition and that comes from the power of resurrection? When you speak to others about patience, do you have the experience? Were you an impatient person who experienced the power of resurrection changing you and making you patient? You may be able to speak about the doctrine of resurrection and ascension, but do you have a testimony that you are transcendent and untouched by the things of the earth? If you do not have such a testimony, you cannot preach such a truth. If you do not know Christ, you are not qualified to be a witness of Christ. Friends, I am not mocking you; I am pleading with you. If your experience of Christ is not deep enough, you are not qualified to be a worker of the Lord.

When I was in Shanghai, many brothers came from various localities to learn some lessons. Many of them think that they can be preachers after they return home. They think that they have learned about the way to meet. They think that they know all about the breaking of bread, baptism, and the laying on of hands. They think that they are ready to return once they have learned these things and

are able to speak about them. They think that all they need is a little knowledge about the Bible and the ability to speak about it. You must realize that there is not such a thing. You may know all the teachings, but can you speak to others about the things that have gone on between you and Christ? Can you speak about your experience of Christ? You have to see that only the Christ you have experienced will supply and render help to others.

Three hundred years ago, there was a famous theologian called Bengal who had a few students. At that time, theologians were different from those of today; they took only a few students. One student studied the book of Romans under Bengal. He was told to study nothing but Romans for a period of time. One day the student came to him as he was reading a book and said, "I have discovered the doctrine of sin in the book of Romans." When Bengal heard this, he jumped up in surprise, and said, "You have discovered only the doctrine of sin in the book of Romans. Have you not discovered sin within yourself and in your daily life?" If we do not find sin in ourselves, and if all that we know is the doctrine of sin in the book of Romans, and then tell others to hate sin, deal with sin, and not live by the flesh, what good will this do? If we have never been freed from the power of sin, how can we free others?

We are after something concrete, not a doctrine. Let me tell you a secret: If you listen to a man's preaching and find nothing behind his words, you can ignore his preaching. Every time we stand up to speak, we should dispense something concrete and real to others; we cannot merely give others some doctrines. The only things that will work are the real things that are behind the doctrines. Doctrines alone amount to nothing.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Paul said in Philippians 3 that we have to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Why did Paul not say the power of the cross? Why did he only say the power of resurrection? This is because the cross is a negative death, a termination and an end. However, resurrection is something positive; it is a life that is raised from death, a regaining after a termination. Resurrection is something that has come out of death; it is something beyond the natural realm. It is what is perfected through death. Has your eloquence passed through death? Death will not make your mouth lose its ability to function, but it will terminate the activity of your mouth, and in resurrection you will regain this activity. Have your thoughts passed through the terminating death and returned to you from God in resurrection? Is your work in the realm of ordinary living, or is it in the realm of

resurrection? The realm of ordinary living is the natural realm, whereas the realm of resurrection is what is perfected through death. The realm of ordinary living is what we have inherited from our parents, whereas the realm of resurrection is what we receive from God.

What is resurrection? It is that which has passed through death and which has come out of death. Resurrection is that which has been perfected by death and is reinstated. For example, you may have wisdom, eloquence, and natural attraction. You have to say to the Lord, "I will not employ these things. I will not claim these things for my own glory. I am willing to go through death and resurrection and to give these things up in death so that I can claim them back from God's hand." The experience of resurrection is letting go of everything that is natural through death, not trusting in them any longer, and not glorying in them. It is as if you are dead—your hands are dead, your eloquence is dead, and your natural attraction is dead. Everything that you have is gone, and you cannot do anything anymore. After some time, perhaps three days, three months, or three years (no one knows how long it will be), God comes in again, and your eloquence is returned to you, your wisdom is returned to you, and your attraction comes back. However, even though you have regained these things, they have changed. Your natural goodness and everything you naturally have are no longer yours; a cross now separates you from these things. You dare not use these things any longer, leaving them instead to the Lord to be employed according to His pleasure. These things are no longer your own; instead, you recognize them as God's.

This kind of loss through death and gaining in return is what resurrection is all about. Luke 15 says, "Because this son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found" (v. 24). Resurrection is being lost and found again. How much of yourself has been lost? I know many people who desire to work for the Lord. I would ask them a most honest question: "Are you lost? Have you lost what you think the Lord can use?" We have to know that natural goodness can never come into the Lord's service. We have to lose these things in death. It is a blessing to lose in death, for then you will begin to know resurrection.

In our daily life, whenever we die and live again, we have another experience of death and resurrection. The experience of death and resurrection is a cycle; it puts everything in Adam, both good and bad, through death, and gives it back to us in Christ. The process of death and regaining puts us on the ground of resurrection, and qualifies us to express the power of the Spirit. I like the story of

Matthias. Many people think that the story of Matthias was nothing more than a process of making up the number of the apostles. Actually there is more to it. Acts 1 records that Judas lost his allotted portion among the apostles and had gone to his own place. The disciples had to choose from among the men who accompanied them during the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among them, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which the Lord was taken up from them. They had to choose one of these to be a witness of His resurrection with them (vv. 16-22). This means that one had to be chosen from among those who had been with the Lord from the time of John's preaching of repentance and the Lord's baptism, that is, the beginning of the Lord's work, to the time of His death and resurrection. The one who was chosen had to be a witness and wait together with them in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostles who waited in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit did not go out to work right away. They remained in Jerusalem. They were able to remain in Jerusalem because there was a history and background between them and the Lord already. Only those who have had such a history and background can receive the power of the Holy Spirit to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ. The only kind of people who can be witnesses for Christ are those who know Him and know the power of His resurrection. Please remember that everyone who desires to be a witness for Christ must know what it means to lose in death and regain in resurrection. Only those who have a history with Christ, who have experienced His death and resurrection, and who know the power of His resurrection are qualified to be a witness for the Lord. May the Lord be merciful to us.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

TALKS

(1)

Date: October 16, 1936, afternoon

Place: Amoy

PERSONAL LIGHT AND CORPORATE LIGHT

God's light for men has two aspects. The first is the personal aspect and the second is the corporate aspect. In the Old Testament, the light in the temple was not a common kind of light. It was the light of the lampstand, which was not supposed to go out at any time. The light of the lampstand typifies Christ Himself. In the Old Testament all personal light was temporary in nature; it passed away

after a while. But the light in the temple was shining all the time. Our meeting today is the temple, and in this temple there is the need for permanent light. The Bible is full of allusions to the temple as a type of the meeting of the saints. Ephesians 2 says that the church is the dwelling place of God in spirit. First Corinthians 3 says that we are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Every time the saints gather together there is a spiritual house, and everyone is a stone built up as a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5). Today when the saints are gathered together, they become the temple. Therefore, when we come together, we should expect a light that we would not ordinarily receive. It is hard for an individual to see any light. But when he comes together with others and they become a temple, the light comes. The church today is like the temple; it is the place where God shines His light in an intensified way.

THE LORD PERSONALLY APPEARING TO PAUL

Question: Why did God personally appear to Paul in Acts 9?

Answer: Pentecost did not fully consummate until Acts 10. Prior to chapter ten, Pentecost had come to the Jews, but it had not come to the house of Cornelius. Paul had the Damascus experience because the church had not fully come into existence yet. Before the church fully came into existence, Paul could not have accepted anything unless it was through God's direct appearing. God saved him, but He could not use him as an individual. Paul had contacted many church members and had persecuted them by putting those who called on the Lord in every place in chains. This is why God had to shine His light on him. Today God uses ordinary means, not supernatural means, to accomplish His works. He appeared to Paul in an extraordinary way because He needed to subdue him and bring him into submission. In spite of this, He told him to enter into the city, and that someone in the city would find him and tell him what he should do (9:6). The Lord sent Ananias to tell him two things. First, Paul was told to rise up and be baptized, washing away his sins (22:16). Second, Paul was told that God had called him to be a witness among the Gentiles, bearing His name (9:15). When Paul obeyed, he received his salvation. In the New Testament, the normal way is to receive the gospel from men, but Paul received his salvation directly from the Lord. As a consequence, when he wrote the book of Galatians, he proclaimed that it pleased God to reveal His Son in him (1:16). This is the revelation of the New Testament. This revealing could have happened at the time Ananias was talking to him. In any case, Paul had the experience on the way to Damascus in

Acts 9 because the New Testament church was not yet fully formed at that time and the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not fully consummated.

SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE

Question: How do you explain Peter's word that younger men should be subject to the elders?

Answer: Peter said in his first Epistle that younger men should be subject to the elders, and that we all should gird ourselves with humility toward one another (5:5). Peter did not say that the younger should obey the elders, but that the younger should be subject, or should submit, to the elders. Obedience is a matter of conduct, whereas submission is a matter of attitude. We can only obey the Lord, yet we should submit to one another. Submission is a question of the heart, whereas obedience is a question of conduct and action. We often obey a person without submitting to him. Submission is being one with others in attitude. It is to not oppose. Today we find many wives who would obey, but few who would submit. Many women do what a wife is supposed to do, but they murmur quite a bit. This is obedience, but this is not submission. How many times has a wife obeyed out of submission?

One brother did not obey his father's order because the order contradicted his faith. He told his father, "I wish I could obey you. I wish I could do what you said and obey, but I cannot disobey God. Please forgive me." The son was gentle, yet he could not obey his father because his father's word contradicted his faith. Paul told the slaves to obey their masters, but he told the wives to submit to rather than obey their husbands (Eph. 6:5; 5:22). A woman can do many things, but she should be in subjection to her husband. Good citizens must be subject to those who are above them. Peter said, "Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to a king as being supreme..." (1 Pet. 2:13). Peter did not say to obey, but to be subject to or to submit. Submission is not opposing. Among the brothers, the younger should submit to the elders. If a matter is in harmony with God's will, we can do it, but we cannot do it if it is not in harmony with God's will. This is submission, not obedience. A meek spirit is a submissive spirit. If we can distinguish between submission and obedience, we will avoid many problems.

GOD IS SPIRIT

Question: What does it mean to say that God is Spirit?

Answer: God is Spirit, but this does not mean that all spirits are God. This is like saying that Brother Luk is a man, but this does not mean that all men are Brother Luk.

MATTHEW 5:28

Question: What does Matthew 5:28 mean?

Answer: Matthew 5:28 says, "Every one who looks at a woman in order to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." It does not say "every one who sees," but "every one who looks." Seeing is unintentional, whereas looking is intentional. There is a difference between seeing a person on the street and looking at him. Seeing him is unintentional, but looking at him is intentional. It is a sin to look at a woman for the purpose of lusting after her. Today the temptation of looking at a woman on the street is great because many women do not dress or walk properly. This can be a constant temptation to sin. While one is walking on the street, he naturally sees many women, but there is no need to consciously look at them. Seeing women is unavoidable, but looking at them involves the will. The first glance is unintentional, but the second look is intentional; it constitutes adultery in the heart. You cannot stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can stop it from building a nest on your head. The first glance does not involve the will; it is unintentional. The second glance, however, involves the will; it is intentional and constitutes a sin.

DEALING WITH THE THOUGHTS

Question: How can we overcome our thoughts?

Answer: Satan knows us more than we know ourselves. Our words and actions originate from our thoughts. Many people say that their words are unintentional. Actually, however, everything we say is intentional, but the intention may be hidden in the heart. Thoughts that exist within will eventually be expressed in words (Matt. 12:34-35). If a Christian cannot control his thoughts, he has failed already. There are very few believers who have overcome their thoughts. Every temptation must first be translated into a thought before it will lodge itself in a person. In order to reject temptations, we must first reject the thoughts.

How can we overcome our thoughts? First, we must, as Romans 8:6 says, set the mind positively on the things of the spirit. Second, we have to reject all wandering thoughts. If we do not reject wandering thoughts, they will eventually become sinful thoughts. Our thoughts are prone to wander when we pray, but at other times they wander also. A brother asked me what he should do when he found his thoughts straying and when he was unable to concentrate as he

prayed. I asked whether his thoughts wandered all over the world when he was not praying. He admitted that they did. This is where the problem lies. If our thoughts are always wandering, it will be hard to keep our thoughts from straying and to concentrate in prayer.

In order to deal with wandering thoughts, we first have to ask the Lord to cover our thoughts with His precious blood. We should apply the weapon mentioned in Ephesians 6. Many people do not wear any helmet on their head. As a result their thoughts tend to wander. Our whole body needs to be equipped, but we need more on our head than on any other part. A helmet cannot be used as a weapon, but it can protect the head from attacks. However, there is another problem. Some say, "The more I reject wandering thoughts, the more they come and the more confused I become. What should I do?" When this happens, we must not be discouraged. Remember that Satan will not persist. When Moses went to Pharaoh, there were two Egyptian magicians (2 Tim. 3:8). Aaron turned a staff into a snake, and the two magicians did the same thing. Aaron turned water into blood, and they did the same. Aaron caused frogs to come to the land of Egypt, and they did the same. But when Aaron struck the dust and turned it into lice, they could not do the same thing. Satan's temptations do not last long. If we persist and are not discouraged, Satan will soon be stripped of his power.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE FLESH AND THE WORK OF GOD

Date: October 17, 1936, morning

Place: Amoy

THREE GREAT ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE

In the history of the Israelites, God's people had three main enemies: the Egyptians, the Philistines, and the Amalekites. The world is signified by Egypt; the power of darkness, who is Satan, is signified by the Philistines; and the flesh is signified by the Amalekites. The Triune God has a triune enemy who frustrates His people from following Him. Outside of God's people, there is the world, under them there is Satan, and within them there is the flesh. These three enemies work together to frustrate God's work among His people.

Egypt typifies the world that binds us; it signifies the worldly living and everything that occupies us and causes us not to serve God. The Philistines typify the authority of darkness, the power of Satan, which frustrates us and disturbs us. The Amalekites typify our flesh. Outwardly speaking, the Amalekites were not as

menacing as the Egyptians and the Philistines. They opposed the Israelites who had left Egypt and would not allow them to enter Canaan. The Amalekites cooperated with the Egyptians and the Philistines to stop the Israelites from entering Canaan. This typifies the work of the flesh in us, frustrating us from fully entering into the heavenly position to enjoy God's salvation.

These are the three most damaging enemies that attack our Christian life on earth today. First, the world takes away our love of the Father (1 John 2:15). The world is versus the Father. Second, Satan causes us to rebel against Christ's authority. First John 3:8 says that the Son of God was manifested for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. Hence, Satan is versus Christ. Third, the flesh lusts against the Spirit within us (Gal. 5:17). Hence, the flesh is versus the Holy Spirit. We can see that the triune enemy is versus our Triune God. The world is versus the Father, Satan is versus Christ, and the flesh is versus the Holy Spirit.

The trouble today is that many Christians love the world and are bound by the world; they do not want to leave Egypt. There are also Christians who do not realize their heavenly position, which is their Canaan. They have never heard of the ascended place of Christ nor experienced it. Thus they are blocked from entering Canaan. Victory over the world is the initial stage of the Christian life, while the heavenly position in Christ signifies the highest peak of the Christian living. This morning we will not speak about the world or Satan. Our emphasis will be on the problem of the flesh. The flesh is manifested not only in our personal lives, but many times in God's work as well. If it were only manifested in our personal lives, the matter would not be that serious. But when it is manifested in God's work, the glory of God will suffer great loss.

WHAT IS THE FLESH?

How does the flesh manifest itself in the work of God? First, we must know what the flesh is. Once we know what the flesh is, we will know how it is manifested in the work of God. We can know what the flesh is from the Bible. Simply put, everything that originates from the natural life is of the flesh. The flesh is what we have acquired from our natural life; it is what we have inherited and what we possess from birth. Anything that does not come as a result of our regeneration is the flesh. It does not matter how much and what kind it is, as long as it does not originate from our regeneration, it is the flesh. How do we know this? The answer is in John 3:6. The Lord said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Thank God that everyone who is sitting

here today has had these two births already. We were all born of the flesh, and we have all been born of the Spirit. These two births often occur twenty to fifty years apart. That which is born of the flesh means that which we received when we came out of our mother's womb. That which is born of the Spirit means that which we received when we were regenerated. There is a time difference between these two occurrences. The birth of the flesh happens first, and the birth of the Spirit happens later.

The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." A regenerated person inherits every spiritual thing that can be inherited at the time of his regeneration. Only after the Spirit begets the spirit are there spiritual things. Do you want to know what is of the Spirit? It is not difficult to know this. All you have to do is to find out what you have received since your regeneration. Then you will know what is of the Spirit. If you set aside all the new things you received from the Spirit's regeneration, the flesh would be all that was left. What does the flesh include? It includes everything that is in the natural realm and everything that you had originally. There are two aspects to the flesh, one is filthy and the other is clean. One is sinful and the other good. Before a man is regenerated, not only does he commit sins, but he commits "goodness" as well. Many non-Christians have good works, but according to God, these good works are not of the Holy Spirit, because they are not born of the Spirit. God wants to remove not only all of man's sins, but all of his goodness as well. Anything that is not from the Spirit, whether good or bad, is rejected by God and must be removed. God only wants that which comes from the Spirit. He does not ask if something is good or evil; He only asks if such a thing is from the Spirit or the flesh. He does not ask about the nature of a thing; He only asks where it comes from. Anything that comes from the flesh is of the flesh. It is easy for man to see the evil and sinful part of the flesh. But it is difficult to discern the good part of the flesh. We must therefore pay particular attention to the good part of the flesh.

THE GOOD PART OF THE FLESH

The Wisdom of the Flesh

There are two aspects to the good part of the flesh. First, there is the wisdom of the flesh. Second, there is the power of the flesh. Let us first consider the wisdom of the flesh. Many fleshly persons can do many things beside committing sins. They have a good mind that is capable of thinking and scheming. They can be quick to understand and apt to speak. This is the wisdom of the flesh. This

wisdom was with us before we were regenerated. Since we have believed in the Lord and have been baptized, these things should be condemned. However, after we are saved, we try to serve Him in His work. We want to do everything for His sake, and we try to please Him by testifying for Him. Spontaneously, we apply the wisdom that we formerly employed in our business to God's work. The wisdom that we used to apply to our studies, our business, and our managing of human relationships is now applied to the work of God. We may think that it was wrong to use our wisdom in the world, but right to use it in God's work. I did not realize this truth until I had been in the Lord's work for six or seven years. One day I read John 3:6 which says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." I understood then that whatever is born of the flesh is the flesh no matter where it is applied. Another passage that is in Romans 8 says, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (v. 8). This verse does not say that the evil of the flesh does not please God. It says that the flesh—as long as it is the flesh—cannot please God. Then I read the Lord's Word in John 6:63 which says, "The flesh profits nothing." It profits nothing whether it is the good flesh or the bad flesh. Only the Lord's word to us is not flesh; it is spirit and life, and only His words can give life. Other than that which is from the new life and the spirit, everything else is from the flesh and is useless.

In God's work, the only wisdom we can apply is spiritual wisdom. We can only work according to God's will. We often read the Bible the same way that we read an ordinary book. But God will destroy the wisdom of man. He has chosen the foolish things in this world to put to shame those who are wise (1 Cor. 1:27). In the spiritual journey, the wise do not have any advantage over the foolish. One does not become more spiritual because he is more wise. There is not such a thing. A wise and thoughtful person is the same as a foolish person when it comes to spiritual matters—both need faith. The wise one may understand things quicker, but this does not mean that he can acquire the spiritual realities faster. He must have faith, obedience, and consecration in the same way that the foolish one does, before he can acquire spiritual things. In order to receive spiritual things, there are no shortcuts; believing, obeying, and consecrating are the only way.

The Power of the Flesh

Let us come back to the first aspect of the goodness of the flesh—natural strength or the power of the flesh. Many people are powerful in preaching; they have natural attraction, organizational skills, and management skills. They think

that these make them good helpers to God's work. But the power of attraction in preaching and leadership, the ability to save souls, organizational and management skills, and a talent for design and methodology do not add anything to God's work. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; when it sins it is the flesh, and when it applies itself to God's work it is still the flesh. A Chinese is always a Chinese whether he is in England or in China. The place may change, but the person does not change. The evil flesh is abominable in God's eyes, but the good flesh is equally abominable in God's eyes. The flesh cannot please God when it sins, and it equally cannot please God when it applies itself to God's work. The flesh is useless in combating sin, and it is equally useless in doing God's work.

Thank God that He has brought all men down to the same level. No one is "taller" than anyone else. Nothing in the old creation can be brought into the new creation. Nothing in Adam can render any help to anything in Christ. Everything in the old creation, whether power or wisdom, is useless in the building up of the new creation. It is a great mistake for God's worker to think that a man with eloquence, intelligence, articulation, and ability would be a big catch if he ever was saved. He thinks that such a man would be greatly used by the Lord and does not realize that the only things that a man can consecrate to the Lord are things from the first Adam. Do you think that the things of the first Adam can ever render any help to the second Adam? Suppose you see a country person who is poor in words, thoughts, and writings. You preach the gospel to him and he is saved. Suppose another man, who is young, educated, eloquent, and intelligent, is also saved. What would you think of these two persons? You may think that there is considerable hope for the young, educated man because he has a good background. You may think that there is not much hope for the country person, but that the young man is a good piece of material. However, what kind of material is he? He is material destined for hell! Where does such material come from? It comes from the flesh, and it deserves nothing but the fire. Everything that he originally has is the flesh and is abominable. That which is born of the flesh is the flesh, and it has nothing to do with God's work.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH FLESHLY POWER AND WISDOM

Some have asked: "Why is it that some advance so quickly while others advance so slowly? Why is it that some even do not advance at all?" The difference does

not lie in their background or in what each one originally had. The difference lies in whether or not a man has exercised faith to receive Christ. The more a man believes, the more he advances. The less a man believes, the less he advances. This is the same as saying that a man will have eternal life if he believes, and that he will perish if he does not believe. There is no difference between being "good" material or "bad" material. A man who is evil by nature is the same kind of material after he is saved as any other person. His degree of advancement depends strictly on the amount of his faith, consecration, and obedience. Everything depends on Christ, not on our natural goodness or shortcomings. Natural goodness and shortcomings do not hinder us or help us in any way. Hallelujah! Before the Lord, everything that is from ourselves is useless. May the Lord break us and show us that everything that originates from the self is useless.

"APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING"

I love John 15:5 which says, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." Prior to 1927, I did not believe this verse. I had read the Gospel of John over one hundred times, and I had read chapter fifteen perhaps over two hundred times. Every time I came to the words "apart from Me you can do nothing," I could not believe it. I thought that I could still do so many things apart from the Lord, and I even experienced His blessings in doing these things. How could I say that apart from Him I could do nothing? When I read this in 1926, I prayed, "Lord, I cannot believe this verse, because I can still do many things without You." At that time I was very good at preaching and drew considerable attention to myself; many people were saved. I could say, "Apart from You I can do a lot!" One day the Lord showed me that apart from Him everything I did was sin. To be able to do nothing apart from Him means that I cannot do what the Lord wants me to do. I may be able to do something apart from Him, but what I can do is not what He wants.

On that day the scales fell off from my eyes. I saw that we can only trust in the Lord for the accomplishment of spiritual works and all that He wants us to do. Apart from Him, we can only do things that we want to do, not the things that God wants us to do. They are not God's work. From that day forward, I began to learn to trust in the Lord in everything. Although I still trust in myself many times, I feel ashamed whenever I do. That was a big turning point in my life. I saw that all of God's work is in Christ, and that apart from Him, anything that I did was sin. Apart

from Christ, all works are sin. Anything that originates from the flesh is empowered and energized by the flesh, and God hates the power of the flesh.

Those who are serving the Lord and working for Him must ask what it is that we judge and condemn today. Do we only judge and condemn common sins? Have we judged our wisdom and power? Have we judged the good part of our flesh? All those who have judged their flesh will no longer be proud of themselves. A man who has judged his flesh will feel ashamed when he is proud. Once our flesh is judged, all the glory will go to God and not to us. It will not be related to us any longer. This is the way to serve the Lord.

GOD CHOOSING THE FOOLISH AND THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD

Who can advance more—those with wisdom or those with power? Actually, neither fleshly strength nor fleshly weakness can help a person to advance. In order to advance, a person has to be seeking, hungry, and consecrated. In order to know whether a person is advancing or backsliding, there is no need to consider the wisdom or power of his flesh. All we have to do is consider his faith, prayer, consecration, and obedience. Saul was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward, yet God did not choose him. David was an ordinary man, yet God chose him. God chooses those whom the world despises. First Corinthians 1:27-28 mentions five kinds of people who are qualified to be chosen by God. They are the foolish, the weak, the lowborn, the despised, and those who are not. How many people believe this word? Do you really believe this word? I am afraid when some find themselves less intelligent than others, they become discouraged and say to God, "It is useless to choose me. That man is better; he is more useful." Yet God has not chosen him; He has chosen you. You may not believe this, but it matters little whether or not you believe this. As long as God's Word has said it, it is so. God has chosen the foolish things and the weak things of this world, in order to put the wise and the strong to shame.

Last year two brothers came to me in Shanghai. One was slow in thought and the other was slow in words. Both felt called and chosen by the Lord to serve Him, but neither dared to answer His call. One said that his mind was too slow. It took him a long time to understand what would take others only five minutes to understand. The other said that his words were not coherent. They asked if there was any way to improve their eloquence and their mind. I looked at them and said, "As far as I am concerned, both of you are very qualified. No one among us

is as qualified as the two of you." They asked why I would say this, and I answered, "The Bible says that God has chosen the foolish things. He has not chosen those who are eloquent or quick in their mind. If you are too good, God cannot use you. God can only use you if you are not that good. He chooses those who have not." I continued, "You two should stand before the world and testify of the power of God. Show the world that wisdom and eloquence are useless. If you are somewhat intelligent, you could not testify in this way for the Lord. But the very fact that you have no wisdom or eloquence qualifies you to prove to the world that God has not chosen the eloquent ones." The law of God was given by Moses. But he did not have any eloquence; his brother was the eloquent one. Yet God chose his brother to be the priest to speak to God, and chose him to give the law and speak to the Israelites. Aaron was eloquent, but God told him to remain in the tabernacle and pray. Moses was not eloquent, yet God told him to speak the law in front of the people. This is the wisdom of God. From this we see that natural wisdom and power account for nothing in the work of God.

REJECTING THE POWER OF THE FLESH IN GOD'S WORK

Some may say, "Paul was eloquent, and he was intelligent. Why then did God choose him?" Actually Paul was not used by God because of his natural virtues. He was physically weak and did not speak with persuasive words of wisdom. I admit that Paul was intelligent. But you must remember that Paul's wisdom was put under the cross of Christ. He said that he was determined not to know anything among the Corinthians except Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). A wise man has to do one more thing than a foolish man—he has to reject his own wisdom and power. God does not need man's wisdom or power. As we said yesterday, we have to lose everything in death. The flesh must be dealt with. God is seeking in China for a group of men who would know their flesh. Those who do not know their flesh are not qualified to be God's workers. I am not discouraging men from giving up their jobs to serve the Lord. I am not saying that it is difficult to find men who would want to work for the Lord. I have met dozens of men every year who have a heart to serve the Lord. But I find very few who will condemn their flesh. Many people want to work for God, but they do not realize that God does not want the old creation; He wants the new creation.

We must learn to deny our flesh. In working for the Lord, the crucial point is not the result, but the source. Does something originate from the flesh or from the Spirit? The value of a work is not judged by its result, but by its source. A work

does not become more valuable because it produces good result. The value of a work depends on its source. In evaluating a piece of work, one should ask whether it was done by himself or by God. I am ashamed to admit that after I work, even though there are often good results and men receive help, I have to confess to the Lord because it is I, rather than God, who has been doing it. God is leading us day by day to stop our work so that we will realize that we cannot accomplish God's work and that only God Himself can accomplish His work.

SMITING ALL THE AMALEKITES

Finally, let me remind you of one thing: First Samuel says that God charged the Israelites to smite all the Amalekites and not to spare them (15:3). He is asking us to do the same thing today—to smite all the flesh. This is God's firm stand. One day He will lead you to the point where you will thoroughly hate everything that is of the flesh. There is a definite date when we were saved. There is a definite date when we overcome. There is a definite date when we receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, there is a definite date when we realize that we are completely useless, and we condemn ourselves and deal with our flesh in a thorough way. Perhaps this day has not come yet. But when that day comes, we will see that everything of the natural life must be smitten; nothing can remain. Sinful things need to be smitten; so do excellent things. Bad things need to be removed; so do good things. Useful things need to be removed; so do useless things. Nothing of ourselves should remain. That day will be the day of our salvation. That day will be the day when we can truly serve the Lord and work for Him.

Prayer: Lord, we confess the sin of being successful in our work. We confess the sin of all our endeavors. Lord, we confess the sin of doing everything according to ourselves. We ask that You calibrate our work according to the light of Your judgment seat.

CHAPTER FORTY

TALKS

(2)

Date: October 17, 1936, afternoon

Place: In the dormitory, Kulangsu, Amoy

A LIFE IN THE EMOTION VERSUS A LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

The Christian life should not have any period of spiritual coldness. However, in order to teach us the function of faith and the will, in the practical experience of

our spiritual life, God often allows spiritual depression to come to us. When our faith is put to the test, the outward, burning sensations may be gone, but we should not be discouraged. A Christian life is full of joy during times of abundance, and it is at least full of peace during other times. It is wonderful to have special joy and happiness, but it is not abnormal if one does not have these feelings some of the time. When these feelings are gone, an inward peace should be sustained. It is not necessary for us to constantly feel a sense of enlightenment and joy. It is more important to be without barrier or burden in our spirit and to have no nagging feeling that God is far from us. If there are such barriers, they must be removed.

On the one hand, it is easy to develop barriers between us and God. These barriers can be removed, and the way to remove them is by foot-washing. On the other hand, there is nothing unusual about not having third-heaven, supernatural feelings of elation. We should not seek for these supernatural experiences all the time. The first time you pass through a big crisis, you may have some supernatural sensations. If you have such an experience, you should thank the Lord. But such an experience will not last for long. For example, when you were first saved, when you first experienced the overcoming life, or when you first consecrated yourself, you may have been extremely exuberant. But these feelings do not remain with you forever. On the one hand, we have to remove all barriers in our fellowship with the Lord, and on the other hand, we have to live by faith when this special joy is absent. Special and extraordinary joy is like the over-intoxication of wine, whereas the freshness of life is like the invigoration of spiritual energy.

The Bible says, "Always rejoice" (1 Thes. 5:16). This is a matter of the will, because this is God's commandment. For example, when you get up in the morning, your heart may not be full of joy. When you read this verse, you should exercise your will to rejoice. The same is true when the Bible says, "Be strong." You can respond to God's Word by saying, "Today I will be strong." God's commandment requires only man's "amen." Once you hear God's word and you turn it into an "amen," you will receive what you said "amen" to. If you say, "Lord, I thank and praise You. I will rejoice," you will immediately have the experience of joy. Every kind of emotion in your life is sustained by the will. Other aspects of your life may require other things.

Sometimes we feel cold and sometimes we feel hot when we pray. None of these feelings matter. As long as we are clear within, and as long as we have a little

revelation in the depth of our being concerning God's will, we should pray. Although many of our prayers seem to be "cold" and "indifferent," God often answers our "cold" and "indifferent" prayers. I often pray in a "cold" way for an hour to two, but I know that God answers my "hot" prayers as well as my "cold" prayers. Our submission to God's will is not based on our inward coldness or hotness, but on our obedience. We have to pray to do God's will, and it does not matter whether or not we have the knowledge or the feeling. God does not necessarily answer our zealous prayers. Yet I know that God has answered my "cold" prayers many times.

THE INWARD LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The greatest blessing of the New Testament is that man can know God's will inwardly. A brother once asked, "Can I do a certain thing? I cannot find a clear answer from the Bible, and I have asked many people. Some say that I can do it, while others say that I should not." I said, "Let us put aside what the Bible says for now. Do you have the Holy Spirit within?" He said, "Yes." I then said, "Since the Holy Spirit is within you, is He not able to instruct you in anything?" Many times, it is not the Spirit who fails to instruct us, but we who fail to seek His leading. We have not looked to Him, but have instead sought help from others. In doing a certain thing, we may have thought through the whole process and have the right doctrine and consent of everyone backing us up, but it is still possible to be wrong. We have to believe that the Spirit never forsakes His duty. He resides within us for the purpose of instructing us. Personally, I believe that even when we do not read the Bible, the Spirit will still instruct us. (I am not saying that we should not read the Bible. I am saying that we have to take care of the inner voice.)

One of my sisters was saved about three months ago. Two months ago, she had an experience. My brother-in-law took her to a holy communion in the denominations. Before she was saved, she did not feel anything when she went. After she was saved, she was uneasy when she joined the communion. She thought, "The Bible has not said anything about this. Why do I not have the peace?" Later, she found that there were unsaved ones among them taking the communion. When she tried to go again, she again had no peace. She tried to give herself an excuse, saying, "I am taking the communion for myself. Others are responsible for their own conduct." She took the communion again, but after she returned home, she felt very uneasy again. Although she had many reasons, the leading of the Spirit within would not go along with her. She knew that she

had done the wrong thing. When she read the Word and prayed, the Lord showed her that it was wrong for her to partake of that kind of communion. Later, my brother-in-law got into a big argument with her and accused her, saying, "You have just been fooled by your brother." When I heard this, I told him, "I have never spoken with my sister about this matter. I had the same feeling when I was praying for her. She was following the leading of the Spirit." We cannot follow our own thoughts and reasons; we should follow the small voice of the Spirit within.

A RELEASED, UNBOUND, AND TRANSCENDENT SPIRIT IN THE MEETING

Question: What should we do when we are depressed in the meeting?

Answer: You should have a released spirit in the meeting. If your spirit is oppressed by some kind of burden, you will not be able to release others from a bound spirit. If you are conducting a meeting, and you are pressed down by some burden, it will be impossible for you to set the spirit of the congregation free. A weighed-down spirit cannot express the Holy Spirit. Only a released spirit can express the Holy Spirit. When you come to the meeting, your spirit must be released and must be without any burden. Only then will the meeting receive your help. My shoulder can only bear one burden at a time; it cannot bear two burdens at the same time. My shoulders must be empty before I can take up another burden. If a man comes to the meeting with a burden already, you cannot give him another burden.

A worker should not wait until he comes to the meeting before he unloads his burden. If you come to a meeting with a burden, you must learn to give your burden to the Lord. If there are burdens that you cannot put away, burdens that are inexplicable and hard to pinpoint, you have to push them away with your will. The words that come out of a Christian's mouth are very powerful; they can be like the orders in an army. You can tell God, "I want this burden removed. I repudiate this burden." Not only should you pray, but you must also declare to God, the angels, Satan, the evil spirits, and to everything. You must declare and command the burden to go away in the name of the Lord. When you open your mouth to repudiate it, the burden will drop.

Sometimes you may be depressed even though nothing is apparently suppressing you. Your spirit is debilitated. At these times you have to lift up your own spirit. This kind of depression of the spirit is not caused by anything outside of you; rather, your spirit is suppressed by your own feeling of coldness. A

depressed spirit is different from a burdened spirit. A depressed spirit has no particular burden; it has sagged because of the coldness surrounding it. Under such circumstances, one should not deny the condition with the will, but stir up the spirit with the will. The best way to stir up the spirit is to praise. Praise can bring a person to the throne. You have to exercise your faith to lift up your spirit. You have to say to God, "Although I am surrounded by darkness, I will still praise You. Although my spirit is vacillating, You are on the throne and You never waver." If you refuse to believe in the environment and instead give praises to God, your spirit will be lifted up to the heavenlies.

When a spirit is depressed and cannot be freed, it is sometimes very effective to practice foot-washing. If a brother who is burning in spirit comes to you while you are cold, he will have the power to wash your feet, and your spirit will be lifted up by him.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DECLARATION

Question: Sometimes I worry and do not have the peace. Prayer does not work at such times, yet my declaration does. Why is this?

Answer: One day when the Lord was going on His journey, He became hungry. He saw a fig tree from a distance, but the tree did not have any fruit. What did the Lord do? He said to the tree: "May no one eat fruit from you forever!" (Mark 11:14). The next day the disciples found the Lord's word fulfilled—the tree had withered from its roots. Why did the tree wither from its roots within a day? When the disciples saw this, they realized the power in the Lord's word, and they told the Lord what had happened. The Lord told them to have faith in God, and that those with faith could ask whatever they will and God would give it to them. Those who have faith can even ask a mountain to be removed and God will do it for them. Mark 11:23 is not an ordinary prayer, but a declaration. The Lord did not say, "Whoever kneels down to pray..." He told them to declare. He said, "Whoever says to this mountain..." Praying to God is not dealing with the mountain, but saying directly to the mountain, "Be taken up and cast into the sea." Here the Lord did not say that we would receive an answer according to what we pray, but according to what we say.

We often pray for God to remove everything that hinders, frustrates, and bars us from pressing forward, things such as anxiety, worries, and sufferings. Sometimes God will answer such prayers. But many times such prayers avail little. The Lord wants you to say to the "mountain," "I oppose and reject in the name of the Lord everything that suppresses and frustrates me." You must

declare and give command. The Lord did not say to the disciples, "Dear disciples, we must pray and ask God to dry up the tree." He did not do this. He gave a command. Many troubles and sicknesses can only be driven away by such commands; they are like the marching orders that a general gives to his soldiers. These kind of words are declarations of authority.

In the book of Acts, the apostles exercised this key. Peter and John saw the lame man at the door of the temple which was called Beautiful, and they said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene rise up and walk" (3:6). They cast out demons by speaking directly to them and casting them out in the name of the Lord (16:18). This is declaring with authority. With some things you have to pray. With other things you have to declare. If you practice this, you will save yourself much trouble. The way to reject unwanted thoughts is also by declaring one's stand. When you reject Satan's thoughts in the name of the Lord, Satan can do nothing but flee away. Both Peter and James told us to withstand the devil (1 Pet. 5:9; James 4:7). This is withstanding the attack of Satan. You do not have to pray for the demons to go away; instead, declare and command them to go away in the name of the Lord.

There are certain conditions which we must fulfill before we can do things in the name of the Lord. Being in the name of the Lord means having a part in the Lord and being granted all the rights that come from the redemption of His blood. If we have such a faith, our speaking in His name will be effective. In Acts some men tried to cast out demons in the name of the Lord (19:13). Although the words were right, the name of Jesus had nothing to do with them and did not produce any effect on them. It is not the words we say that makes our declaration effective, but the union with this name through faith that makes the declaration effective. The Lord is the Christ, and we are Christians. When we are one with Him, His power will flow to us. No formula will work. The only thing that will work is faith.

ONE'S DAILY LIFE AFTER PASSING THROUGH THE GATE OF VICTORY

After we have passed through the gate of victory, we must continually abide in Christ. Abiding is remaining, and abiding in Christ means that we remain in Christ. To abide in Christ is to consider ourselves in Christ and not in ourselves. If we consider ourselves in ourselves, we will only see ourselves. We will overcome the first time when we look to Christ as our victory. Thereafter we must

continue to look to Christ as our victory. We can only have the overcoming life when we are in Christ, and we can only continue to live an overcoming life when we are in Christ.

HOW TO DEAL WITH SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

In the meetings, there are often people who speak improper words. The workers should exhort these ones. The way to deal with spiritual problems is not to deal with the problems alone—that is the way of the law. In order to deal with spiritual problems, one must first find out the cause. For example, a brother who speaks improper words all the time may not be speaking those things consciously; his problem may be elsewhere. Chinese medicine does not deal only with the head when the head hurts; one must consider the body as a whole, because the cause of the illness may be elsewhere. Some brothers have problems with their conduct because they are sick in their spiritual life. In order to change their conduct, they must first change their whole being. It is useless to only change their conduct. Hence, in helping others, we should not try to change their conduct; we should look for the sickness within them and help them to find out the root cause.

CONCERNING FAITH

Faith is a wonderful thing; it substantiates spiritual things and accomplishes God's Word. Satan only works in the environment and can only attack God's Word from the outside; he cannot attack God directly. God's Word demands our faith. For example, God's Word may say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Satan will tell a person that this is not necessarily so. Some brothers face hardships and oppositions at home. The way to deal with them is not by enduring the unbelief of the family members. Of course, I do not mean that one should allow his family to go on worshipping idols. The way to deal with them is to stand firmly on the promise of God and declare to Satan that one's household shall be saved. However, if one does not have the faith, he will be afraid, change God's Word, and say that His promises are not effectual. Satan will then sing and rejoice. This shows us that we fail only when we do not stand on God's Word. Satan is most afraid of us holding on to God's Word and dealing with him according to it. Hence, we have to stand on God's Word with firm faith. Even if the environment changes, we will not change. If we do this, Satan can do nothing to us. He can stir up adverse environments, but we believe that God's Word is true and unchanging. We can say to Satan, "Do all you can. Let us see what God's Word will do."

The first thing Satan does in deceiving us is to produce an environment that is opposite to God's Word. The second thing he will do is to tell us that God's promise is not real. He will base his words on the environment he has created. Once I was sick. I prayed and God promised that He would heal me. I had the faith for the healing, but after three weeks, the sickness became worse. Then Satan came and tempted me, saying, "What good is your faith? Your illness is still here." When I prayed again, God rebuked me, saying, "Why are you still praying? I have told you that I will heal you. Why do you still have to pray?" I immediately began to praise. I said, "God, I cannot sleep, and I feel much pain. Satan is troubling me all over. Yet I praise You because Your Word is true. I do not care if I suffer. Only Your Word counts; only it is trustworthy. The environment is just Satan's performance. You alone are faithful and trustworthy." I began to sing Hymn #778 on my bed. That was the best singing I ever experienced in my life. The words in stanza two were particularly precious: "For God delights when faith can praise /Though dark the night and long." Later the Lord did heal me. Satan's work produces only one result—doubting God's Word, that is, making men wonder whether or not it is true. Outward conditions are not real. If you listen to Satan and look at the adverse environment, you will think that God's Word is not true. But if you stand on God's Word by faith, you will not fear. Faith does not require any proof or evidence. When a person has good credit in business, he does not need a guarantee. Only those who do not have good credit need a guarantee. Satan does not have good credit. This is why he asks for a guarantee for everything. He has to furnish facts to guarantee everything he says. The facts he furnishes are often the environments he creates. This is not the way our God works. Our God has very good credit. He does not need any fact, and He does not need any guarantee. His Word alone counts. What can guarantee the words of the Bible? The Bible only uses a few words to tell us the facts about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and ascension, etc. The Bible does not need any guarantee.

Today we can commit our spirit, soul, and body to God because we have the word of the Bible. We can give up all things for the Lord because we have the word of the Bible. The Bible produces faith in us. Those whose eyes are set on the environment will not change any fact. But those who praise by faith will see fruitful results.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE IN CHRIST

Date: October 17, 1936, evening

Place: Kulangsu, Amoy

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:30a; Eph. 1:3

Our messages during the past few evenings have been fragmentary in nature. Beginning from tonight they will be more systematic. I hope that in the next few days, I can impress you deeply with the matter of being in Christ. The words in Christ are very simple, but their significance is profound. Without being in Christ, there is no gospel and there is no church. If there is not such a thing as being in Christ, there is not even Christianity, and there is certainly no redemption and salvation. Everything that God has done is done in Christ and not in man. Everything that God has accomplished within us is done in Christ.

GOD NOT DEALING WITH INDIVIDUALS

Tonight is an introductory word. Following this, every evening we will see a little more about being in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 says that God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." We may think that God is redundant and cumbersome by adding the words "in Christ" after the words "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies." It seems unnecessary to do this. Why does God's Word say this? If we understand this, we will understand Christianity. We also will understand God's plan of redemption and how His work is accomplished in the Bible. In God's plan of redemption, He does not deal with man individually. The Bible shows us that God does not deal with the world as individuals, but as a corporate whole. God does not ask how many sins and evils you have committed. He only asks if you are in Adam. Man pays attention to individual sins, but God has included the world in one man—Adam. We can find out what we are from this man. If he did not have a problem, we would not have any problem, and if he has a problem, we have a problem, because we are in him.

THERE BEING ONLY TWO MEN IN THE EYES OF GOD

According to the principle of the Scripture, there are only two men in the world. The Bible says that Adam was the first man—the first Adam. Christ is the second man—the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). Some may ask, "What about all the men who were between these two men? There are obviously many men in this world. Why does the Bible only speak of two men?" This is because in God's eyes everyone is included in these two men. Other than these two men, there is not a third man;

there is no other man. You are either in Adam or in Christ. Adam is like a big man. Once you are born, you are born into this big Adam, and when you believe in the Lord and are regenerated, you are transferred into Christ.

IN ADAM

I once saw a picture of a woman with a big skirt and under her skirt were many small children. God views us the same way. We are human beings in Adam. God has put the whole human race into Adam. We can include the children in the parents, and the parents in the grandparents. Each successive generation is included in the preceding generation. This goes on all the way back to Adam. In this way we see that everyone is in Adam. Today we see that we come from Adam. Strictly speaking, we are still in Adam. Whatever Adam did on that day, we did the same. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, we sinned as well. What Adam did we also did.

What does it mean to be in Adam? I can explain this with an illustration. When I was in Kaifeng, a person asked me what it means to be in Adam and asked me to give him an illustration. I answered, "The Chinese say that our ancestor is Hwang-ti. Once Hwang-ti fought with Tzi-you and killed him. Suppose at that time that Tzi-you was not killed, but that Hwang-ti had been killed instead. If that had happened, would there still be the Chinese race today?" He answered, "Of course not." I said, "Why would there no longer be a Chinese race when Hwang-ti died?" He answered, "Because if Hwang-ti had died, we would have all died." I argued, "Hwang-ti's death was his business. Our life has nothing to do with him!" He said, "No. We all came from Hwang-ti. If Hwang-ti had died, we all would have died as well." Have you seen this? Tzi-you would not need to kill all of us. All he would have to do would be to kill Hwang-ti, and all of us who come after him would be gone. This is the way the Bible sees Adam. We do not have to commit sins in ourselves. Everyone who is born of Adam has sinned. Adam's experience is our experience. First Corinthians 15 says that in Adam we all died. When Adam died, the whole world died with him. You do not need to search your personal history. As long as you are in Adam, his experience has become your history.

GOD'S WORK OF REDEMPTION BEING IN CHRIST

God saves us according to the same principle. We are saved in Christ. How could the Lord die on our behalf and save us? Individually speaking, we were saved when we believed in the Lord. But corporately speaking, we were all

condemned in Christ. For example, here is a chalk box. We can say that this is a picture of us in Christ on the cross. I do not have to throw the pieces of chalk into the sea one by one. As long as I throw the chalk box into the sea, all the chalk will be in the sea. The chalk will be wherever the chalk box is. In the same way, we are now in Christ. All of His experiences have become our experiences. He was judged on the cross, He was crucified, and He resurrected and ascended. We have also been judged, crucified, resurrected, and ascended because we are in Him. All of His experiences have now become ours. In Christ, God sees us as Christ, having the same experiences that Christ had. This is God's work of redemption.

HOW TO BE IN CHRIST

Someone asked how we can be in Christ, and I answered, "If Watchman Nee, weighing only one hundred and fifty pounds, has the strength to put the chalk into the chalk box, is it too hard for God, who is the creator of the universe and millions of times stronger than me, to put us into Christ?" Please read 1 Corinthians 1:30. Of whom are we in Christ? Of God! We are in Christ. But we do not know how we got into Christ, in the same way that the pieces of chalk are in the chalk box, but do not know how they got in. However, as long as the chalk is in the box, whatever happens to the box will happen to the chalk. I do not know how I got into Christ. I only know that God has put me into Christ. Whatever Christ has passed through, I also have passed through. You must realize one thing: God's work of redemption does not deal with you as an individual; He only deals with Christ. Today God has set up two great camps in this world—the camp of Christ and the camp of Adam. Man has a choice to be either in Adam or in Christ. If you are in Adam, your end is perdition. If you are in Christ, your end is salvation. God did not do anything outside of Adam. In the same way He is not doing anything outside of Christ.

Someone once asked me, "Do you think I will go to hell?" I answered, "You are quite qualified to go to hell." He answered, "But I am such a good man. Will I still have to go to hell?" I said, "You were already qualified a long time ago. I do not have to ask whether you are good or bad as an individual. I only ask if you are in Christ or in Adam. You do not have to steal, murder, or commit any gross sins. As long as you are in Adam, you are qualified to go to hell." I remember one wonderful passage of the Bible in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a difficult book. The apostle who wrote this book was trying to prove to us that Christ is higher than Moses, Joshua, the angels in the Old Testament, and Aaron. He

compared Christ with many people. One of the comparisons he made was of Christ as the High Priest and Aaron as the high priest. How did the apostle prove that Christ is higher? He said that Christ is a priest according to the order of Melchisedec; His priesthood is derived from Melchisedec. Aaron was a high priest, but his priesthood was derived from Levi. Aaron had an ancestor, who was Abraham. One day Abraham went to war. After he won, he gave one tenth of what he took to Melchisedec, from whose order Christ's priesthood was derived. This proves that Aaron is less than Christ. Aaron was the descendant of Levi, Levi was the son of Jacob, Jacob was the son of Isaac, and Isaac was the son of Abraham. Abraham offered one tenth of what he took to Melchisedec. When Abraham offered one tenth to Melchisedec, Isaac was in Abraham's loins. Jacob and Levi were even smaller, but they were within Abraham as well. Hence, they also offered one tenth through Abraham to Melchisedec. Consequently, Christ, whose priesthood is after the order of Melchisedec, is surely greater than Aaron, whose priesthood is after the order of Levi.

INHERITING ALL OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

Once I talked to a few college students who majored in biology. I told them that according to the Bible, the father's age is less than the son's age, and the son is older than the father. This is because the source of life extends all the way to the first ancestor. By the time the line of life reaches the father, it may already be six thousand years old. Suppose his son is thirty years old. It means that his life is now six thousand plus thirty years old. Does this not therefore mean that the son's age is greater than that of the father?

Just as Adam's life was in us, the life of Christ is now in us. When we received the life of Adam, we became a part of Adam. Today the same is true about being in Christ. When we are in Christ and receive the life of Christ, we become a part of Christ. Everything in Christ becomes ours. This is God's way of salvation as revealed in the Bible.

Some may pose a question: If this is the case, why do we still need to have individual pursuit? Does this mean that we no longer need to seek after holiness and victory? Please remember that if you want to be holy and perfect, you have to view yourself according to God's view. Forget for the moment whether or not you have sinned. All that matters is being in Christ. Whether or not you are good, whether or not you have the overcoming life, and whatever way you are going does not matter. As long as you are in the box, everything that the box passes

through will become your experience. This is the gospel. This is why we say that the gospel is free. It is free because it has nothing to do with us. As long as we are in Christ, everything becomes ours. Ephesians 1:3 mentions every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. All of these are ours when we are in Christ. When we are in Christ, God cannot hold back anything from us. When we are in Christ, God cannot withhold any spiritual blessings from us. God cannot withhold them because He has already put them into Christ. God can choose not to put us into Christ, but as soon as He puts us into Christ, He cannot withhold any spiritual blessings from us. We lack nothing in Christ. God is not satisfied with giving us nine things when there are ten things in Christ. Everything that is in Christ is ours. This is God's work. Whether it is salvation, the overcoming life, power, the way, or anything else, we have them all as long as we are in Christ.

It does not make any difference even if you are the chiefest of all sinners. God has put you into Christ. When Christ died on the cross, God's punishment on Christ became your punishment, and His judgment upon Christ became your judgment. Your sins are all forgiven in Christ. God has no way to take back what He has done even if you commit more sins. This is based not only on God's grace, but also on His righteousness. Romans is a book on grace and righteousness, whereas Ephesians is on God's grace. There is a difference of timing between the two. It is God's grace for Him to work in Christ. If God did not put man into Christ, man would have no way to help himself. It is God's grace that we can be in Christ. After God put man into Christ, He judged the man who is in Christ. Today you are saved. However, you are saved not only because of God's grace, but because of God's righteousness as well. Can God judge us again after He has judged Christ? No! After He has judged Christ, He has to justify us, because we are in Christ. God is righteous, and He has to recognize everything that Christ has done.

After we become a Christian, everything depends on seeing what it means to be in Christ. After we see the meaning of being in Christ, we will enjoy great blessings.

BEHOLDING CHRIST AND NOT OURSELVES

I do not have time to go into detail concerning the matter of being in Christ. There are countless spiritual blessings in Christ such as holiness, victory, power, spirituality, faith, spiritual progress, humility, endurance, and love. Every spiritual blessing that you can imagine is in Christ. The worst kind of Christians are those

who look inward instead of outward. If you search within yourself to see whether or not there is holiness, I can tell you the answer right now—you will find no goodness within. God has saved us. But we often forget that God has saved us in Christ. We often think, "I am saved. But why is my temper still so bad? Why am I still so proud? Why is there still so much uncleanness in me?" You wish you could overcome, and you begin to consider yourself to see whether you have endurance, humility, holiness, etc. Please remember that as soon as you look within, you will not find any endurance, humility, or holiness. On the contrary, you will find uncleanness, temper, pride, and all kinds of sins. Why is this? It is because you have forgotten that God's way of salvation is in Christ, not in yourself. Humility is in Christ. Endurance is in Christ. Holiness is in Christ. Everything is in Christ. In yourself you are always unclean and defiled. But when you live in Christ, you have everything. When you live in yourself, nothing will change.

**BEING JOINED TO CHRIST,
AND ENJOYING EVERYTHING IN HIM**

Never think that God is doing something within you independently. What is within you is still uncleanness, evilness, unholiness, and pride. God's grace is not bestowed upon you, but upon Christ. When you are joined to Christ, everything of Christ will be transmitted into you. When you are cut off from Christ, all of your filthiness will come back. This is like connecting a pipe to clean water; the result is clean water. But if you connect a pipe to dirty water, the result is dirty water. After you are saved, you think that you should at least be better than before. You think that your old Adam will gradually change. But God has to prove to you that this is not possible. No, there is not such a thing! As long as you are in old Adam you will still be unclean. Only Christ can make you different. Only when you are in Christ will there be any change. How does a lamp shine? The lamp does not shine by itself. It shines when an electrical current passes through it. The same is true with Christians. All virtues and power, as well as the fruit of the Spirit, are found in Christ. As long as you are joined to Christ, you will have all of these. This is the same as saying that electricity is in the power plant. When the lamp is joined to the power plant, it shines. Being in Christ is being joined to Christ and being related to Him. When this happens, His power and His everything will be transmitted to you. It is not wrong to say that the lamp is shining. But strictly speaking, it is not the lamp that is shining, but the electricity shining through the lamp. The lamp overcomes darkness with the light of electricity.

When I was ten years old, I saw an electric lamp for the first time. At that time I marveled at it very much. It was clearly a lamp, but how could it suddenly light up? I waited until it had shined for two hours. Then I moved it to a dark room, thinking that it would continue to shine. However, it stopped shining as soon as I moved it away. The lamp went dark. It did not have any light in itself; it was dark in itself. It shined only when it was in contact with the power station.

We were all in darkness. But when we were put into Christ, we began to shine, and we began to be patient and humble. Yet we forget that the reason these things exist is because we are in Christ. After having been a Christian for a few years, we begin to think that these things are ours. Little do we realize that once we are separated from Christ, we have nothing.

CHRIST AND NOT I

First John 5 says that God has given His life to us in Christ. He has not given His life to us independent of Christ. Suppose I wrap a piece of iron in some paper. When I take the paper, I take the iron as well. "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (5:12). Apart from Christ, we cannot have anything. Nothing is given to us independently. Everything is given to us in Christ. If we know and believe this fact, we will be so happy that we will not go to sleep tonight. It is of God that we are in Christ; we have no part in this work. Everything is Christ and not us. When we see this, we will realize that there is no hope in us at all. We cannot change at all, and we cannot improve at all. Just as a lamp cannot shine when it is not connected to electricity, we have nothing in ourselves when we are cut off from Christ. If there is any difference or change in us today, it is not because we have changed in ourselves. Everything is in Christ and everything depends on Christ. It is all of Christ, not of us. This is God's way of salvation.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO IN ADAM AND IN CHRIST

Date: October 18, 1936, evening

Place: Kulangsu

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 5:17

OUR INHERITANCE IN ADAM

The Power to Sin

God's way of redemption is wonderful. Man thinks that he has to do something before he can be saved, but God does not want us to do anything in order to be

redeemed. God does not do anything in man; He does everything in Christ. Satan's work was concentrated in Adam, whereas God's work is consummated in Christ. We have to understand one thing before we can know God's salvation. Do you know how man sins? Does he have to make up his mind to sin? Friends, what do you have to do to lose your temper? Do you have to think about it for a night, saying, "I will lose my temper tomorrow. Tonight I do not have the strength to lose it; I am too weak. I wish I could lose my temper tomorrow. I will make up my mind to lose my temper tomorrow"? Is there such a thing? No! One does not need to make up his mind to lose his temper. There is no need to exert any effort for he can lose his temper effortlessly. There is no effort involved in committing sins; it only takes effort to try to not sin.

We can illustrate this by considering light and darkness. The electrical power company helps us to remove darkness by supplying us with light. But it is interesting that there is no darkness company. We need to pay for light, but there is no need to pay for darkness; it comes by itself. If you need some darkness in your home, do you have to buy it from a darkness company? No, darkness comes spontaneously; there is no need to exert any effort. However, if you want the light, you will need to exert some effort; you will need to pay a price. In the same way, there is no need to exert any effort to sin. But it takes much effort to try to not sin.

The Nature of Sin

Man does not need to pray, make up his mind, or exert any effort to sin. He sins easily. There is no need to prepare for it; it comes spontaneously. Why does a man not need to try to sin? Why is it so easy for man to sin? It is because to sin is natural. Doing good is not easy; it is not natural. Why is it so unnatural for man to do good? The Bible clearly tells us that man has the Adamic nature in him, and the Adamic nature is a sinful nature. Romans 5:12 says, "Through one man sin entered into the world." Sin came in through Adam. Those who are in Adam have inherited his Adamic sinful nature. This is why it is so natural for us to sin.

Satan wants to see the whole world sin. But if he induced every individual to sin one by one, it would take too much time. What did he do? He put the poison in the "fountainhead." Consequently, everyone who drinks the water will die. He put the poison in Adam. After Adam sinned, everyone who belongs to Adam spontaneously sins. It does not take any effort for me to sin today; I do not have to think about it or make up my mind to do it. As long as I am related to Adam

and belong to him, I spontaneously sin. Hence, I have inherited the Adamic nature and power of sin.

Inheriting Everything that Adam Had

For this reason, we should not be surprised by what we do. Since the world has such a relationship with Adam, it is natural for the whole world to sin. It is most natural for us to sin. If we want to lose our temper, we can do it in two seconds; there is no need to consciously try. We have inherited the power, mind, and mentality to sin. Because we are in Adam, we inherited everything in Adam. All of Adam becomes all of us. We have nothing; Adam has everything. We are born of him and belong to him. It is as if Adam wrote a will for us and gave us all his inheritance. We do not have to learn to commit Adam's sins; we commit the same sins and have inherited the same sins.

The Bible says that everything we have is inherited from Adam. What does it mean to inherit something? How does an inheritance pass from one person to another? Suppose you are a father and have earned and saved a great deal of money. You have a son that you love very much, and you bequeath all your money to him. The money has not been earned by your son; it was earned by you through hard work. Now you bequeath all of this money to your son. This is an inheritance, and this is what Adam did. He bequeathed everything to us. We can say that Adam bequeathed much "grace" upon us; there is no need for us to do anything to receive it. Christ has bestowed grace upon us, and it is free. Adam has bestowed sin upon us as a kind of "grace"; it is also free. Everyone who is born of Adam has received from him the free "grace" to sin. Hence, we are all sinners today. No one needs to make up his mind to sin, yet everyone sins.

We were born sinners, and we sin spontaneously and effortlessly in this world. Sinning is natural as well as habitual for us. This is our inheritance in Adam. He made us a sinner free of charge. When we are in him, he freely bequeaths to us his power and nature to sin.

SALVATION IN CHRIST

The Principle Being the Same in Christ as in Adam

God's salvation works the same way as the free gift that Adam gave to us in making us sinners. God's salvation in Christ is the same in principle as our being sinners in Adam. When we are in Adam, there is no need for us to do anything to inherit his sinful nature and power. When we are in Christ, there is no need for us to make up our mind, do anything, or come up with anything to receive salvation.

As long as we are in Christ, God's salvation comes to us unconditionally, freely, and unreservedly. As long as we are in Christ, everything of Christ becomes ours. There is no need for us to exert any strength or to think or make up our mind to do anything. The situation is exactly the same as when we were in Adam. This is grace. I sin because the life of Adam is in me. In the same way, I am good, righteous, and holy because I am in Christ and the life of Christ is in me. There is no need for me to exert any strength of my own. Only one condition is crucial—we must be in Christ.

The gospel annuls our previous relationship in Adam. Our relationship with Christ today is just the same as our relationship with Adam previously. Friends, what grace our God has bestowed upon us! I can say with joy and happiness that we can enjoy everything there is in Christ. In Christ we can partake of all that Christ can do and all that He has. This kind of participation does not require any effort of our own; it comes naturally. As long as we are in Christ, it is ours. This is just like sinning without any effort when we were in Adam. In Christ there is no place for any effort of our own; we can be humble, patient, meek, holy, and transcendent over all things. As long as we are in Christ, we can do all these things and we can have all these things.

Becoming a New Creation in Christ

Let us see what the Bible says about this matter. Please read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Does it say, "If anyone does good, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new"? No! The Bible does not say this. It does not say that only those who make up their mind and strive to do good are transferred from the old creation to the new. Rather, it says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." There is no other condition. It is not a matter of what we are, how we make up our minds, or how hard we strive to change ourselves into a new creation. It says that as long as we are in Christ, we are a new creation. Nevertheless, we all constantly think about how we can become a new creation. We try to improve ourselves, changing a little today and a little tomorrow, gradually working ourselves into a new creation. Even though we are not humble in our heart, we think that we can start at least by being humble with our words. We try to speak to others in a humble way. Or we may try to practice holiness by first being holy with our words and then holy with our thoughts. We think that although we are evil today, we can change for the better and gradually make ourselves holy. We hope that this will one day change us into a new creation. It is difficult for us to say how long we will need for such a change, but

we think that it may take ten or twenty years, or perhaps even a lifetime. But please read the Word of God: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Being a new creation has nothing to do with us. As long as we are in Christ, we are a new creation.

During my gospel meetings in Kaifeng, the younger brother of a magistrate came to me and said, "I admit that I have sinned. But no matter what you say, I still believe in Buddhism and in self-enlightenment. I have studied Buddhism for a few years, not in the superstitious ways, but by a philosophical approach and by seeking after peace of mind and contentment of life. Yet the more I study and the harder I try, the less peace of mind I have; it seems that turmoil is always within me. I have been practicing this for a few years, but have not made much progress, but I intend to spend another thirty years to continue my pursuit, and I hope that I will succeed eventually. According to what you have said, a man can become a new man within a day. Once he is in Christ, he becomes a new man. How can this be? I have studied many religious books and found that the Christian way is the fastest way. But you are very bold. Your way is even faster than the Christian way. How can this be?" I did not give him too much of an explanation, I only told him to go home and try it out. At the next meeting, he came and said, "Your method is fast. The next time you have a baptism, please tell me about it. I want to be baptized." Everything that is in Christ happens fast; there is no need to improve or adjust ourselves slowly. All the virtues are in Christ; they do not become ours by self-improvement, nor are they manufactured. As long as we are in Christ, we have all the virtues.

Does a lamp need to pray for a few hours, make resolutions, or strive before it can shine? No. All it needs is to be connected to electricity and it will shine. There is no light in the lamp itself; all it does is allow light to shine through it. The same is true with a Christian; he cannot accomplish anything through self-enlightenment, struggling, or conjectures. All he has to do is to touch Christ—the "electrical power source." Regeneration, sanctification, and power are all in Christ; they have nothing to do with changing ourselves. The overcoming life, holiness, humility, etc., are all Christ. When we are in Christ, we have all of these. We have to say, "Thank Christ that it is not I. All the glory goes to Christ. Everything is done by Christ; it is not done by me. I receive everything in Christ." The only condition is being in Christ; there is no other condition. As long as we are in Christ, we are a new creation, and the old creation has passed away.

The question is: Are you in Adam or are you in Christ? Sinning or overcoming, perishing or having eternal life have nothing to do with us. It all depends on which man we are in. This is God's way of salvation; it is the way described in the Bible. God saves us by putting us into Christ. In dealing with Christ, He has dealt with everything. Do you still remember the illustration of the chalk box and the chalk? Wherever the chalk box is, there is the chalk. The destiny of the chalk box is the destiny of the chalk. The pieces of chalk do not have to ask what will happen to them. All they have to ask is what will happen to the chalk box. This is our relationship with Christ; we do not have to ask about ourselves; we only need to ask about Christ. As long as we are in Christ, whatever Christ is becomes ours.

No Condemnation in Christ

We have to read two more verses. Romans 8:1-2 says, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." These two verses describe the kind of people who are not under condemnation. We think that those who have repented, who are righteous, and who are doing good are not condemned. But God says that those who are in Christ are not condemned. As long as a person is in Christ, that is good enough; there is no need to do anything anymore. Those who are in Christ are not condemned. There is no other condition. Why is a person no longer condemned when he is in Christ? It is because when Christ was judged on the cross, he was judged in Christ as well. The judgment that Christ went through became his judgment. Christ's experience on the cross became his experience. In Christ we are no longer condemned. The words no longer imply that there is not a second time. Christ was judged and condemned on the cross. We are in Christ, and Christ has borne our judgment. This is good enough, and there cannot be any further condemnation in Adam. If I borrow one hundred dollars and return it later, my creditor cannot demand one hundred dollars any longer. Since we have been terminated on Christ's cross once, we have been judged already, and now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ.

I am not as bold as others may think. I used to think about what would happen to me if I were to go to hell. A few times when I was sick, I feared for what would happen if I went to hell then. Today I believe that God has judged and punished me once and for all in Christ. I am very happy today, because I am no longer condemned in Christ. Brother Lui is a businessman. If anyone owes him money,

and he collects what is owed at the end of the year, he would not go and ask for more money later. This is what all honest people do in this world. Thank God that our debt has been paid by Christ on the cross, and God can no longer come to us for payment.

No Longer Impotent in Christ

Those who borrow feel intimidated by their creditors, and those who have not borrowed can be afraid to borrow. Suppose you only earned one dollar a month, and the dollar is only good for one meal. What can you do except borrow? This is like a believer who realizes that his sins are forgiven, but at the same time always worries that he will sin again. What should he do? A Greek scholar wrote thirty years ago that the word condemnation in Romans 8:1 has two meanings in Greek. It has a legal meaning and a general meaning. In the legal context it means condemnation, but in the general context it does not mean condemnation, but encumbrance or impotence. Hence this verse means that those who are in Christ are no longer condemned and are no longer impotent! In Adam we were impotent to withstand sin; we were crippled. We were impotent in respect to many sins and unable to overcome them. We made resolutions, prayed, and struggled, but we still failed. None of these ways worked. But now we are made potent in Christ. Christ is strong. Everyone who is in Christ is no longer impotent, but has become potent. The question is not whether we have power in ourselves. The question is how much has been transmitted into us from Christ. When we are in Christ we receive everything from Christ. The whole issue therefore rests on whether or not we are in Christ.

The Freedom of the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

Why are we no longer condemned in Christ? Why are we no longer impotent? Verse 2 provides an explanation: "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." The word "for" indicates that verse 2 is preceded by something in verse 1. The word "for" explains and relates to the things mentioned in verse 1. Hence, verse 2 gives the reason for verse 1.

Verse 2 mentions a law. What is a law? A law is a rule that never changes; it is something that always remains the same. The Chinese government has a law which says that whoever murders will be executed. This is a law. It does not matter if Chang or Lee or anyone else murders; he will always be executed. The law of gravity is also a law. Every object that falls will fall toward the ground. It does not matter if the object falls today or tomorrow; it does not matter if it falls in

Nanking or Peking. As long as you let go of an object, it will fall to the ground. This is what is meant by a law. This verse says that sin is a law. This means that sin always acts the same way. Man always sins. No matter who he is, he always sins. He will sin today, and he will sin tomorrow. Suppose I have a quick temper. If I lose my temper easily at Mr. Chen and lose my temper easily at anyone who is similar to Mr. Chen, this means that similar temptations produce similar results. Everyone is proud and everyone has a temper. When the right temptation comes, everyone falls to pride and temper. Similar conditions produce similar sins every time. We seldom commit new sins. Most of the time we have our private sins which we are fond of committing. This shows that sin is a law. Every sin we commit is a familiar sin. We may have struggled with them for years already, yet we repeatedly commit the same sin or sins. It is easy for us to know that we sin. But do we realize that sin is a law? Sin is not just a conduct, but a law.

This verse also mentions the law of death. What is death? The biblical definition of death is extreme weakness. If a man is sick, you know that you should give him a word of comfort. However, you do not have the strength to do it; this is the law of death. You know that you should be holy, righteous, and patient. However, you cannot make it; this is the law of death. Everyone who is sitting here today is bound by the law of sin and of death. Every time you fall, you fall because of the same sins, and every time you fail, you fail in the same things. You may commit sins that others do not commit, and you may not be able to do things that others can do. But every person has his own version of the law of sin and of death.

There is a way to overcome the law of sin and of death; it is by the law of the Spirit of life. The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death. Only Christ is not bound by the law of sin and of death. I have in my hand a copy of the New Testament. Although it is not moving, it has a constant tendency to fall. It has not fallen, however, because there is an opposite force holding it up. The force of my three fingers has stopped it from falling. Gravity is a force; it pulls the book downward. My fingers are another force; they keep the book from falling. Hence, I can say that my fingers have freed this book from the law of gravity. My hand is the "savior" to this book. The same is true with the Lord's salvation in us; He holds back the power of sin with the Holy Spirit. Although my fingers are small, they can withstand the great force of gravity. Does this book need to make up its mind, struggle, or hope not to fall? No. My three fingers have prevented it from falling. The same is true with our salvation. We do

not have to do anything. As long as we are in Christ, the law of the Spirit of life will free us from the law of sin and of death. The work of deliverance from perdition has nothing to do with us. In the same way, freedom from sin is accomplished only in Christ. When we are in Christ, we can overcome all sin. Everything is accomplished in Christ.

EVERYTHING BEING IN CHRIST

I thank God that I am saved, forgiven, justified, and have eternal life. None of these things originate from myself; they are all given to me in Christ. This is why the Lord said that He is the Beginning and the End (Rev. 22:13). Thank God that I am in Christ. Around me, in front of me, and behind me there is just Christ. Christ occupies everything. Christ, Christ, Christ, everything is Christ. What are we? If we have anything, it is because we are in Christ. Last night I spoke on the meaning of being in Christ. Tonight I spoke on overcoming sin in Christ. I do not know how to make this more clear to you. We are completely useless in ourselves. Everything is Christ, Christ, Christ. Christ is everything, and everything is in Christ.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE

Date: October 19, 1936, morning

Place: Kulangsu

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 15:9

GOD WANTS HIS WILL AND NOTHING ELSE

In Deuteronomy 25, God ordered the Israelites to blot out the memory of Amalek (v. 19). But in 1 Samuel 15, when the Israelites killed the Amalekites, they spared Agag the king of the Amalekites. They also spared the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good; they did not utterly destroy them. In dealing with the Amalekites, the people of God exercised their discernment; they killed some and spared some. God charged them to kill everything, but they wanted to spare the best ones. Among the oxen, sheep, camels, and donkeys of the Amalekites, there may have been a distinction between the strong and the weak or the great and the small. But in God's eyes there was no difference. He ordered all of them to be killed and nothing to be spared. This means that the Amalekites along with all they had were rejected. However, the Israelites seemed to have a better discernment than God. They divided the sheep and oxen of the Amalekites into those which were good and

those which were weak. They spared the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs, and good things; they killed only the weak and worthless ones.

Man often thinks that he is smarter than God and that he has more wisdom than God. He thinks that it is even possible for God to be wrong, and that He is not always economical. "Why should I set aside all that I have learned throughout the years, including my eloquence, wisdom, and ability?" Man is concerned with profit, economy, value, and result. But God does not care for these things. There is only one thing that He takes pleasure in—His own will. Other than His will, God has no pleasure in anything.

We think that it would have been a waste to kill the oxen, sheep, and Agag. Real submission is always a waste to the fleshly man. Have others ever considered that you have been wasted? Have you ever felt that you wasted yourself? Perhaps you have never felt a sense of waste. This is because you are too full. You will have a sense of waste only after you have set your flesh aside. If your self is fully utilized, and if you are full of natural elements, you will not have a sense of waste. If the oxen and sheep are saved, where is the waste? There is the sense of waste only when all the oxen and sheep have been killed. When the oxen and the sheep are spared and the flesh has not suffered any loss, there is no room to speak of waste. There is the sense of waste only when the flesh is set aside and rejected by God. When the flesh can do something, but is nevertheless stripped of the opportunity of exhibiting itself, there is the sense of waste. When an opportunity for exhibition is present, it is impossible to talk of waste! The day before yesterday we mentioned that a worker must have God's view before he can work for God. If a person's view is earthly and he serves by the flesh, he may be very competent in what he can do, yet the nature of his work is wrong and far from being noble in God's eyes.

The Israelites spared Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen because they could not find a justification for killing them. They thought that the sheep, oxen, and Agag were useful. It was too much of a waste to kill all of these good things. The problem with the Israelites was that they did not see God's will. They considered these things according to their natural concept and had pity on them. They were not willing to blot the Amalekites and everything they had out of their memory according to God's word.

THE NEED OF GOD'S REVELATION FOR SEEING THE EVIL OF THE FLESH

During the past two days, I have been considering one thing: God has to give us revelation. If we do not have revelation from God to see His will, we will justify things according to our concepts. We will consider that something is reasonable when we think that it is good and justified. As a consequence, we often do not hate what God hates and cannot sympathize with God. We should not despise such a word. If we have not dealt with this matter in a serious way before the Lord, we cannot engage ourselves in His work, because we are not qualified to do so. Even if we have done something, it will not be registered in the heavens. We need to ask God for a thorough and shattering revelation to see what He sees. When our eyes are opened, we will see how evil are the Amalekites; we will not treasure even the best of the sheep, the oxen, or Agag. We will realize that everything that issues from the flesh is useless. If we have not seen the evil of the goodness of the flesh, we have not yet seen God's revelation, and we are still not clear concerning what is spiritual.

We have listened to so many teachings and have learned so many things. We may agree that the flesh should be removed, but the question is whether or not we truly hate the flesh. We have to know the flesh, and we have to hate it to the extent that we want to kill it. Only then can we say that we have seen the revelation. Sparing the flesh is an expression of the lack of light concerning the flesh. If we see what God sees, we will judge as God judges and reject what God rejects. Ten or twenty years ago when you were still a sinner, did you realize that you were an evil person? No. Not only were you without this realization, but you even boasted with a bold conscience that you were better than your neighbors and that there were few in this world who were as good as you. Today you know that you are a sinner. When others ask if you have sinned, you say yes. But even though you say this with your mouth, you may not realize in your heart how evil you really are. What does it mean to be void of God's light? Being void of God's light is to fail to see what God sees. A man who does not see what God sees is one who is without His light. If you do not know that you are a sinner, you do not have God's light. If someone tells you now that you are without any sin, you will not dare agree with this because you have seen a little of what God sees. You have the light of God, and you readily admit that you have sinned.

In God's work, cutting away the flesh has much to do with God's light. I am not saying that the goodness of the flesh cannot render man some help. But if we have God's light, we will see that God even rejects the goodness of the flesh. God says that the energy of the flesh, as well as the natural power of attraction,

eloquence, ability, and wisdom of the flesh are useless in His work. In God's work we must not stop short of hating the fleshly energy. We must deny the goodness of the flesh in the same way that we deny the weakness of the flesh. Most people know that sin is evil and that it should be removed. But they think secretly in their heart: "Do I have to lay down my wisdom, eloquence, and power too?" Those who ask such questions are void of God's light. I know a few workers of the Lord who are very useful in God's hand. They have all experienced intense light. You may be afraid of God's light, but there are some who are not afraid of it. They want to experience God's intensified enlightening because they realize that even the best of themselves and their flesh is under God's curse and cannot be employed in God's work. How many of us have ever been enlightened by the Lord in such a strong way? We have to pray and ask God to give us a thorough revelation so that we will see what we do not understand. If we know how hopeless we are, we will repent in ashes.

PAYING ANY PRICE TO OBEY GOD

Samuel charged Saul to smite the Amalekites. Samuel was representing God. In 1 Samuel 15:13, Saul said to Samuel, "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." He thought that he had obeyed in everything. He felt that he had killed the weak sheep, oxen, and all the Amalekites, sparing only the best of the sheep, oxen, and King Agag. He thought that these were inconsequential. My brothers, can there ever be a time when obedience to God is economical? Obedience is not an economical move. Saul thought that it was enough for him to kill the weak sheep, oxen, and the Amalekites, and that his obedience was good and perfect enough. He wanted to save some things. He thought that he had removed all the evil things, that enough of the Amalekites had been killed, and that he had obeyed Jehovah's commandment!

But in verse 14, Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul said that he had fully obeyed the Lord's commandment. But where did the sound of the sheep, the oxen, and Agag come from? Saul was enraged. Those few sheep and oxen were too stupid. They could bleat and low any other time. It is often not up to us when the sheep bleat and the oxen low. They bleat and low at exactly the wrong time. They were innocent! They bleated and lowed at the wrong time! We can imagine the scene. Saul was about to say, "Blessed be thou...", when the sheep bleated and the oxen lowed. He was about to say, "I have performed the commandment

of the Lord...," when the sound of the bleating and lowing came again. After he finished his speech, the bleating and lowing cut in again. Then Samuel asked where the sound was coming from. Perfect submission would not have resulted in any noise!

LIFE OR POLITICS

Two things are outwardly similar but inwardly different: one is a thorough and inward realization of the corruption of the flesh, and the other is an outward and political performance. One is of life, and the other is a matter of politics. Life comes from within; one acts genuinely according to what is within him. Politics is intentional and artificial. A Christian should walk by life and not by politics. I wish to mention one brother. I hope I am not criticizing him. I can only say that I have never met any person who is as obnoxious about his flesh as he is. I have told him many times that his trust in his eloquence and power and the results of his work were nothing but an expression of himself. These things were not of God, and God was not pleased with them. He might be wiser, more eloquent, and more powerful than others, but none of these things could be employed in God's work. I spoke to him frankly, and he did not reject me. He said, "Brother Nee, I agree that my virtues such as eloquence, wisdom, and power are corrupt. You are right." He fully agreed with my words. He said the same thing from the first year I met him until the third year. Every time I spoke to him, he accepted my words patiently, humbly, and willingly. But he was only being political; it was not life. Politics is artificial; it does not come from within.

How do I know that he was being political and not in life? If something is political, there will be bleating and lowing. Once you hear bleating, lowing, and the sound of Agag, you know that it is politics and not life. Saul said that he had kept God's word. If he had, there would not have been any bleating or lowing sound. If it is something political, one will have to control the sound and muzzle the bleating and lowing when it is time to be quiet. If you hear any bleating or lowing, you can be sure that something political is being carried on. If the flesh can still plead for mercy, it means that one only has an intentional performance; it is not life, and it is not a genuine dealing of the flesh.

In spiritual matters, a man can only deceive himself; he cannot deceive others. You can only cheat yourself; you cannot cheat anyone else. Neither God nor the brothers, the sisters, or the world can be deceived by you. Even Satan will not be deceived by you. A man can only cheat himself. Saul might have thought that no

one heard the bleating and lowing. Actually, the whole world heard it. Yet he still thought that he had kept the sound from everyone. The brother that I just mentioned did not need anyone to point out his flesh. While he was speaking, his flesh spontaneously was exposed. One can never hide the sound of the sheep, oxen, and Agag from the ears of others. Although a man may not say anything outwardly, the inward sound will expose him. Sometimes when you tell others to deal with their flesh, natural wisdom, eloquence, and power, they may think in their hearts that they are not that bad. They may not say it with their mouth, but they cannot hide what is in their heart. There is a big difference between a person who has been judged and one who has never been judged. If a person has not been genuinely dealt with in his flesh, he may pretend outwardly that he has been dealt with, but the sheep and oxen which he has spared will inform others that his performance is not real. In spiritual matters, nothing can be hidden from God. The sheep and oxen will expose what is in man. This was Saul's history.

GOOD INTENTIONS CANNOT REPLACE GOD'S WILL

In verse 15, Saul told Samuel the reason he had spared the best of the sheep and the oxen. He wanted to offer them to the Lord. This shows how we are prone to spare good things for God in the hope that we can please Him. It is a good intention to spare good things to offer to God. But good intentions can become a substitute for God's will. Whatever God says must be done. Today we have to deal with this matter once and for all. We have to see that good intentions can never be compared with God's will. God's will does not need man's hand to adjust it. He knows what He wants and what He likes. His commandment speaks of His heart. We should not try to change His desire by our good heart.

I have a brother who works for me in my house. He is a very good cook. I have told others that he is a bad servant and a terrible employee. Why do I say this? I say this because this brother thinks he knows more than I do. He thinks he knows my stomach better than I do. Once I asked him to cook noodles. I waited for a long time, but he still did not come. Later, I found that he was cooking porridge instead. I wanted noodles, but he was preparing porridge. He thought that porridge was better for me than noodles. Since he had cooked it, I had no choice but to eat it. Man can compromise a little, but our God will not compromise. If I am the master and I want noodles, I should only be served noodles. If I say noodles, I mean noodles. This brother loves me and cares for me, but he is only qualified to be my master. He is not qualified to be my servant.

He has his own ideas, and he thinks that his ideas are better than mine. He does not work according to my instructions. Hence, we have to see that our good heart can never replace or amend God's commandment. We should never think that we can be God's counselors. He is the Lord, and we are but the slaves who take orders from Him obediently. We should not try to do anything for God out of our good heart. Such good hearts often contradict God's commandments, because they are nothing but an indication of the existence of the flesh.

OBEDIENCE BEING BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, AND HEARKENING THAN THE FAT OF RAMS

Verse 22 is very precious. This word is too good. Samuel said, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The fat of rams adds sweet aroma to the sacrifices and delights the Lord. A sacrifice is a loss to us and a gain to God. When a man offers a sacrifice, he loses something. Putting a sacrifice on the altar is a loss; it is to sacrifice oneself in order that God would gain something. A sacrifice is for man to suffer, to deny himself, and to give his best to the Lord. Yet God said that no sacrifice can replace obedience, and no work can replace our hearkening. The problem with us is that we can do everything but obey. Man thinks that he can offer up sacrifices that are better than obedience. Yet God treasures obedience and hearkening.

Even if we can do many works for God, and even if we can sacrifice, labor, suffer, and deny ourselves, none of these things can replace obedience and hearkening. Many people work laboriously and unceasingly in order to replace obedience with sacrifices. They think that as long as they work unceasingly and continuously, they can make up for their lack in obedience. The only thing they will not do is to stop and obey. Such ones can never hope to please God. I know only one thing—nothing can replace obedience.

Ten years ago I was with Miss Barber on a hill in Pai-Ya-Tan. We spent three hours walking together. On our way back I asked, "Many people say that you like to hike. Is that true?" She asked, "What do they say?" I said, "They say that they see you hiking all the time." She said, "It is easy for me to stop hiking. I have been away from England for over ten years, and I do not intend to go back. I intend to die here. Every day I like to take a little walk. I prayed about it and became clear that this is what the Lord wants me to do. It would be easy for me

to avoid this criticism of my hiking, but if this is what God wants me to do, it would be hard for man to stop me from doing it."

I noticed that Miss Barber had better food than many unbelievers, and I mentioned this to her. She said, "My friend, it is not a question of eating well or not eating well. It is just as easy for me to eat well as to not eat well. But I pray over every dollar that I spend on my food every month. God takes responsibility for my food and for how good it is; I am not responsible for it." God's will is better than our sacrifice. We may think that sacrifice and sufferings are good. We may think that everything will be all right as long as we offer good things to God. But what does God say? Our mind does not need to worry about what to do for God. All we have to do is to obey His commandment.

"YET NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL"

Before the Lord's departure from the world, He prayed the last night in the garden of Gethsemane. Many people think that the Lord was sorrowful and that His sweat became like great drops of blood because His flesh was weak and He was afraid of the cup. No! Listen to what the Lord said: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). The Lord asked that the cup be removed from Him if it were possible. Yet He prayed that it would not be according as He willed but as the Father willed. The Lord could ask for the cup to be removed from Him, but He could not ask for God's will to be removed. He could ask for the passing away of the cup of the cross, but He could not ask for the passing away of God's will. The Lord was not dealing with the matter of crucifixion but with the matter of God's will. He desired to be one with God's will. It was all right with Him whether or not the cup was taken away. All He asked for was God's will. Many times we pay attention only to the bitter cup; we think that suffering is always good and that sacrifice and labor are always good. Yet the cup is good only when it is linked to God's will. If the cup is separated from God's will, the cup has no value to it. After the Lord was clear that God's will was for Him to take the cup, He took it willingly. Before the Lord was clear that the cup was God's will, He could pray for the cup to go away. But when He was clear that it was God's will, He took it without any hesitation.

We must live for God's will, not for the sacrifices. May the Lord shine on us thoroughly so that we realize that nothing of us will ever please God. Only that which is done according to God's commandment will please God. Do not think that everything will be all right as long as we live for Him, consecrate to Him, and suffer for His sake. We must ask if this living, consecration, and suffering are

God's will. The Amalekites, the sheep, the oxen, and Agag are all useless on God's altar. The sacrifice which God wants on the altar must be something that God Himself designates. Everything else is the flesh and only deserves to die; it is not worthy to be put on the altar. May the Lord open our eyes to see that we can offend the Lord not only in sinful things, but also in offering sacrifices. May the Lord forbid us from offering what He has not designated, and may He direct us to do only that which is according to His will.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THE SUBJECTIVE ASPECT

OF BEING IN CHRIST

Date: October 19, 1936, evening

Place: Kulangsu

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:3-11

OUT OF ADAM AND INTO CHRIST

God's salvation is wonderful. However, He did not do anything in us to accomplish His salvation; everything was done in Christ. Christ has accomplished everything for us. The only way for man to be saved is to be in Christ. We do not need to ask God to do anything in us. As long as we are in Christ, everything that Christ has accomplished will be realized in us. This is God's way of salvation. Let me ask a question: How did we enter into Christ? It is God who has put us into Christ. Strictly speaking, we must come out of Adam before we can get into Christ. For example, I must get out of this room before I can go into the next room. We must have an exit before we can have an entry. First, we get out of Adam, and then we get into Christ.

GETTING INTO ADAM THROUGH BIRTH

AND GETTING OUT OF ADAM THROUGH DEATH

In order to know how to get out of Adam, we must first know how we got into Adam. John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Who are the ones who are in the flesh? They are those who are born of the flesh. As soon as we were born, we were in Adam. The life which we inherited from our parents is an Adamic life. After so many generations, the human life is still the Adamic life. Since we entered Adam through birth, how do we get out of Adam? Suppose I entered this room facing the east. In order to go out, I only need to turn around and walk toward the west. Since we entered Adam through birth, we have no other exit except through death. Once we die, we terminate our standing in

Adam. Thank God that He has delivered us out of Adam by bringing us through death.

DEATH BEING THE ONLY WAY TO GET OUT OF ADAM

In Adam we can do nothing but sin. Death is the grand deliverance by which we are delivered from the bondage of sin. A man may be bound by many things, but everything is over as soon as he dies. The same principle applies in the spiritual realm. Romans 6:7 says, "For he who has died is justified from sin." After a man has died, he can no longer sin; consequently, he is free from sin. A dead man is one whose thoughts, will, temper, and evil deeds are dead. There was a man in Australia who was sentenced to death. He committed such serious crimes that the judge handed down one hundred and eighty verdicts of death against him. However, he only needed to die once. Then he could sin no more. A man can be a drug addict, robber, murderer, or hardened criminal, but everything is over as soon as he dies. He will no longer sin. The biblical principle is the same. Once a Christian dies, everything is over with him.

The way we enter Adam is through birth, and the way we exit Adam is through death. Once we die, we are delivered from Adam's sins. We have the way now. But how can we take this way? We are born into Adam and have become a part of him. Today if we want to get out of Adam, we have to die. Once we die, we will be delivered from Adam. But how can we die? How can we be freed from Adam? The way to salvation is death, the way to victory is death, and the way to be freed from Adam is also death. The question today is, how can we die? How can we back up this "car" to its original place? Can we die by ourselves? No. There is no way for us to die by ourselves. The way of death has been prepared by God. When we believe in Him, we die in Christ and are freed from Adam. Hallelujah! How wonderful it is to be in Christ! When we are in Christ, we die.

IT BEING GOD'S WORK THAT WE DIE IN CHRIST

It is God's work that we died in Christ. When Christ was crucified on the cross, God put us into Him. We died with Him and in Him. For example, there is chalk in this chalk box. When I throw the box into the sea, the chalk will go into the sea as well. Wherever the box is, the chalk is there as well. In the same way, God has put us into Christ. All the experiences of Christ have now become our experiences. Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Him on the cross. The last part of 2 Corinthians 5:14 says that One died for all, therefore

all died. We died in Christ. God's Word says that when One died, all died because all are in Christ. When Christ died, all died in Him. There is no way for all not to die. This death is in Christ, not in ourselves. When we die, we cannot lose our temper or sin anymore. This is God's way of salvation.

THE EYES OF FAITH

The second time I was in Kaifeng, I told everyone that when a man dies, he is delivered from sin. One lady, a Mrs. Yan, came to me and said, "The Bible says that I have died. In my daily life, however, it does not seem that I have died." Then she asked, "Mr. Nee, how can I really die? If I can be assured that I am really dead, I will be delivered from sin." I told her, "We died in Christ. In ourselves we are still alive and living. If you abide in Christ, you will be dead all the time, but as soon as you live in yourself, you will not be dead. The death that God has accomplished, the death that He has created, is in Christ. If you look at yourself, you will not die. Never look at yourself in yourself. You have to exercise your eyes of faith and consider yourself dead in Christ. When you do this, you will die. God's work is not done in you, but in Christ. If you remain in Christ all the time, all that Christ is and has done will flow into you."

A lamp cannot shine by itself. It shines when electricity passes through it. We cannot control our temper by ourselves. But when we are in Christ, we will be patient spontaneously.

Some people seek for death while they are alive. We seek for life through death. I have said that we should exercise our eyes of faith and view ourselves as dead in Christ. We are not the object of our faith; the object of our faith is Christ. If I, Watchman Nee, look at myself, I will not find death. But Watchman Nee has long been dead in Christ. There is no need for me to die anymore. Thank God that we are dead in Christ. Many Christians fail on this very point. They seek for death in themselves but never find it. When we search within ourselves to see whether we have died, we will find that we are still living in ourselves. In fact, we will find that we are very much alive. Death is something that can only be found in Christ; it can never be found in us. It is a marvelous thing that man can live in two realms. We were in Adam, but God has put us into Christ. Yet in our daily life, it is possible for us to return to Adam. This is our problem. Many Christians fail because they continue to look inward. As a result they continue to live in themselves.

One sister has much experience in the Lord. When others asked her about the secret to the Christian life, she answered, "If you want to experience the

overcoming life all the time and remain victorious, you must never consider yourself outside of Christ. Whenever you consider yourself outside of Christ, you will be the same as you were before you were saved. When you look within, you are exercising your feeling and trying to see with your own eyes. But when you look at Christ, you are exercising your faith and seeing with God's eyes."

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

What else should we do after we die? After a man dies, the first thing to do is to bury him. This is the biblical meaning of baptism; baptism is a kind of burial. Yesterday, six people were baptized. This means that six people were buried. A man must first die before he can be buried. We bury a man because we believe that he has died. One woman's husband died, and she would not let others put him into a coffin for three days and three nights. She said that she was afraid her husband would suffocate in the coffin. She did not believe that her husband had really died. Would you bury a man if you did not believe that he had died? No. If I have not died, I surely would not allow others to bury me. Baptism is the acknowledgment of our position in Christ. It is to believe that we have been crucified with Christ. Everything of Christ has become ours, because everyone who believes in the Son of God is in Him. After you believe and have the faith that you have died in Him, what should you do to show that you have died? You should be baptized. Baptism is our declaration that we are in Christ and that we have died with Him. Through this act of burial, we acknowledge this fact.

DELIVERED FROM ADAM'S COMMUNITY INTO CHRIST'S COMMUNITY

A Christian must go through the station of "death" before he can be delivered from Adam, and he must go through the station of "birth" before he can enter into Christ. Between these two stations, there is a "pontoon bridge" called "burial," which is signified by our baptism. This bridge brings us from the side of Adam to the side of Christ. Baptism is joined to Adam on one end and to Christ on the other end. On one side, we say to Adam, "Farewell forever. I have left you behind and have nothing more to do with you." On the other side, we enter into Christ and begin a new life in Him.

The Bible shows us the perfect arrangement God has made for us: In Christ. This enables us to leave the community of Adam and enter the community of Christ. These two communities are separated by a grave. When a man dies, we put him into a coffin and bury him. No water in this world can wash away our sins, but the Lord's shed blood has washed us of all our sins. Through the water of baptism

we can now testify, "I have been delivered from Adam through death. I am now in Christ through burial. In Christ I have been washed of my sins, and I am saved."

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THE INIQUITY OF THE SANCTUARY

Date: October 20, 1936, morning

Place: Kulangsu

Scripture Reading: Num. 18:1-32

THE INIQUITY OF THE SANCTUARY

God's Word shows us that some sins are committed before man, while others are committed before God. Some sins are committed against ordinary laws, while others are iniquities committed against the sanctuary. In short, there are sins committed in our daily life and sins committed in the work. The book of Numbers shows us that the sins of the priests were iniquities committed against the sanctuary. Using today's terminology, they are sins committed in God's work. Most people only commit sins in their daily life, but a worker of the Lord can commit an additional kind of sin. Most sins are common sins, but a worker of the Lord can commit some special sins—sins in God's work. We have to pay special attention to this matter. A sin pertaining to the work may not necessarily involve such things as pride or jealousy. When the flesh is manifested, when the self-will is exposed, and when one speaks rashly or makes suggestions rashly, one often commits the special sin that pertains to the work. Those who do not engage themselves in God's work will not commit the iniquity of the sanctuary. But those who work for the Lord are liable of committing the iniquity of the sanctuary in addition to all the other common sins. Sinning in the work means offending God in His holiness, glory, and sovereignty. In God's work, everything that is incompatible with God's will is a sin and is an iniquity of the sanctuary.

I have often said to others as well as to myself that there are three very important considerations in God's work which we should never forget. First, the initiation of God's work must be according to His will. Second, the advance of God's work must be according to His power, not our own power. Third, the result of God's work must be for His glory. If we fail in any of these three points, we have committed an iniquity against the sanctuary. No work can be initiated by ourselves, no work can be carried out by our own strength, and no work should result in our own glory.

THE INITIATION OF THE WORK BEING OF GOD AND NOT OF US

In the meetings the sisters have their heads covered with respect to the brothers. This signifies that everyone is covered before Christ. He is the Lord, and only He is the Head. Only He is worthy to be the Lord of all, and only He is worthy to initiate any work. In God's work, no decision should be made through the discussion of two or three brothers. The result and worth of a work, whether or not it is spiritual and pleasing to God, depend not on the amount of work that has been done, but on how much of the work is initiated by ourselves and how much is initiated by God. The less we initiate, the more spiritual, worthwhile, and acceptable it is to God. I thank God that I do not have to initiate anything. He arranges everything. I do not have to be responsible for coming up with anything. We often think that we should do this or that, but God has His own agenda. We do not have to be His counselor. We only need to do His will and find out if something is according to His will. We do not have to worry about the result. The initiation of God's work must be His will and His will alone. We have no right to initiate anything. God's will must be the unique beginning of all His works.

I would like to ask the local responsible brothers a question: In your locality, do you embark on a work just because this is what many people want or because it is a logical thing that produces good results? Or do you do it because you know that it is God's will? Brothers, to initiate anything rashly is to commit an iniquity against the sanctuary. In spiritual things there is no ground for your own proposals or directions. God does not need you to be His head. In the book of Job God said to Job, "Who is this who darkens counsel/By words without knowledge?.../I will ask of you, and you shall inform Me" (38:2-3). Every time I read this, I laugh within myself. Man likes to be God's counselor. But God does not hire any counselors. Paul said, "Who has become His counselor?" (Rom. 11:34). I am afraid the co-workers have not been as serious about the work in the sanctuary as they should have been. Perhaps you were quite careful at the beginning, but today you have become quite careless and loose. Those who have a little more authority speak more and dominate more. Those who have just entered the Lord's work may be more careful than those who have been working for eight or ten years.

The book of Numbers shows us the distinction between holy things and common things. We should not fall into unholiness through touching something in a common way. Many things are holy and not common. Have you ever baptized

someone? The first time you baptized someone, you were probably quite serious. But after five or ten times, it becomes common to you. There is nothing new in the sanctuary. The priests changed the showbread, dressed the lamp, and burned the incense. They did the same things day after day and year after year. But if they were just a little bit careless, they would have committed the iniquity of the sanctuary and died. Therefore, no priest could consider his work a common thing. The first time a worker has to give a message, he is very serious. But after he speaks a few more times, it becomes a common thing to him. Many have said to me, "You seem to be prepared all the time." But I can testify that every time I read the New Testament, I feel as if I have never read it before, and every time I speak, I feel as if it is the first time I have ever spoken. Brothers, we cannot consider any of God's work as a common thing. Whether or not we are fresh to others depends on whether spiritual things are fresh to us.

Take the example of the breaking of bread. The first time we have to bless the bread we are solemnly aware of its significance. We are very careful before the Lord, and we are truly like the priests. Subconsciously, God's power and His Spirit come upon us. But gradually, we become more relaxed. Our spiritual feeling is not as strong as before, and we have little spirit for prayer and worship. A person may realize that God has not given him the power and the anointing at a particular time; however, he may think that since he has done it before, he can do the same thing today. In this way he loses his spiritual freshness and the power of life. There are three results or punishments for the iniquity of the sanctuary. First, there is a loss of the power of life; a man becomes stale. Second, there is the experience of spiritual death; there may even be sicknesses or physical death. God does not allow those who sin this way to continue. Third, there will be the judgment at the judgment seat. I have the deep sense that at the judgment seat no sin will be greater than the iniquity of the sanctuary.

Brothers, we have to take this matter seriously. We cannot initiate the work. A man can only be satisfied when his desires are met. In the same way, God can only be satisfied when His will is fulfilled. We have no other choice than to do God's will. We cannot replace God's will with anything else. All the sacrifices in the world cannot replace God's will. Men may think that their work is better than God's will and that His will may be wrong, but please remember that God does not need any counselors. He only wants us to do His will. We may have done a lot of things for God, but no matter how much we have done, the only thing that counts is God's will.

THE ADVANCE OF GOD'S WORK

BEING BY GOD'S POWER AND NOT OUR POWER

The advance of God's work can only be carried out by His power. We can only accomplish God's will and purpose by means of His power. In order to accomplish God's will, not only must the beginning be of God, the process of carrying it out must also be according to His will. We can never fulfill God's will by our own ability. Once I went to Hong Kong with three hundred dollars in my pocket. I had to cross the harbor from Kowloon to Hong Kong, which cost five cents. I asked a man to give me change, and he said that my money was no good. I showed him the three hundred dollars, but he insisted that my money was useless. He then told me that in Hong Kong only Hong Kong currency is accepted. This is like the Chinese Customs Department which accepts only currency issued by the Chinese Central Bank. The same kind of relationship exists between God's will and His power. It does not matter how much "money" you have in your pocket, you cannot buy anything in God's kingdom with it. Only God's power—God's "money"—will be accepted. Even after a man knows God's will, there is still the danger that he will try to accomplish it by his own power, ideas, charisma, or eloquence. Abraham's begetting of Ishmael is one example. This is where the problem lies. The starting point and final goal of a work may be according to God, but the means and power that a man uses to accomplish His will are of great significance. Every worker of the Lord must check with himself about the means that he uses to accomplish God's will.

The goal of a work must be spiritual. But the method and means by which we reach God's goal must also be spiritual. Otherwise, we will commit the iniquity of the sanctuary by bringing the flesh into the sanctuary. God said, "The stranger who comes near shall be put to death" (Num. 18:7). The accomplishment of God's work has nothing to do with our power. The question is not how much we have done, but whether we have done something according to God's power. A brother said, "Only that which is from heaven can go back to heaven." A sister also said, "If the Lord comes, we can go home." Let me ask whether we will be going home or visiting as a guest when we go to the Lord. The answer lies in whether or not we come from the Lord. If I came from the Lord, my return would be like going home. Otherwise, it would be like a visitation. I cannot say that I am returning to Amoy, because Amoy is not my home. If we are to return to heaven, we must first come from heaven. If a man derives his strength from Adam, he

can only return to Adam; he can never return to God. A worker must remember that God's work can only be accomplished by God's power. Otherwise, no work can please God.

THE RESULT OF GOD'S WORK BEING FOR GOD'S GLORY AND NOT FOR OUR GLORY

The initiation of God's work is His will and the advance of His work is His power. These two things have nothing to do with us. In the same principle, the result of God's work is God's glory, not our glory. After I preached in a place, a brother came to me and said, "Brother Nee, you spoke so well tonight! Are you proud of it?" I did not answer him immediately, because no one had ever asked me such a question before. I thought about it, and asked myself if I was proud of my speaking. Then I answered him, saying, "I have never thought about this question before. Perhaps I am very proud, but I have never thought of it." That evening I learned that as long as we are only for God's will and glory, we will never think of usurping His glory. If we have the thought of usurping His glory, we will surely have a problem with the first and second point.

One thing which may be superfluous can be brought up at this point. Why does God not allow man to be saved by works (Eph. 2:8-9)? What is the purpose of God monopolizing the work of salvation? The purpose is that God wants to have all the glory. The amount of work one does determines the amount of glory he receives. God does not want us to share His glory. Therefore, He does not allow us to do anything. This is why He has chosen the ones who are weak, foolish, and despised by the world for His work. First Corinthians 1:29 says, "So that no flesh may boast before God." God does not wish to see us getting the glory. He can give everything to man. He is even willing to give His Son to man. But He will not give His glory to man. We can only enter into the Lord's glory. We may be very poor and weak, but as soon as we render a little help to some brothers and sisters and as soon as we save a few people, we begin to steal God's glory. Stealing His glory is committing the iniquity of the sanctuary. It is very easy for us to commit the sin of stealing the Lord's glory.

None of us wants to be a thief. However, stealing God's glory is the act of a thief. God requires that we not only remove outward, evil acts, but also that we do not steal His glory. God is the God of all goodness, and we are men of all evil. We can only say that all goodness is found in Him alone. Stealing God's glory is committing the iniquity of the sanctuary. The showbread, lampstand, and incense altar are all Christ. Other than Christ, there is nothing in the sanctuary. God does

not want us to have any glory of our own in the sanctuary. If a man enters the Holy of Holies, he should only see the ark, which is Christ, and the cherubim above the ark, which represent God's glory. Everything that we see in the tabernacle is related to God's glory. The temple was filled with God's glory. In it we see only Christ; we do not even see the sacrifices.

The question today is who is qualified to share God's glory. Last year God might have called some brothers to His work. He might have given you the experience of the outpouring of the Spirit, and you might have received the overcoming life. During the past year, I have heard that many have worked for the Lord in a wonderful way, but I am afraid that some will begin to become proud. I am afraid that when some have more spiritual knowledge and experience, they will also increase in spiritual pride. They have not yet seen God's will and glory. Therefore, they still work by themselves and seek their own glory. Please listen to the Bible. It says that God "rejects" (1 Sam. 15:23), and "resists" the proud (1 Pet. 5:5). It is difficult to find stronger words than these in the Bible. The word reject means to be finished with someone, whereas resist is a word that is used against Satan. There is nothing more abominable in the eyes of God and nothing more evil in His work than pride. We have no ground to stand on other than being in dust and ashes.

In this world, everyone under Satan's deception is a proud person. A proud person does not know himself; those who know themselves will not be deceived. When we come before God, we have to realize that everything we have is unclean. Unless the Lord's blood covers me constantly, I dare not work for Him. In fact, I cannot even be a Christian if I do not have the covering of His blood. What do you have that is not from the Lord's grace? Do you think that you are better than others in any way? Are you holier than others in any way? If God exposed everything within you, you would find out how much uncleanness there is within. During the past few days we talked about the excommunication of a certain brother. Every time we came to God, we came with fear and trembling. Had it not been for the Lord's grace, we would have been worse than our brother is.

We are under God's grace today. We cannot enter into God's glory yet. We have to wait for the time of resurrection before we can obtain God's glory. Today we can only remain humble and useless like Lazarus the beggar, who was always begging under the table. We can only be those who receive and accept grace in true humility before His face.

It is unfortunate that those who partake of God's work can commit the iniquity of the sanctuary. How evil is the sin against the sanctuary! If you read Numbers 18, you will see that the punishment for sins committed in the sanctuary was primarily death. The sin of coming near to the sanctuary results in death (vv. 1-7). The sin against the sanctuary does not need to go through man's judgment; God judges it directly. Those who come near to the sanctuary die immediately; there is no need for the priests to judge it. Ordinary sins must pass through the priests' judgment, but the iniquity of the sanctuary is a direct offense against God, and God judges it directly. Many sins offend God indirectly, but the iniquity of the sanctuary is a direct offense against God. This is because the sanctuary belongs to God and the iniquity of the sanctuary is an infringement on God's glory and on God Himself. This is a very serious matter; I can only speak of it under the precious blood. I ask for the Lord's forgiveness, and I also ask for the brothers' forgiveness.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Date: October 20, 1936, evening

Place: Kulangsu

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:3; John 12:24, 33; Gal. 3:28

During the past three evenings, we have seen the matter of being in Christ. Last night we saw one thing that is accomplished in Christ—death. Christ has died on the cross, and those who are in Christ have also died. We do not have to die ourselves; there is no need for us to seek to die or to think of ways to die. In Christ we are all dead. Through the death of Christ, those who are in Him are dead already.

We have a brother who was an officer in the army. He told me that if anyone retreated during a battle and ran away from the army, he would be executed immediately. He talked about this with the other officers. The military law was stricter than any civil law, and many soldiers could not take it. The officers were cruel and constantly harassing them. Yet once a soldier dies, he is free from the authority of the officers, and the officers can no longer do anything to him. An officer can abuse a soldier only to the point of death, after which the officer can do nothing more. The same principle is involved with our being in Christ. Adam's sin dominates us. Through sin Satan often harasses and overpowers us. But once we die in Christ, we are free from its domination.

This is God's way of dealing with our problems on the negative side. But what has He done for us on the positive side? God has appointed Adam to be the head of the human race. After Adam fell, everyone became a sinner by birth, because everyone is in Adam. How can God deliver us out of sin? His way of salvation is to appoint a new Head—Christ. Christ is the Head of the new human race, just as Adam was the head of the old human race. God has put us into Christ. We become persons in Christ, just as we were persons in Adam. Man is never independent; either he is in Adam or in Christ. If he is not in Christ, he is in Adam. There is only one man in heaven, and there is only one man in hell. As we are sitting here today, we should ask ourselves whether we are in Adam or in Christ. We must realize that we leave Adam and enter into Christ through His death. The resurrection of Christ is the beginning of everything in the new creation. It is interesting to note that the Bible never tells us to believe in the death of Christ. It only tells us to believe in His resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:14, Paul said, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is vain; your faith is vain also." The death of Christ takes care of the negative things; it terminates everything in the old creation. The resurrection of Christ is positive; through resurrection we receive a new life. We are delivered from sin and enabled to serve God. When Christ resurrected, those who died in Him were also resurrected. They became a new man in God's eyes through the new life they received.

REGENERATED THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

First Peter 1:3 mentions a very wonderful thing. It says that we have been regenerated through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Many people in the church today talk about regeneration, but they do not understand how regeneration occurs. Many say that we have been regenerated through the cross. But Peter said that we have been regenerated through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have been regenerated through Christ's resurrection. In other words, if Christ had not resurrected, we would not have been regenerated. When Christ died and resurrected, we died and resurrected with Him as well (Eph. 2:6), and we received His life into us. Regeneration brings us the life of Christ. This life was imparted to us at the time of Christ's resurrection. He first had to die before He could resurrect. If He had not died, He could not have resurrected and would not have been able to impart His life to us.

Thank the Lord that He has died and lived again. Therefore, He can dispense His life to us.

We need to consider Christ's death and resurrection before we can understand the overcoming life that we have received in Christ. When the Lord was on earth, He spoke of the parable of the wheat. This is recorded in John 12:24. The Lord said that if a grain of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it dies, it bears many grains. Verse 33 shows clearly that the death of the grain of wheat, as mentioned by the Lord, refers to His death. A grain of wheat is different from a grain of sand. A grain of wheat has life, whereas sand does not have life. But if the grain of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, it will remain as grain even after millions of years. The Lord Jesus as the grain of wheat fell into Bethlehem and died at Golgotha. Then He resurrected, and in resurrection He regenerated us, giving us the same life as His. If Christ had not left heaven to come to earth, there would only be one person, Himself, today. The Bible says that Christ is God's only begotten Son (1:18). This means that He is the unique Son. God loves His only begotten Son, but He wants to have many sons (Heb. 2:10). He desires to see His only begotten Son become the firstborn Son so that He can have many sons.

In the Gospel of John, Christ is God's only begotten Son. But in Romans 8 and Hebrews 2, He has become God's firstborn Son. We cannot call a person a firstborn son and an only begotten son at the same time. Being a firstborn son means that there are other sons to follow, but being the only begotten son means that there are no more sons. Yet God wants His only begotten Son to become the firstborn Son. How can Christ as the only begotten Son of God become God's firstborn Son? If the only begotten Son remained in heaven all the time, there would forever be an only begotten Son. In order for Him to become the firstborn Son, there is a need for Him to "fall" from heaven to the earth. One day Christ "fell" from heaven to Bethlehem and later died. There are two aspects to His death: the first is the redemptive aspect, which is for the purpose of taking away our sins. The second is the non-redemptive aspect, which is for the purpose of releasing His life.

GOD'S LIFE BEING RELEASED THROUGH DEATH

Let us read Luke 12:49. This is the deepest verse in the Gospel of Luke. The Lord said, "I have come." He does not mention anything about redemption. He merely came "to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already

kindled!" This verse speaks of a fire being cast on the earth. This means that the fire is not from the earth, but from heaven and from God. Fire signifies the life in the Spirit. The Lord came to cast fire on the earth, that is, to release God's life to the earth. Following this the Lord said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" (v. 50). The word "pressed" in Greek means "bound" and "confined." The Lord was saying that He came to release the life of God. Yet He was still in the flesh and could not release such a life. He felt bound and confined. Because of His flesh, God's life could not be released; His life was limited by the flesh. This is why He felt bound and confined.

The Lord spoke of a baptism which He had to be baptized with, which was not yet fulfilled. Since He had already been baptized in chapter three, why did He say that He had another baptism to be baptized with? We must note that the Lord did not say that He had not been baptized. He was saying that there was a baptism that had not yet been accomplished. "Baptism" in this verse clearly refers to His death on the cross (Mark 10:38). The death of Christ was His great release. If Christ had not died, the divine life within Him would have been imprisoned and bound. But once He died, the divine life was released and ready to be received by man. This is what He wished to see.

The phrase in Jesus is not in the Bible. The Bible only says "in Christ." We cannot be in Jesus, because Jesus was a man. He was God's only begotten Son, and we have no part in Him. No one can be in Jesus of Nazareth. But one day this man who was in the flesh, this individual man, was crucified on the cross. Although His flesh died, this death released His life. When He resurrected from the dead, He became Christ Jesus; He became the One whom we can get into. When we are in Christ, we receive His life; we die and are raised up together with Him. This is what Christ's resurrection has accomplished.

Let us now turn back to John 12:24. The grain of wheat in this verse refers to Christ, the only Begotten of God. When Christ died, the grain of wheat died. The shell of the grain was broken, and the life of the grain was released. After some time, the one grain became many grains. All the grains come from the one grain. Originally, there was only one grain. Now it has become many grains. The one grain becomes many grains by falling to the ground to die. Christ, the one Man, died; His body was broken, and His life was released. In resurrection, the one grain becomes us; we become the many grains. Our life has its origin in Christ, the one grain. Our life is derived from Christ. In this way, we know what it means

for Christ to be the Head and for us to be His members. Although this life is in us today, this life comes from Christ. This is the process through which Christ regenerated us.

HAVING THE SAME LIFE

The Lord was first the only begotten Son. After His death and resurrection, He brought forth many grains and became God's firstborn Son. As the many grains, we have now become God's many sons. On the day of resurrection the Lord said to Mary, "I ascend to My Father and your Father" (John 20:17). The Lord could not have said this three days before. But on the day of resurrection, He could say this. Before His death, He did not have such a relationship with us, but through His death and resurrection, He released His life to us. We have all received the same life and become the sons of God. Before our regeneration, we were different in Adam in many ways. Now in Christ we become the same. We have the same life and share the same nature.

A NEW MAN IN CHRIST

Outwardly, baptism appears to be a very simple matter. But we must never consider it as being that simple. Through baptism, everything is buried. The end of Galatians 3 says that those who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There cannot be Jew or Greek, slave or free man, male or female; we are all one in Christ Jesus (vv. 27-28). For many years Communism has tried unsuccessfully to abolish all class distinctions. Even if it can abolish the father-son relationship, there are the other relationships that cannot be abolished. But in Christ, all distinctions, including nationality, sex, and class are abolished. In Christ we have all become one. Please remember that our becoming one has everything to do with the baptism in verse 27. We were buried in the water when we acknowledged that our old man had died and that this old man and all that he possessed had been crucified with Christ. When we entered the water, we entered as a person in Adam. But when we came out of the water, we came out as a Christian in Christ. When we came out of the water, all of our differences in Adam were left behind in the baptismal water and buried. We now have Christ as our life; we have all become Christians, and we can now be one.

NO JEWS OR GREEKS

Paul mentioned Jews and Greeks in Galatians 3 because the Jews were a proud people. They considered all Gentiles to be dogs and pigs. If you were to give money to the poor among the Jews, they would not take it. They considered

themselves to be the only people who were chosen of God. Their racial consciousness was extremely strong. It was impossible to make Jews and Greeks one. But after they believed in Christ and received Him, they entered into the baptismal water. The part that distinguished Jews as Jews could not come out; only the part which is Christ could come out. Baptism is a test; it shows whether a person is in Christ or not. Do you still hold onto your national distinctions? Do you still hold onto the distinction between slaves and free men? At the time of the Roman Empire, slaves did not have any freedom. There was a vast difference between slaves and free men. Yet all those who are baptized into Christ have become one in Christ. There are no more distinctions between the nationalities and races and between slaves and free men.

NO SLAVES OR FREE MEN

In Shanghai a brother works for me as my cook. At home I call him by his name, but in the meetings I call him a brother. Once I asked him to come to me. He said, "Mr. Nee..." I interrupted him and said, "In Christ there cannot be servants and masters. You should not call me, 'Mister'; you should call me, 'Brother.'" There was a sister in Shanghai who had an unsaved husband. The winter before last, they decided to pray to the Lord. The wife prayed first, and then the husband also prayed and became a member in the Lord. I told the husband when he was baptized that from the time they were married until this day, they were husband and wife; however, from this night forward, their relationship in Adam was terminated. They had become one in Christ. Once I met a brother in Canada, and I asked if his father was saved. He told me that his father was a brother and that they had become one in Christ. In another meeting, I had to stand up to introduce my uncle, and I called him my brother. In a family, there are different family ties. But in Christ and in the church, there are no family ties. We have all become one in Christ. I have often said that we call our children our children at home, but in the church we call them our brothers and sisters.

In Kaifeng, Honan province, many government officials believe in the Lord. I was invited once to preach to them. When a local brother introduced them to me one by one, he addressed them as Officer So-and-so. I turned around and told him that we have all been saved from Adam into Christ and that we were all brothers. Two of the brothers were heads of some government departments. Some time ago they came to Shanghai and had a meal with the brothers. A brother was about to address them as Officer So-and-so, but when he saw me, he corrected himself immediately and said, "I am sorry. I made a mistake. They are Brother

So-and-so." Hallelujah! Through death we have been delivered from Adam, and through resurrection, we have entered into Christ. In Christ we are all God's sons and dear brothers to one another.

NO MALE OR FEMALE

In Christ there is also no distinction between male and female. The Bible only speaks of God's sons. Sisters, what are you? Through God's only begotten Son, you have all become sons. In the flesh you are female, but you have received the life of God's Son. This life is the life of the Son. Therefore, even the sisters are sons. A brother once said that the brothers should be called male brothers and the sisters female brothers. This is right. Second Corinthians 6:18 says that we are sons and daughters of God, but this portion is not talking about our relationship in Christ. Hence, there is no contradiction between that portion of the word and Galatians 3:28. We are all sons of God in Christ, and there cannot be male or female. This is a glorious fact.

RECKONING OURSELVES DEAD IN CHRIST

Since this is the case, what should our attitude be today? Romans 6:11 provides the best answer. This verse says that we should reckon ourselves dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus. If the words "in Christ Jesus" were taken away from this verse, there would not be any Christian faith. Many people believe that being a Christian is a matter of "counting everything from yesterday as being dead and everything from today as being alive." But the death and life we talk about are in Christ. I have read Romans 6:11 many times and have spoken on it many times, but often I forget the words "in Christ." If we are not in Christ, we can never reckon ourselves dead, and we cannot die. We die in Christ, not in ourselves.

We should say to the Lord, "In myself I am still not dead; I am still alive to sin. Today I still want to sin. But thank You because You have said that I am dead in Christ. I do not believe in myself; I believe that I am dead in Christ. I believe that I am dead in Christ already!" This is faith. Death comes by faith, not by works. We should not seek to die or try to die when temptations come. No! We are dead when we are in Christ. We have died in Christ, and God has crucified us in Christ. When we are in ourselves, we are alive, but when we are in Christ, we are dead. Our death in Christ is not something that will happen tomorrow or something that is happening today. Our death in Christ is an accomplished fact. We died in Christ long ago. This is an accomplished fact.

RECKONING OURSELVES LIVING TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS

On the one hand, Romans 6:11 says that we should reckon ourselves dead to sin. This is the negative side of our being in Christ. On the other hand, it says that we should reckon ourselves living to God in Christ Jesus. This is the positive side of our being in Christ. First we die in Christ, then we are made alive in Christ. When we are made alive, we bear the fruit of the Spirit, which are the various virtues. Yet we cannot live out these virtues by ourselves; we can only live them out as we live by the life of God. If we live by the life of God, we will spontaneously overcome sin and bear the fruit of the Spirit. There is no need to pray much. It is better to praise instead. When temptations come and Satan tells us that we are still living in ourselves and that we have not died, we should say to him that we are no longer in ourselves, that we are in Christ, and that we are alive unto God in Christ.

VICTORY BEING IN CHRIST

A victorious life does not depend on the so-called reckoning. We overcome when we are in Christ. We may do a wonderful job of reckoning when we are in the meetings. But when we go home, it would not work to try to continue to reckon in ourselves. Victory can only be found in Christ. Let me illustrate this by the example of the lamp. A lamp shines when it comes in contact with electricity. The source of the lamp is the electrical power plant. A lamp shines as long as it is in touch with electricity. The lamp cannot shine in itself; it shines because it is connected to the electrical power plant. Furthermore, consider the difference between the Shanghai electric street trolley and the automobile. Neither the trolley nor the automobile can move by themselves. A trolley moves when it is in contact with electricity, whereas a car moves by the power of combustion. It is possible for the power of a car to run out. When the fuel runs out, the car will not run. However, our life is not like an automobile with a limited supply of fuel. Our life works in the principle of the trolley. As long as we are connected to Christ, all the riches of Christ will be transmitted to us continuously. There is no need to worry if the supply will run out.

The whole matter today is whether or not we are willing to be in Christ. If there are unsaved friends in the audience here, you only need to enter into Christ and to be joined to Him. All of His riches will flow into you. This is God's grace; you do not have to do anything, yet you can receive everything.

Death is a termination; it is negative. It terminates our life in Adam and buries everything that is old. Resurrection is the beginning of the new life; it is positive and initiates our new life in Christ. In Christ's resurrection, we receive His life. Hence, we die in Christ and also resurrect in Christ. Both death and resurrection are in Christ. Everything is in Christ.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

CO-WORKERS' MEETING

Date: October 21, 1936, morning

Place: Amoy

(Editor's Note: This chapter is an excerpt of notes from a co-workers' meeting. Most of the notes were reports by different co-workers concerning the work in various places. Only the portions containing Watchman Nee's words of fellowship, his answers to questions, and related portions of the meeting pertinent to his fellowship have been included.)

Brother Kuo asked: Presently, I am a responsible brother in my locality. If the Lord delays and no mature ones move to our locality, should we try to produce responsible brothers out of our own locality?

Brother Nee answered: The elders of each local assembly must bear the responsibility of edifying the brothers in their own locality. We find this in Paul's Epistles to Timothy and the book of Hebrews.

Those who think that they are able to work and only trust in themselves will not have the blessing of the Lord on their work. A man must be dealt with by the Lord to the extent that he no longer acts by his own strength, but acts solely by God's strength. He must learn to continually trust in God. When he does, God will use him. When Moses first volunteered to work for God, he appeared to be very strong. God had to do something to force him out of Egypt, and he became a shepherd in the wilderness at Sinai. Later, when he acknowledged that he could do nothing, God came in to call him to His work.

Natural ability cannot be our capital for spiritual work. In the eyes of God, a Christian is one who does not look at himself. He does not become disappointed by looking at his own weaknesses, nor proud by looking at his own strengths. A worker of God must not look at himself. He must not look at his weaknesses or his strengths. God can use a donkey to utter human words, and you are better than a donkey. This is a fact. What is impossible with man is possible with God. We must learn not to look at ourselves.

If you want to work for God, you must seriously seek for light, revelation, and gift from Him. One brother in Shanghai sought for the power of the Holy Spirit again and again, but was not able to obtain it. Later, he asked a few brothers and sisters to pray for him. He said, "Some gifts are designed especially for some people. Lord, Your Spirit can work through a donkey, and I believe that You can use me also." Soon after this he experienced the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some have asked Andrew Murray about humility. Many people think that considering oneself to be small is being humble, and considering oneself great is being proud. But Andrew Murray answered that humility is not considering oneself at all, whereas being proud is considering oneself.

Brother Chung asked: I feel that I need to go to Fu-ching.

Brother Nee answered: Are you clear that this is the Lord's will?

Brother Chung answered: I have prayed and asked the Lord about it.

Brother Nee answered: It is not enough to say that you have made a telephone call. You must receive an answer to your call. Many people know that they should pray when something happens. But after they pray, they do not know whether God has answered their prayer. Not only must we pray, we must also receive definite revelation from the Lord and be clear of His leading.

Brother Chung should also learn to join ranks with others and go on together. One must not be strong-willed; rather, he must cooperate and work together with others.

Brother Jin-shiu Han fellowshiped: Brother Nee has spoken on the iniquity of the sanctuary. I received much help from that message. I want to consecrate myself to God to enable Him to deal with me more. I hope to go to Shanghai to receive more training.

Brother Nee's fellowship: If you want the Lord to enlighten you, you must have a determination to overturn all the wrong things that you have built up in the past. Many sins need to be dealt with. You have to ask the Lord to give you the light to remove all the wrong things. No one can say that he has dealt with his sins for the last time. It is not enough to just confess your sins before men. Before the Lord, you must condemn yourself and hate yourself for your sins. You must go through a clearinghouse experience with respect to your sins once in a while. If a brother has not experienced this for two or three months, he is probably not right with the Lord.

[Brother Yau-yee Wang explained how the Lord had been leading him in the work. He related two great crises he had encountered: (1) his ulceration of blood, and (2) his encounter with bandits.]

Brother Nee's fellowship: If you are clear about the Lord's leading within, you should not be influenced by outward circumstances. Whether or not the environment works against you is not a reliable sign. The most important thing is whether or not there is the anointing within. If you are clear about the Lord's leading within, nothing should shake you.

Some things require the Lord's guidance only once, and the matter is settled forever. Other things require His guidance again and again. For example, the matter of marriage is a once-for-all decision. But regarding where you should eat, either in a restaurant or at home, there is no one-time rule.

Brother Teng fellowshiped: We have over ten people at the bread-breaking table meeting. There are more at the message meetings, about seventy to eighty people. Even when the attendance is low, we still have fifty to sixty.

Brother Nee's word: Please render the brothers some training right away. There is no need to ask brothers from other localities to come to help you. Moreover, you have to teach the young brothers to submit to the elderly ones.

Brother Ke Lien-min's fellowship: I feel that I am too young and need more training. I will go to Pu-Tien to join Brother Tsai in his work. I feel that a young one must follow an elderly one. Otherwise, he will suffer great loss spiritually.

Brother Nee's word: Faith is not making sure that every outward thing is safe and sound before doing anything. Faith is related to one's inward condition. If one is on the right path inwardly, he should go according to the Lord's leading.

After George Müller started his first orphanage, someone told him not to move too fast. But God's way is higher than our way. Later, he quickly started a second and a third orphanage. While he was starting the first, he encountered many difficulties. But he did not care for any of them, because he was clear that he was following the Lord's leading. Man's word could not influence him, nor could the environment change him.

The Acts of the Apostles is a book of "acting," not a book of "sitting." The workers of the Lord should not remain in one place. We should follow the Lord's leading to work in other places. For example, the workers in Shanghai should go to other places and leave the responsibility of the church in Shanghai to the local brothers. When the workers return, they may find the local condition better than before.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

HOW TO BE IN CHRIST

Date: October 21, 1936, evening

Place: Kulangsu

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:30; John 3:16; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 6:3, 11

During the past four evenings, we have seen the biblical meaning of being "in Christ." The opposite of being in Christ is being in Adam. First, we spoke on the life and nature of two great communities—the community of Adam and the community of Christ. Next, we saw that we need to move out of the community of Adam and into the community of Christ. This is our salvation and regeneration, which gives us a new beginning and leads to our life in Christ. We also saw how we moved out of the first community and into the second community, that is, out of Adam and into Christ. We saw that God did not work individually on men. All other religions work on men individually. But Christ's salvation is not accomplished through human ways; it is God's own work in and through Christ. A Christian is one who is joined to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and who partakes of all that Christ has. Although we are poor in ourselves, we are joined to Christ. Everything of Christ flows to us. We do not have to do anything. When God put us into Christ, He became everything to us. This is the gospel. Of course, we need to emphasize the truth in our messages. However, after we have presented the truth, we must also present the way to practice the truth. Some can tell me that Amoy is very good, but in the end they must also tell me how to get to Amoy. Tonight we will consider the way we can be in Christ.

IT BEING OF GOD THAT WE ARE IN CHRIST

The first half of 1 Corinthians 1:30 says, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus." Being "of Him" means to originate from God. At the time the Lord died on the cross, we were put into Christ already. This is God's work. During the first evening, I spoke of putting chalk into a chalk box and throwing it into the sea. If an ordinary person like me, who is five feet eleven inches and one hundred forty pounds, has the power to do this, how much more power does God, the Creator of the universe, have in putting us into Christ? God has done this and unveiled it to us in the Bible. We do not know how He did it; we only have to believe it.

BELIEVING INTO CHRIST

It is of God that we are in Christ Jesus. Since this is the case, what do we have to do? We have said that God has put us into Christ. But how can we obtain this

blessing? There is one book in the New Testament that tells us how we receive life in Christ—the Gospel of John. The most familiar verse in John is 3:16. It says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." Many unbelievers have criticized the church for not exhorting people to do good and for not teaching people other things; it only does one thing—it asks people to believe. Actually, the Bible does not ask people to just believe; it asks people to believe into Christ. The Bible does not say that we should believe a thing, like believing some news published in the newspaper. The Bible says that when a man believes, he believes into Christ. Through believing, we become one with Christ. To be one with Christ means to be in Christ. On the one hand, it is of God that we are in Christ. On the other hand, we have to believe into Him.

THE DEFINITION OF FAITH

Let us now find out what faith is. The most important matter in the Bible is faith. Perhaps the faith that we know of is not the faith that the Bible speaks about. The Bible mentions faith several hundred times. But the only place that gives a definition to faith is Hebrews 11:1. This verse says, "Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." The word "substantiation" is not a noun in Greek, but a verb that is turned into a noun. It can be translated as "substantiating." Most English translations render this word as "substance." Only J. N. Darby's translation renders it as "substantiating." In Chinese there is no comparable word for it.

Human beings are made with a physical body. How can we relate to the material world around us? We relate to it through our five senses. If a man is deprived of the five senses, he will not know anything about the physical universe. The world is full of physical objects of all sizes and forms, each having its own shade, color, and shape. These objects are realized through our eyes. When sight is transmitted into us, we know that all these objects exist in the world. Colors are outside of us, but they are transmitted into us through the eyes. These colors are the substance that the Bible speaks of. The eyes substantiate the colors of objects. In the same way, faith substantiates the substances that are in the spiritual world. We may talk to a blind man about colors, and there may be all kinds of colors in this world, but to him there is no color. This does not mean that there is no color in the world. It only means that a blind man does not have the faculty to substantiate the colors that objects possess.

Today God wants the things that He has accomplished in Christ to be substantiated in us. This is a function of faith. Faith is a kind of substantiating; it reveals the substance that is in the spiritual world. Discussing spiritual things with a person who does not have any faith is like a painter discussing color with a blind man. The blind man may deny the existence of any color. This does not mean, however, that there are no pictures or colors in the world. It merely means that the blind man lacks the proper faculty to substantiate the colors. What are the spiritual things in Christ to you? Is my speaking to you like the painter speaking to the blind man about his painting? I hope not.

The question is not whether there is a spiritual world. The question is whether or not there is an organ to realize the things in the spiritual world. Although a blind man cannot see with his eyes, he can hear with his ears. If I speak to a blind man about color, and he tries to listen with his eyes, he will not hear anything. You may laugh at this thought. It is ridiculous because the man has used the wrong organ to substantiate colors. Every organ and faculty in the human body has its special functions. The only organ that will substantiate spiritual things is faith. It is wrong to try to substantiate spiritual things with one's feelings.

Why does faith substantiate or make spiritual things real? It is because Christ has accomplished everything. God has put everything into Christ. In the spiritual world, God does not need you to create "colors" and "shapes"; He has finished everything. All you have to do is exercise your spiritual eyes, that is, your faith, to substantiate them. The faith that the Bible speaks of is a faculty that substantiates spiritual things.

A question may arise in our actual experience. You may say, "You have said that I have died, but I do not feel as if I have died. I feel as if I have not died. I still have many sins, and I am still very much alive!" Please remember that our physical eyes can only substantiate physical things. Only faith can substantiate spiritual things. Faith is acknowledging that whatever God says is true. If we look at ourselves and try to feel something in ourselves, we will only substantiate the things in Adam. Why are we not able to substantiate the things that are in Christ? It is because we have used the wrong organ. We are seeing with our physical eyes, and we are feeling with our feelings. We are not exercising faith.

BELIEVING IN GOD'S WORD

You may ask, "What should I believe now that you have told me to believe?" How does faith work in reality? Please remember that our faith is based on God's

Word. Believing in God's Word means that when God says in His Word that certain things have been accomplished, we believe that they have been accomplished. A missionary once asked me, "What is the difference between God's Word and His work?" I was shaking his hand and I had my gloves on. I explained that God's work is like the hand, while His Word is like the glove. When someone holds my glove, he is holding my hand. In the same way, when we hold onto God's Word, we hold onto His work. When I explained it in this way, he became clear. All we have to do is to hold onto God's Word; His work is in His Word. If the hand is not in the glove, it would be useless for anyone to shake the glove. But God's work is now in His Word. We should say to the Lord, "You have said that Your work is accomplished. I believe in what You said." If God's Word says it, we should also say it. God's Word says that our sins are forgiven in Christ. We should respond by saying that our sins are forgiven in Him. God's Word says that our sins have been judged in Christ. We should respond by saying that our sins have been judged in Christ. God's Word says that the old man has died. We should respond by saying that our old man has died. God's Word says that we have received a new life. We should respond by saying that we have received a new life. If we do this, everything in Christ will be ours.

John 15 says that the Lord is the vine and the Christians are the branches. To outsiders this may not seem like anything sensational, but to a Christian this is a revolutionizing fact. All the sap in the vine flows into the branches. The fruit, leaves, and branches all derive their growth from the tree. A Christian is a branch on Christ the vine. He does not need to struggle to grow leaves or bear fruit. All he has to do is remain in the vine. However, many Christians feel that they do not look like a branch. They pray and ask to become a branch. These prayers are absolutely useless. We are branches already, and there is no need for us to pray to become a branch. We only need to see that we are branches. If we see that we are branches, we will no longer pray to be one, but will acknowledge that we are one already. This is the meaning of faith.

BELIEVING IN WHAT GOD HAS DONE RATHER THAN IN WHAT HE WILL DO

Once I was very sick, and I prayed to the Lord: "Heal me, Lord. The doctors can do nothing about me now. Please heal me." I had seen many promises of God in the Bible prior to this. But the Lord spoke to me through one word. "He Himself took away our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matt. 8:17). At first I prayed for the Lord to bear my disease. Then He gave me a promise, but my illness was still

there. I prayed again and the Lord rebuked me and showed me that this was wrong. He opened my eyes, and I saw that He had already borne my disease. When I believed in this word, I did not pray any longer; instead, I began to praise Him for bearing my disease even though outwardly everything was still the same and the illness was still with me.

Faith is not believing in what God will do; it is believing in what God has done. It is not believing that God will heal me, but that He has healed me. The Bible does not mention faith as something belonging to the future. Faith is believing in what God has done in Christ. When we believe in what God has done and accept His accomplished facts, we have genuine faith.

STANDING ON GOD'S WORD

There was another time when I was sick. I asked the Lord to heal me, and He told me that the Holy Spirit is living in me and will give life to my mortal body (Rom. 8:11). I knew that the Lord had healed me, yet I could not go to sleep that night. The fever was high and the condition was worse than before. Satan came to me and said, "You say that God has healed you. But look at yourself, your temperature is very high and you cannot sleep. You say that you are healed, but your sufferings are worse than before. How can you say that God has healed you? This is not true." I thought that perhaps I was wrong. But then I realized that this was nothing more than a mood that came from Satan, and I began to ignore it. I told Satan, "God said that He has healed me. My temperature may be high, and I may still feel pain and be unable to go to sleep, but none of these conditions are trustworthy. There is only one thing which is real in this world—God's Word. All pains and problems are false. Only God's Word is real." After I said this, I fell asleep within a few minutes.

Satan may say, "Look at yourself! You are so filthy within." You have to tell him, "Yes, I am filthy in myself. But I am in Christ, and everything in Christ is clean." If you stand on God's side, Satan will be defeated immediately.

In reading the Bible, we have to pay attention to two matters—being in Adam and being in Christ. There is a great difference between these two things. They have a great deal to do with the way we live our Christian life, and we must deal with these two matters properly. When our life does not match the biblical description of being in Christ, we have to stand on God's Word. We must not trust in our feelings or consider our conditions. We have to stand on God's Word and believe in His Word. If we do this, He will lead us into all the riches that are in Christ.

SECTION FIVE
CONFERENCE IN FOOCHOW,
DECEMBER 1936
CHAPTER FORTY-NINE
TALKS

(1)

Date: December 12, 1936, evening

Place: In front of the Foochow Gospel Hospital

Dr. Wu asked: How can we love our enemies? Sometimes I treat a certain person well, but he is evil to me in return. What should I do?

Answer: You have to know that you can never love your enemies by yourself. You will always hate your enemies. You should never think that you can love your enemies. It is not surprising at all to hear you say that you cannot love your enemies. On the contrary, it would be a surprise if you had said that you can love your enemies. The Lord did not give the teaching on the mount for men to keep, but for them to break. Neither did God give the law to men for them to keep, but for them to break. God gave so many commandments to men and the Lord spoke the teachings on the mount in order to show men that they cannot make it. Only one person can keep the law—Christ. Only Christ can meet God's demands; only He can keep God's commandments.

There are two salvations in the Bible. One relates to the Lord dying on the cross for us. The other relates to the Lord living within us and for us. The Lord tells us that we can never carry out the commandments in Matthew 5 through 7 by ourselves. Only the One who is living within us can fulfill His commandments for us. In 5:16 the Lord said, "In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens." This shows that the good works are done by God and not by men. This is why men glorify God. If Mr. Chu delivers a good message, there is no reason that men should give glory to me. If they glorified me, that would be the greatest joke on earth. Men glorify the Father for our good works because good works originate from God Himself and not from us. With man this is impossible. But with God nothing is impossible. Thank God that His Son can love enemies. If you receive the Lord into your heart and allow Him to love your enemies, there will no longer be a problem.

Mrs. Zia asked: How can we know God's will?

Answer: If you walk according to your own will throughout the year and only inquire of God in moments of life and death, it will be difficult for you to know God's will. If you want to know God's will, you must first make the matter of doing His will your lifelong goal. Then you will know God's will. Understanding God's will does not depend on a method but on the person involved. No method will work. You should ask whether a person like yourself can know God's will. Psalm 32:9 says, "Do not be like a horse or like a mule, without understanding;/Whose trappings consist of bit and bridle to constrain them,/Else they do not come near you." We can speak to those whom we know well with our eyes, but to those whom we do not know well, we can only speak with our mouth. If we know God well, He will speak to us with His eyes. Hence, we have to learn to have a very intimate relationship with the Lord and not allow any barrier to exist between us and the Lord. If we fulfill these conditions, it will be easy for us to know His will.

Philippians 2 says that we should have the mind of Christ Jesus. In order to know God's will, we must also have the mind of the Lord. Having His mind means that there is no barrier between us and the Lord; it means allowing no sin to remain between us and the Lord. Those who do not have the Lord's mind will not have God's will in them either. We have to learn to always follow the Lord's leading within. There are two aspects to the Lord's leading. The first is the inner urging, and the second is the inner forbidding. We must learn to follow both kinds of leadings. It is impossible to know God's will without being familiar with these two aspects.

If you have learned your lesson well, the Lord will reveal His will to you and show you what to do when problems arise. But if you do not have the mind of Christ Jesus, you will never have the outward leading of God's will. When problems arise, you must not only deal with symptoms, you must deal with the root. Your whole being needs to experience a thorough turn. You must have the mind of the Lord. You must draw near to Him, and there must not be any barrier between you and the Lord. If you do this, you will know God's will.

Sister Tzi-mei asked: Sometimes I feel clear that something is according to the Lord's will, yet circumstantially there are obstacles. What should I do?

Answer: If you are certain that something is according to the Lord's will, but there is authority above you, such as your parents or husband, forcing you to act otherwise, you should still submit to them. There was a man from the China Inland Mission who wanted to come to China for the gospel, but his parents would not allow him. He submitted to his parents eventually. If something is

according to God's will, He will be responsible for working out the necessary environment. No one can receive God's blessing without submitting to authority. If you first submit and then ask God to deal with the other person, you will see the other person change.

Except for those with authority, you should ignore any obstacle that comes from man or things. When the obstacle is from man or things, you should obey God's will alone. During the First World War, a company of soldiers was ordered to defend a hill. There was no military justification for defending it, but the soldiers took the order and defended it. Within two hours, the whole company was killed. Whether a decision is right or wrong is not our business. Our duty is only to ask if something is according to God's will. If it is, it is our responsibility to carry it out. It is God's responsibility to take care of the result of our obedience to His will.

Question: What is the difference between submission and obedience?

Answer: Submission is a question of attitude, whereas obedience is a question of conduct. A wife has to submit to her husband. But if an unbelieving husband asks his wife to burn incense to idols, the wife should submit and yet should not obey. In this case, submitting means being meek and yielding in her attitude, while not obeying means not doing what her husband asks. If an unbelieving husband asks a believing wife to go to a dance with him, the wife can say, "I wish I could go with you, but I am really sorry that I cannot." One does not have to obey in such matters, but there should still be submission. In some matters we can only submit; we cannot obey. However, in our attitude we should always be pliable and meek. We have to ask ourselves whether we are pliable and meek. How is our spirit? This is a big question. At times we cannot obey in our conduct, but we should always be meek and submissive in our attitude.

If you can obey an order from the civil government, you should obey it. If it is something that you cannot obey, you should at least be submissive to it. If the authority comes and confiscates your possessions when you do not obey, you should smile and not resist. In regard to your parents, you must obey as well as submit. It would be marvelous if brothers and sisters would submit to one another in the church today. If there is submission in the family, many problems will be avoided. If something is wrong, you must not become angry. Man's wrath does not accomplish God's righteousness. Even if you cannot obey, you must still be submissive. You should submit to one another. Your attitude towards one another should be gentle; your voice should not be brazen as a metal bell. If a

family has only "hard bones," without any "soft flesh" and if the children do not submit to their parents and the wife does not submit to the husband, there will not be joy and harmony in the family. I have been invited as a guest to many homes, but it is difficult to find peace and harmony in many of them because they do not know what submission is.

May the Lord be gracious to us to grant us a spirit of submission. In order to have a submissive spirit, a person must be dealt with by the Lord's cross. It is not easy to be without blame. We often do a proper work with an improper attitude. Moses rebuked the children of Israel as being a rebellious people (Num. 20:10). His mistake was in his attitude, whereas the mistake of the children of Israel was in their conduct. We should learn to be blameless in our attitude every day, and we should learn submission in everything.

Question: What should we do about the Weekly Memorial Service [i.e., in memory of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China]?

Answer: The Bible does not say that we cannot attend such functions, but the Bible forbids anyone bowing down or paying homage to anything (Exo. 20:4-5). We have to honor the civil laws, and we have to be submissive in our attitude (cf. Dan. 3:16-21).

Question: Should we salute the flag?

Answer: Our flag has a symbol of a blue sky with a white sun; it is an image of heavenly bodies. Therefore, it is wrong to salute to such a symbol. The previous flag was in the shape of five-color strips; it had nothing to do with religion. Therefore, it would not have been acting contrary to the Scripture when we saluted that flag.

Question: When Naaman accompanied his master to worship the gods in the temple, he bowed down on his knees. Later, he confessed to Elisha and asked for God's forgiveness. Elisha told him to go in peace (2 Kings 5:17-19). Why was Naaman not guilty for bowing to the idols?

Answer: Naaman's bowing to the idols was a question of duty. When his master bowed to the idols, he bent forward to give him a hand. As a result, he also bowed to the idols. His bowing had nothing to do with idols. Of course, we should stay away from any resemblance of sin. The most unsafe people in this world are those who live next to the city walls. If you want to be safe, you should not live near the border of a country. Otherwise, when the enemy comes, you will be the first one to be hit. If you want to be safe, it is better to live far from the border. The worst thing for a Christian to do is to be a borderline person. It is always to

our disadvantage to engage in things that have a resemblance of sin. Those who live at the border between France and Germany travel back and forth between the two countries all the time. But they suffer in the end. If you are a borderline person, you may not fall yourself, but you will raise concerns in others.

Question: Is it all right to celebrate birthdays?

Answer: Leviticus mentions leprosy in one's garment. The garment signifies a Christian's conduct in the world. The garments of a leper have to go through fire and water. The principle of going through fire and water is having one's conduct in this world purged through judgment and cleansing.

Question: What is the date of Jesus' birthday?

Answer: There is no place in the Bible that speaks of Jesus' birth on December 25. Neither does the Bible command that man should celebrate His birthday. I have studied the Bible for many years and read through it over a hundred times. I cannot find the date that the Lord was born or any commandment for us to remember His birth. The Lord commanded men to remember His death; He never commanded men to remember His birth. Shepherds were tending the flocks in the wilderness at the time He was born. This means that sheep were grazing in the wilderness. However, there is snow in Palestine after September and before April. Sheep can only graze on grass; they cannot graze on snow or ice. Therefore, the Lord Jesus could not have been born on December 25. The most authoritative historian on the history of the Roman Empire was Edward Gibbon. He pointed out that December 25 was the greatest day of festivity in the pagan religion of ancient Rome. This was a day celebrating the birth of the sun. The shortest day of the year is December 22. Three days after the shortest day is the so-called birthday of the sun. After the Romans adopted Christianity, the Roman Emperor declared December 25 to be the day of Jesus' birth out of a need for festivities. According to Malachi, Jesus is the Sun of righteousness. The Romans therefore made the birthday of the sun the birthday of Jesus. We know that this practice is absolutely unscriptural, and we cannot accept it.

CHAPTER FIFTY

GOD'S WAY OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSE IN CREATING MAN

(1)

Date: December 13, 1936, evening

Place: The Savior's Church, Foochow

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9, 16-17; Rom. 8:29-30; Heb. 2:9-11

GOD'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE IN CREATING MAN

Beginning from tonight we will study God's purpose in man in a systematic way and show how He accomplishes such a purpose. God's Word shows us that His purpose is to have many sons, that is, a group of men who will have the life of His Son (Heb. 2:10).

In Genesis we see God creating the heavens and the earth, and then creating man. After this He put the man He created in the garden of Eden. God's purpose in preparing the garden of Eden and putting man in it was not that man would merely be a gardener, but that he would eat the tree of life and receive His life. Human beings work according to a purpose and a plan. God, being much wiser than man, works even more according to a plan. God did all these things according to a plan. His plan is that man would have His life and become His many sons.

God wants many sons. Yet Adam did not have such a thought. Adam's goal might have merely been to become a perfect man. But even if he had become perfect, he would still have fallen short of God's purpose. A perfect man cannot fulfill God's purpose. In reality Adam did not become a perfect man; he became a sinner instead. Today man has two problems. First, he is a sinner, and second, he is a man. As a sinner, he needs salvation, and as a man, he also needs salvation. A person needs to be saved because he is a sinner. A person also needs to be saved because he is a man. The forgiveness of sins merely recovers man to Adam's original position in the garden of Eden. As a "man," he still needs to receive God's life before he can become a son of God and before God's purpose can be accomplished in him. In order to accomplish His purpose in man, God has to do two things. First, He has to save the sinner and deliver him from sin. Second, He has to save the "man" himself. Since man fell through sin, he became a sinner estranged from God on the one hand, and a man who had fallen short of God's purpose on the other hand.

We are sinners, and as sinners we need forgiveness. We are also men, and as men we need God's life. Only when we have both of these things can God's

purpose be fulfilled. Man's problem is not one of being good or bad, sinful or sinless, perfect or imperfect. Man's problem lies in what he is. As long as he is simply a man, he needs God's work, and he needs God to dispense His life into him. Only then will he be able to fulfill God's purpose. God's forgiveness of man's sin is an incidental work—it is not His goal. Man's sin is something negative, something incidental. In order for God to achieve His purpose in man, He first had to solve the problem of sin, but His ultimate goal is to dispense His life into man.

GOD'S PURPOSE BEING FRUSTRATED

We know that Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result he became independent, knowing good and evil. There was no more need for man to ask God or to trust in Him; he became independent. Adam became an independent sinner estranged from God. What is a sinner? A sinner is simply one who is separated from God and independent of God. Being separated from God and independent of God is sin. Hence anything that originates from man is sin, and any act that is done independent of God is sin. A man does not have to commit fornication, robbery, murder, or arson. As long as he is separated from God, he is a sinner. Originally Adam was innocent. He was not able to differentiate good from evil. He had to ask God for everything and find out from God whether something was good or bad, right or wrong. After he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he was able to know good and evil by himself. There was no more need for him to seek after God or to trust in Him. He became independent from God. Through the knowledge he acquired, he became a man who was independent of God. In this way, God's purpose could not be fulfilled and His will was frustrated.

THE REASON FOR MAN'S FALL

God created man's body from the dust of the earth so that man would be able to contact the physical world. After His creation He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, which gave man his spirit. Man's spirit is able to communicate with God. When God's breath of life came in contact with man's flesh, man became a living soul with his own personality, character, disposition, emotion, will, and volition.

However, God's purpose was not just to create such a man. After man was created, God placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden of Eden, and He charged Adam not to eat the fruit

of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was almost as if God was telling Adam that He had to eat the tree of life. But God did not force Adam to eat of the tree of life because He created man with a free will with a right to choose for himself. God's purpose was not fulfilled after the creation of Adam, because Adam did not have the life of God. If Adam had chosen the tree of life and eaten of its fruit, God's purpose would have been fulfilled.

GOD ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSE THROUGH CHRIST

What is God's ultimate purpose? His ultimate purpose is to have many sons. What is a son? A son is not a chair; a chair is made by man. A son is not made, he is begotten. A son is not just something picked up from the street. Someone who is picked up from the street is not your son, because he has no life relationship with you. A son is one whom a person has begotten and who has a life relationship with that person. This is why the Gospel of John says that a man cannot enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). If a man has not been born again and not received God's life, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. No lower forms of creatures can enter the kingdom of man, because they are too far apart from man; they do not have man's life. The distance between God and man is immeasurably greater than the distance between man and the lower creatures. As such, man cannot enter the kingdom of God if he does not have God's life. In order for man to enter God's kingdom and be a son of God, he must have the life of God.

The Lord Jesus was God's only begotten Son. Yet God is not satisfied with having only one Son; He wants to have many sons. This is why Christ is the only begotten Son as well as the firstborn Son. As the only begotten Son, He is unique, having no brothers. At the beginning of the Gospel of John, the Lord was the Word, the only begotten Son of God (1:18). But in Romans and Hebrews, He became God's firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:6). For God to have a firstborn Son means that He has other sons. The Lord Jesus is the firstborn Son, and He has many brothers. God calls those who have His life His sons. Man will not call a lower form of animal his son no matter how good that animal is. The matter is not about good or evil, but about whether one is of the same species with the same life.

In order for man to become God's son, he has to receive Christ. In the garden of Eden, God wanted man to eat of the tree of life. Today He wants man to receive Christ as life. There is a difference between a tree and fruit. A tree cannot be

eaten, whereas fruit can be eaten. The fruit is the embodiment of the tree; it is the tree, but in an edible form. The substance of the fruit comes from the tree, and it shares the same life with the tree. God is the tree of life, while Christ is the fruit. Christ comes from God and shares the same life with God. He is God in a receivable form. On the one hand, God gave Christ to us to accomplish redemption so that we no longer have to be sinners. On the other hand, He gave Christ to us in order to dispense His life into us and make us His sons for the fulfillment of His purpose.

Romans 8 mentions conformation to the image of God's Son (v. 29). This conformation is not one man's imitation of another, moving when the other moves and stopping when the other stops. Conformation implies passing through the same mold. The Lord is a mold; He molds everyone who has believed and received Him into the same image. In Vietnam men make rice cakes by grinding rice into paste and pressing it with a mold. As a consequence, all the rice cakes bear the same image. Christ is our mold, and we will all be conformed to the same image. This is why some people say that Christians are in a class of their own, that they are all the same. This is true because we share the same life and are being conformed to the same image.

God's purpose is to have many men who share the same image as His Son so that they become His many sons and eventually be with Him in His glory in eternity. But something happened—man sinned and fell. Sin entered the world through one man (Rom. 5:12). But the Lord came as the world's Savior. He died on behalf of man and solved the problem of sin. Man has been recovered back to the point of being in the garden of Eden. Now this man must still choose the tree of life and receive Christ as life before he can become the son of God.

In this conference we want to see how God accomplishes His purpose in man. Tonight's word is merely a foundation. Starting tomorrow, we will begin to build the house. May the Lord be merciful to us so that we can clearly see God's purpose and the way to reach His purpose.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

GOD'S WAY OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSE IN CREATING MAN

(2)

Date: December 14, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

GOD'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE IN CREATING MAN

We have seen that God's purpose in creating man is that man would receive His life and become His sons. Man was created according to God's image and likeness. As far as his outward appearance is concerned, man is like God already. Man is like God in both image and likeness, yet he does not have God's life within him. Man must receive God's life before he can reach God's goal. Adam's spirit was not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of man. If Adam's spirit had received God's Spirit, he would have received God's life and fulfilled God's purpose. There are four kinds of spirits in this universe—the spirit of the angels, the Spirit of God, the spirit of man, and evil spirits. The spirit is the faculty for worship. Lions are strong, and monkeys and dogs are clever, but they do not have a spirit. Thus, they have no faculty to worship God. They are lower forms of creatures. Man is between the angels and lower forms of animals. The angels have a spirit and a soul, but no body. The lower forms of animals have a soul and a body, but no spirit. But man has a spirit and a soul, like the angels, and also a soul and a body, like the lower forms of animals. The lower animals belong to one category of living beings. Man belongs to another category of living beings. God's life is yet another category—His life is much higher than our life.

Was God's purpose fulfilled after man was created in this way? No! After God created everything, the Bible says, "And it was so." But after man was created, it does not say, "And it was so," because the work was not completed. This is why the final word was not pronounced. The final word had to be spoken by man himself. Therefore, God put man in front of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Only after man made the right choice would God's purpose have been fulfilled.

MAN'S FREE WILL

God created man for the purpose of receiving and sharing His life to become His sons. Man's spirit was made to contact God's Spirit and receive His life, become His son, and fulfill His purpose in creating man. Yet God gave man the right to choose; man has a free will. After He created man, God put man in front of two trees. The created and completed man was sinless; he was innocent. God placed him in front of two trees, setting two principles before man. The tree of life represents dependence on God, whereas the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents independence from God. These two trees represent two kinds of lives. The tree of life represents the life of God, whereas the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents Satan's sinful life. When man rejected the

tree of life, he rejected the life of God. In effect, he was saying to God, "I do not want to take You. I will be a man by myself."

GOD'S PURPOSE BEING FRUSTRATED

In Genesis 2:17 God said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This word is not a word of punishment, but a description of a natural law. If one eats, his stomach will be filled. If one puts his hands to the fire, he will be burned—these are laws. If man eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he will die—this also is a law. God did not say that man would be punished by death when he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God did not say this, and we, of course, cannot add such a footnote. God only said that man would surely die when he ate of it. Conversely, if man did not eat of the tree of life, he still could not have been a son of God. In God's eyes, he was still without life. God's purpose in creating man was that he would be His son. For this reason He gave man a free will. He wants man to choose the tree of life and become His son by his own free will.

GOD'S REMEDY

Originally, God only had to do one thing—cause Adam to receive the life of God. If man would have received God's life, His goal in creating man would have been fulfilled. But Adam sinned. God now must do two things. In the garden of Eden, He only had to do one thing to accomplish His purpose. But after man left the garden of Eden, God had to do two things. First, He had to deal with man's sin. Second, He had to cause man to receive His life. God wants man to receive His life—this is His eternal purpose which He purposed before the ages. His dealing with man's sin and His saving grace for man are simply His remedial actions. God did not intend for Adam to sin; Adam's sin was an incidental matter. Hence, God's dealing with sin is also an incidental work; it is not according to His original purpose. For example, when you drive a car, you have no intention to overturn the car; your intention is to arrive safely at your destination. However, you may have an accident, overturning the car and hurting yourself. Then you need to take care of your injury and fix the car before you can resume your journey. In the same way, God created man with a purpose. Yet man fell, and God had to do a remedial work before He could bring man back to His original purpose.

HOW GOD ACCOMPLISHED HIS ORIGINAL PURPOSE

Now let us see how God saves us and brings us back to His original purpose in creation. After man fell, he not only needed to be saved from sin, he also needed to be saved from just being a man. What makes the Bible so distinct is that it not only says that a sinner should no longer be a sinner, but that a man should no longer be a man. Hallelujah! We do not have to be a sinner, and we do not have to be just a man. God wants man to live out His life in order for man to speak what he could not otherwise speak, to do what he could not otherwise do, and to live in a way that he could not otherwise live. Until we reach this point, we are at best like Adam in the garden of Eden; we are not yet men according to His will and not yet sons of God. God's purpose is to put His life within man so that man can live Him. When God is in man, man becomes God's son, and spontaneously he is able to live out the sermon on the mount.

The Need of the Blood

After man fell, his greatest problem was that he had sinned and become a sinner. This is why the Bible speaks of the need of the blood. Leviticus 17:11 says that life is in the blood and that it is therefore needed for the atonement of sin. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The Bible speaks of the blood over four hundred times. When man sins, he has to be punished, and the punishment comes in the form of the shedding of blood. When a man's blood is shed, life is gone; when life is gone, the soul is gone; and when the soul is gone, the man is dead.

The Picture of the Passover

The Passover in the Old Testament is a picture of God's work of redemption. Exodus 12:2-13 speaks of the Passover. At the Passover, God took away man's sin and delivered him from His judgment through a substitutionary lamb. He told the children of Israel that the angel of destruction would come, and that the firstborn of all the households that did not put blood on the doorpost and side posts would be killed. The firstborn represents the sinner, because the first man was out of the earth and earthy (1 Cor. 15:47). Every household of Israel killed a lamb and struck the blood on the doorpost and sideposts. This blood is objective; it is not for man to see, but for God to see. If you were in the house, you "could not see the blood; the blood is for God to see. God said, "When I see the blood..." The word "I" is very important. The blood of Christ is not for us to see, but for God to see. The question is not how we strike the blood and how we apply it, but who is the One who sees it. A sinner can say to God, "Do to me

according to Your valuation of the blood." This is what the Passover has done for us.

According to God's Righteousness

Once I was traveling to Kiu-Kiang, and I met a Muslim on the way. I told him that if God appointed a way of salvation, it would have to be compatible with His own righteousness and holiness. In other words, the way must be proper in God's eyes and must also be proper in our eyes. One cannot be saved according to any way that he thinks is right; he can only put his trust in the sufficiency of God's way of salvation. If the righteous God thinks that a way is good enough, an unrighteous sinner should conclude that it is good enough. God has accomplished everything. What else should we do? We can say, "Thank the Lord that my sins are all forgiven. All my sins, great or small, obvious or hidden, noble or vile, good or bad, are covered by the blood. I do not have to be afraid when I come to God." God says that my sins have been dealt with already, and I also say that my sins have been dealt with already. This is faith.

Once D. L. Moody was preaching to a man who was afraid that the blood of Christ would not be sufficient to take away his sins. Moody asked, "If one of Noah's daughters-in-law had entered the ark, but was afraid that it would leak, would she have not been saved because of this?" The man said, "Of course not." Moody then pointed out to him that his view of the blood would not diminish the effectiveness of the blood in any way. Through this word the man became clear.

The Flesh of Christ

Thank God that through the redemption of Christ, our sins have been dealt with. However, settling the problem of sin was only the first step in God's work. If we see what God accomplished in eternity, we will realize that the removal of sin is only a remedial action; there is still a long way to go. After we are redeemed by the blood, we must still eat the flesh of the lamb. We must cross the Red Sea, leave Egypt, pass the wilderness, and enter the good land. In typology, this means that we should leave the world behind, pass through this world, and enter the millennial kingdom.

According to the picture of the Passover, there are two steps to God's salvation. First, there is the salvation of the blood—this is objective and outward. Second, there is the salvation of the flesh—this is subjective and inward. Three to six hours after we eat some food, it becomes a part of us. This means that after we eat the flesh of Christ, God lives in us. The flesh of Christ typifies the life of God.

We must not only receive the redemption of the blood of Christ for our forgiveness, but must eat the flesh of Christ in order to have His life. There are two clear lines in the Bible. The first is the line of the blood, and the second is the line of the flesh. The blood typifies the redemptive aspect of Christ's death, whereas the flesh typifies the non-redemptive aspect of His death.

A great problem among Christians today is that they do not have the strength to overcome sin. Do you have the strength to overcome sin? Do you have the strength to live a perfect Christian life? I am afraid that most people will say no. Every Christian has one or two sins that they frequently commit. Some sins have been with a person for many years. These sins are the private sins that he commits. For example, some Christians are stubborn in their attitude. Others are unrighteous, unclean, proud, or impure in heart. Some people are fastidious. These people have indeed been washed in the blood, but they have not eaten the flesh. The gospel of the blood enables a person to stand before God. The gospel of the flesh enables a person to live in the world in the same way that the Son of God lived on earth in His days. This living means much more than the forgiveness of the blood.

THE FUNCTION OF CHRIST'S FLESH

Let us now consider the function of the Lord's flesh. In John 6:51 through 58, the Lord did not emphasize His blood, but instead, His flesh, because His flesh accomplished what the tree of life did not accomplish. The Lord said that His flesh was given for the life of the world (v. 51). The blood is only the means; it is not God's goal. An important word is "world." Instead of "sinners," the verse uses "world." When the Jews heard this, they could not understand and said, "This word is hard; who can hear it?" (v. 60). Some who are sitting here tonight have surely asked this same question. It was asked two thousand years ago already. If you are asking the same question today, you can find the answer in the Bible.

The Lord came down from heaven to be the bread of life. In verse 53, "flesh" is mentioned first and the "blood" second. This shows that God's emphasis is not the blood but the flesh. The blood is not given the first place. In this passage, "flesh" is mentioned six times, while "blood" is mentioned four times. Whenever the "blood" is mentioned, it is mentioned after the "flesh." From this we see that the blood is secondary rather than primary. What gives life is the flesh, not the blood.

In verse 54, the Lord said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." When I was in Chuenchow, I met a preacher who did not believe in

eating blood and who taught that man should not eat blood. I told him, "You should not only preach the Lord's blood, you should preach the Lord's flesh as well." It is impossible to take His blood while rejecting His flesh.

Verses 57 and 58 require some explanation. Eating the Lord is eating His flesh. The flesh is for eating while the blood is for drinking. His flesh is true food. This means that the Lord Jesus has taken on a form that can be received and eaten by us. In verse 58 we see another eating. We can only reach God's goal and become His children by eating. Eating the flesh of Christ is receiving His life into us. What we have received in Christ far exceeds what we have received in Adam. Adam fell and became a sinner. Today we have not only been recovered to our first position (no longer being sinners), but we have become the sons of God through eating Christ. In this way, we can accomplish God's goal, which Adam had failed to achieve.

At the Lord's table meeting, we see the cup and the bread. God's intention is with the bread and not the cup. The cup is only remedial. God does not say that we should come together to drink the cup, but that we should come together to break the bread. God's purpose is not for Christ to be crucified on the cross. His purpose is for His Son to dispense His flesh to men. His Son's crucifixion on the cross is merely a remedial act. Our breaking of bread not only reminds us that man has sinned, but that man lacks life. Hebrews 2:14-15 says that everyone in the world is a slave of sin through the fear of death, but that the Son of God destroyed the devil, who has the might of death, through His own death. "Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil" (v. 14). First there is the flesh, and then there is the blood. The flesh is the goal, while the blood is the means. For ten years after I was saved, I did not understand the meaning of the bread. I thought that the blood should come first. Every time I came to the bread- breaking meeting, I praised Him for the blood. But when I saw the flesh, I could not see the significance of it. Later I realized that the flesh was the goal. This is why the flesh is mentioned first in the book of Genesis; the blood is not spoken of until Genesis 3.

The flesh signifies the life released through death, whereas the blood signifies the redemptive death. The blood removes the barriers between us and God, whereas the flesh provides us God's life and enables us to become His sons, thus fulfilling God's purpose in creating man.

When the Lord instituted His supper, He took the bread and said: "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matt. 26:26). The Lord told us that this is His body; this is not His corpse. A corpse means that life is gone. The Lord gives to man the flesh of His body. This means that the Lord is dispensing to us His very organic life. We can see that God's purpose has always been for man to receive His Son's life so that they can become His many sons.

We must realize that God's ultimate goal is for us to receive His life. Because of Adam's fall, God had to do two things: first, remove sins, and second, dispense His life to man. In other words, He had to first shed His blood before He could dispense His flesh to man.

During the first few meetings of this conference, we will consider the objective truths. In the final meetings, we will consider our subjective experience.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Date: December 15, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

A SINNER'S TWOFOLD NEED

From the time man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and was driven out of the garden of Eden by God, he lost his chance to receive God's life. On the one hand, he failed God's original purpose in creating man, and on the other hand, he sinned and became a sinner. Therefore, God had to deal with him not only as a man, but also as a sinner. To this end, God sent Christ to the world. He shed His blood and solved the problem of man's sins. This remedial work took care of the sinner. But God's work is not complete if He only saves us from our sins with His blood. The forgiveness of our sins is not the end of God's goal. The forgiveness of sins, by itself, will not bring us back to God's heart's desire. Therefore, we cannot be satisfied, happy, or at peace with just the forgiveness of sins.

Sin is like the product from a factory, while the sinner is like the factory itself. The sin-products have to be removed, but as long as the sin-factory still exists it will easily continue to bring its product back into the market. Our heart is unclean and deceitful above all things. No one can open his heart for others to examine. Such a deceitful and unclean heart cannot be cleansed by the blood. Man has to have his heart changed. The Lord's blood does not cleanse man's heart; it only

cleanses man of his sins. The blood cannot wash man's filthy heart; it only washes the conscience of condemnation.

At the time of our salvation, we accepted the blood, and its efficacy brought us the forgiveness of sins. Yet His blood did not change our heart. We may have been dishonest before we were saved. However, we can still lie after we are saved. We may have been covetous before we were saved, and we can still be somewhat covetous after we are saved. We may have been unrighteous before we were saved, and we can still be unrighteous after we are saved. We may have been unclean before we were saved, and we can still be unclean after we are saved. We may have been unforgiving before we were saved, and we can still be very mean after we are saved. At the time we were saved, we might have thought that being a Christian was a smooth-sailing journey. Yet we discovered that things were contrary to our anticipations. We discovered that a continuous succession of sinful acts continued to be found in us even though we had been washed of our past sins by the precious blood of the Lord. Hence, the Lord's blood not only must wash away the sins that we have committed, but He must come up with a way to deal with the sin-factory that manufactures these sins. If the factory is not dealt with, the removal of only the sin-products would be like putting the cart before the horse. Soon products will roll out of the factory again. In order to deal with the products thoroughly, the factory itself must be destroyed. Sins have been dealt with already, but the person who produces the sins may still be there. Therefore, there is still the need to deal with the person.

There was a believer in Chuenchow who experienced much victory and peace during the first two or three weeks after his salvation. But after a few weeks, he began to lose his temper just as he once did. He was bothered very much. When I spoke to him, I illustrated his condition in the following way. Once I met a young child who asked me to wash his clay doll. I told him that a clay doll could not be washed. However, he insisted that I do it for him. Eventually, I had to give in. The more I washed the doll, the dirtier it became. Eventually, all the hair of the doll came off, and the child cried bitterly at the sight. I said, "I told you so. A clay doll cannot be washed. Do not cry anymore. I will buy you a new doll." We are like the clay doll; if we try to wash our sins in an outward way, the more we wash, the dirtier we will become. We must deal with the problem from within. Only then can we settle the problem of sin once and for all.

**GOD'S TWOFOLD SALVATION—
THE BLOOD AND THE CROSS**

Man is filled with sin inwardly and outwardly. Whatever man does is sin, and whatever man has not done is also sin. Man is truly corrupted from within. We are like a heavy debtor who owes a great deal of money. We have no means to pay our debts, yet the Lord paid all of our debts. Thank the Lord that He has paid all of our debts. This is a tremendous relief to us. However, we are the kind of person who makes a thousand dollars, but spends twelve thousand. Our Lord has paid our debts, but we continue to borrow. We are habitual borrowers, and we live by borrowing. Our sins are forgiven, but we continue to sin. We, our person, are sinners, and we are constituted with sin. Hence, there is a need to not only deal with our acts of sins, but the person who sins as well. Sins are dealt with by the blood of Christ, whereas the person is dealt with by the cross of Christ.

The blood washes us of our sins and removes our outward acts of sins. Without the blood, man cannot be redeemed by God. But there is also the cross that puts to death the old man and annuls man's inward nature of sin. The Bible never says that the blood can wash away the "I," the self, the old man, the ego, or the flesh. The clay doll can never be washed clean. The biblical way to deal with the sinner is to "remove him." This is the work of the cross. The cross takes away the old man and crucifies it (Rom. 6:6). There is no place in the Bible that indicates the blood washes away our self, our old man, our lusts, or our flesh. A friend wrote a hymn that said, "The blood washes clean all lusts and evils." This is wrong. Lust can only be crucified by the cross (Gal 5:24), because lust is not an outward act; it is related to our inward nature. We must be careful to differentiate between the function of the blood and the function of the cross.

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING CONCERNING THE BLOOD

In the Old Testament

Let us now spend some time to study the Bible and see what it says about the blood. Leviticus 17:11 says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make propitiation for your souls; for it is the blood which, by the life, makes propitiation." The Old Testament mentions the blood over three hundred times, but Leviticus 17:11 is the only place where the function of the blood is explained. This is the only place in the Old Testament that tells us that the blood is for propitiation.

In the Four Gospels

We also need to see what the four Gospels say about the blood. There are not many instances in the four Gospels where the blood is mentioned. In Matthew 26:28, the Lord spoke to the disciples before His betrayal, saying, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." This shows us the function of the blood. The blood is for the forgiveness of sins. On the night before the Lord's death, He explained the function of the blood, which is for the forgiveness of sins. Contrary to the assertion of the modernists, who say that the blood was merely an indication of sacrifice, the blood of Christ was shed for man's redemption.

The Apostle Paul

Let us consider the apostle's concept of the blood. In Romans 3:25 the apostle Paul said, "Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred." The word "propitiation" is the same as the word denoting mercy seat in Greek; it is the flat covering on top of the ark. It is also called the throne of grace. Within the ark was the law, which condemned man and judged his sins. But the covering, that is, the throne of grace, was on top of the ark. This means that all sins are under the throne of grace, and God does not see them anymore. Paul told us that this propitiation cover is just the Lord Jesus, and that it is enacted by God through the blood of Jesus.

A Seventh-day Adventist believer once hung the Ten Commandments on the wall, with the fourth commandment cut out as a reminder that breaking the Sabbath is breaking the fourth commandment. Actually even when a person keeps the Sabbath, he sins against all ten commandments as soon as he breaks any of the other commandments.

Thank God that the Lord Jesus has become our propitiation cover. He is sitting on top of the law. The law cannot condemn us any longer. The only way we can be condemned by the law is if we put aside the Lord Jesus (Rom. 8:33-34).

Ephesians 1:7, 2:13, and Hebrews 9:12-14 and 22 say that Christ shed His blood to redeem us from sin. The blood is for the washing away of sins; it is not to wash our hearts. Man's heart is too evil, and the blood cannot wash it. Man's heart is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9) and all wicked things proceed from within the heart (Mark 7:23). The blood does not change a wicked heart into a good heart; the blood only washes away our sins and cleanses us of them. There is no verse in the Bible that tells us that the Lord's blood washes our heart. Some may say

that in the Chinese Union Version Hebrews 10:22 says that the blood washes our heart. But actually this verse only says that the blood cleanses our conscience. Our conscience is related to sin. When a man sins, his conscience is no longer at peace. Once a man sins, he dares not come to God. There is a barrier between him and God. He dares not face God and is afraid to see Him. But the blood of Jesus has been shed. God cannot be unrighteous; He has to wash away our sins. We have incurred a debt of sin, and the blood has paid our debt for us. The Lord Jesus has shed His blood for us, and God has to acknowledge this. Since Christ has borne our sins for us, God can no longer claim any payment from us. A debt can only claim payment once; it cannot claim payment twice. Once we have such a faith, our conscience will be at peace.

Some have asked if a person is saved through God's righteousness or through His grace. We are saved through His righteousness. From the time the Son of God was born to the time He was crucified, we see grace. But from the time He was lifted up on the cross, we see God's righteousness. Because the Lord has died, God has to forgive us. It was perfectly all right for God not to send His Son to die for us; this would merely have meant that God was not being gracious to us. But now that He has sent His Son to die for us, He has to forgive us because He cannot be unrighteous. Being unrighteous means to sin, and God cannot sin; therefore, He cannot be unrighteous. Since the Lord Jesus has shed His blood, God has to forgive all who believe in Him.

The Apostle Peter

In 1 Peter 1:18-19, the apostle Peter said, "Knowing that it was not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, that you were redeemed from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ." The Bible never says that sin is dealt with by the cross. The cross only deals with the old man. The Bible tells us that sin is dealt with by the precious blood of Christ.

The Apostle John

In 1 John 1:7-9 the apostle John said that the blood of Jesus the Son of God cleanses us from every sin. Our hearts are thoroughly wicked; even God cannot cleanse them. He can only cleanse us from our sins. In Swatow during our conference, a middle-age sister came to me one morning at six o'clock and insisted that she had to see me. The sister was not a decent person. She was a widow and unbridled in her conduct. She was somewhat rich and had committed some uncommon sins. She came to me and said, "I have committed many sins,

and my conscience is not at peace. I do not know if God will forgive me." I quoted 1 John 1:9 and told her that all sins can be forgiven. Whether she considered a sin to be pardonable or unpardonable, refined or crude, moral or immoral, as long as it was a sin, it was included in "our sins." Even if she could not give a name to a sin, it was included in "our sins" as well.

She answered, "But I am too evil. I am afraid that God cannot forgive me." I then spoke to her in an angry tone (of course, without any malice in my heart), "Do you know who you are doubting? You are doubting the faithful God. You are doubting the loving God. You are doubting the God who cannot lie. Do you know what a sin you have committed? All the sins that you have committed all your life could not add up to the sin that you have just committed. Doubting God and questioning His Word are the greatest sins that man can ever commit." She immediately turned from weeping into joy and said, "Then I know that God has indeed forgiven me." When I saw her exhilaration, I knew for the first time what it felt like for a person to turn from weeping to joy. The next morning she came again and said, "My sins are indeed forgiven. But there are many scars because of my sins. What should I do about these scars?" I said, "Read the second part of 1 John 1:9. It says that 'He is faithful and righteous to...cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' The blood of Jesus His Son can cleanse us of our sins to the extent that we feel as if we have never sinned. Since God has forgotten your sins, you should not remember your sins either. You should forget about your own sins, the sins of the brothers and sisters, and the sins of everyone else. Otherwise, you will be saying that you have a better memory than God."

In the last part of Revelation 1:5 John said, "Who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood." God washes away our sins and releases us from our sins by His own blood. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament show us that the blood deals with sins; it redeems us from sins and washes away our sins. The blood of Christ has been shed for us. God is righteous, and He must forgive those who come to Him through the blood of His Son. If anyone does not believe in this word, he is making God a liar (1 John 5:9-10). The greatest sin is to make God a liar. We should not doubt God's Word. When God says that our sins are forgiven and that we have been sprinkled from an evil conscience, we should come to Him with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Date: December 16, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

GOD'S PROVISION MATCHING MAN'S NEED

After man fell, a twofold problem emerged: the sins of man and the man of sin. In God's way of salvation, the sins of man are dealt with by the blood, but the man of sin is too wicked. There is no way to save him; he is corrupted to the core. God can only deal with this problem by removing the old man. It is impossible to change the nature of our old man; even God cannot change it. We are rotten throughout. Just as a Cushite cannot change his skin and a leopard cannot remove its spots, the old man cannot be changed (Jer. 13:23). God's salvation must (1) remove our sins, (2) deal with our old man, and (3) give us a new man, which means that His Son, Christ, has to live within us. Once God's Son lives within man, it becomes easy for man to overcome sin. In fact, once God's Son lives within man, it will be as easy for man to live His life as it was for Him to live His own life on the earth.

THE OLD MAN BEING ABSOLUTELY INCURABLE

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things /And it is incurable;/Who can know it?" Twelve years ago I was conducting a conference in Amoy. One day I was thirsty, and I went with my friend to buy some pears. Each of us bought two nice looking pears, but when we tried to eat them, we found that all four pears had worms inside. I quizzed my friend, asking, "Did the worms come from outside the pears or inside the pears?" He said, "They came from outside, of course." I said, "No, the worms came from inside. When the pear tree blossoms, worms lay their eggs in the flowers, and when the fruit grows, the eggs are already within the pears. When the pears ripen, the eggs hatch and the worms come out." This is what it means when the Lord says that sin proceeds from man's heart. The most ugly sins that the Lord mentions in the Gospels proceed from the heart (Mark 7:21-23). The relationship between sin and the sinner is like that between tuberculosis germs and tuberculosis itself. The cleansing away of our sins by the Lord's blood is like the removal of phlegm, whereas dealing with the old man is like treating the lung itself. In order to cure a man of tuberculosis, the infected parts of the lungs must be removed. Similarly, in order to deal with the person who is totally corrupted, the old man must be dealt with.

GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION

Romans 6:7 tells us that a dead man is delivered from sin. We came into this world through birth. Hence, we can only be delivered from sin through death. We got into Adam through birth, and we get out of Adam through death. The cross means removal, and God removes our old man through the cross. God's unique way of removing the old man is for us to be crucified with the Lord. Only the cross has the power to remove the old man.

Let us now consider a few passages that speak of our relationship with the cross. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." This act was accomplished once for all. The meaning of the word "annulled" is to abandon or cut off. In the original language it means to be cut off from employment. Therefore, a more accurate translation can be "unemployed." When our old man is crucified with Christ, our body of sin is unemployed.

SIN, THE OLD MAN, AND THE BODY OF SIN

Sin, the old man, and the body of sin have the following relationships—sin is the master, the old man is the steward, and the body of sin is the slave. Sin is in the innermost part. The body is the outermost part. In between, there is the old man. Sin tempts, induces, and suggests from within. The old man in the middle consents, and the body outside is motivated to do the works. This is the way the three work together. In order for man to be delivered from sin, there are specific ways to deal with each of the three things. The world's way is to restrict the body and stop it from sinning. This only takes care of the outward body. Another so-called holiness group of believers suggests eradicating the root of sin from within man. They think that once the root of sin is removed, a man will no longer sin. But God's way, as revealed in the Bible, is to deal with the old man in the middle; it is to crucify the old man. Once the old man is crucified, the body is deprived of any power to transgress. Even when sin tries to tempt, induce, or make suggestions, the body will no longer respond. This is God's way of dealing with sin.

Every time man transgresses, he first experiences sin's instigation, then the old man's consent, and finally the evil acts of the body of sin. God's way of salvation is to crucify the old man. This causes the body of sin to be unemployed. By planting His own life in man, which is typified by the tree of life, He replaces the life of the old man and enables man to do God's will. In this way, when sin entices man to sin again, he will no longer succumb to its temptation, because

the Lord's life is now living within man and He does not sin. Sin's temptations will never go away, but if the brain, eyes, mouth, and hands are not available for sin's employment, sin cannot do anything by itself. When the old man is crucified, the body of sin becomes unemployed. Once the old man is crucified, sin can no longer urge it to induce the body to commit sins. When the Lord crucified the old man, we were freed from our slavery to sin. The blood secures our salvation before God; it gives us a clear conscience and brings eternal life to us. This is objective and outward. At the same time, the cross secures our salvation before men; it deals with our heart and touches our living on this earth. It is subjective and inward.

Galatians 2:20 says that I have been crucified with Christ. The cross deals with the "I." Galatians 5:24 says, "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." This verse does not say that sin was crucified on the cross. What God crucified was our person and all we have. Man's way is to improve, cultivate, or mortify himself. But God's way is to deliver our old man to the cross. Once I went to a person's home and saw a child about to take a pair of worn shoes for repair. The mother said, "The shoes are too worn; they cannot be mended. Go and buy a pair of new shoes instead." This is the way God deals with our old man.

The full gospel tells us two things. First, it tells us that the Lord has cleansed us from all sins. Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now and let us reason together,/Says Jehovah./Though your sins are like scarlet,/They will be as white as snow;/Though they are as red as crimson,/They will be like wool." All our sins are washed away by the precious blood of the Lord. Second, the full gospel tells us that God has crucified the old man, the one whom we cannot deal with by any other means. Our self has been annulled by the cross. Galatians 6:14 says that through the cross we have been crucified to the world. As far as I can remember, there are only four verses that speak of the relationship between the cross and "I"; they are Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20, 5:24, and 6:14.

IN CHRIST

Some may ask, "Christ was crucified two thousand years ago. How can I be crucified with Him?" First, we must realize that God never asks us to consider ourselves crucified. There are three hundred eighteen chapters of the New Testament. Not a single verse in all of these chapters says that we have to view our crucifixion with Christ through the eyes of our old man. Even the washing of

our sins by the blood has nothing to do with us. We have not done anything. It is the Lord who shed the blood and washed away our sins. A man once said, "We should carry our sins to the blood and wash them clean in the blood." But thank the Lord, we do not have to bring our sins to be washed. God washed away our sins two thousand years ago. Once a man selected a hymn in a meeting. The first line said, "I laid my sins upon Jesus." All the missionaries in that meeting wanted to sing that song, but I said I would not sing it, because I could not lay my sins upon Jesus. Then an elderly missionary said, "Jehovah is the One who laid our sins upon Him. We cannot lay our sins upon Him ourselves." Eventually, the hymn was not sung that evening. I hope that it will never be sung again. We have to see that our sins are washed away by the precious blood of the Lord. We have absolutely no part in this washing.

Suppose one of our friends prays, "Lord, please shed Your blood for me. Please wash away my sins." God could not answer such a prayer. Such a prayer would not save him. We cannot pray a faithless prayer, and we cannot ask God to do something that He has already done. Similarly, if we say, "God, please crucify me," God could not answer such a prayer. God does not crucify us in ourselves. We have to realize that we are crucified with the Lord in Christ. Christ is the second man; we live in Christ, we are saved in Christ, we are forgiven in Christ, and we are crucified together in Christ.

Adam was the first man, and Christ is the second man (1 Cor. 15:47). In heaven there is only one man, and in hell there is also only one man. In heaven there is only Christ, and in hell there is only Adam. Everyone who is in Christ is in heaven, and everyone who is in Adam is in hell. The whole world equals only two men. Adam was the first man, and Christ is the second man and the last man. We were all in Adam, but we have been transferred into Christ. When I was in Kaifeng, I spoke to some government officials. One of them did not understand the meaning of being in Christ. I explained to him in the way of an illustration: "Most people believe that the Chinese race comes from Hwang-ti. When Hwang-ti fought with his enemy Tzi-you, suppose that Tzi-you had not been killed, but that Hwang-ti had been shot to death by an arrow from Tzi-you. Where would you be today?" He said, "I would not exist." I said, "That is right. In the same way, you have died in Adam, and God has put you into Christ."

When I was in Chuenchow, a few brothers asked, "How can a man be crucified in Christ? Christ is Christ and we are we. In order for us to be crucified, there must be two crosses, His and ours." I said, "Suppose a pregnant woman sits down on

a bus. She only needs to buy one ticket. Although there is a child within her womb, the child is included in the woman, and when the woman buys the ticket, the child buys it as well. In the same way, when we are in Christ, whatever is done to Christ is done to us. There is no need for us to be crucified."

Someone once asked why he felt that there were times when he was in Christ and times when he was out of Christ. I told him the story of a ten-year-old child whom I once met. The child's mother had been in Amoy over ten years ago. I asked the child, "Have you been to Amoy?" The child answered, "No." I asked again, "Really?" Then he changed his tone and said, "Yes, I have visited Amoy before. I did it in my mother's womb. I have not been there by myself, but within my mother, I have already visited that place." Through this example, he became clear.

DYING TO SIN IN CHRIST JESUS

Romans 6:11 says that in Christ we are dead to sin, but living to God. This verse does not say that in ourselves we are dead to sin and living to God; we are such when we are in Christ. If we look back at ourselves, we will find that our old man has not died. We have to say to the Lord: "I thank You. In You I am dead." Colossians 2:11 says, "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." This verse refers to the circumcision of Christ, which we experience in Him. But how can we be circumcised in Him? We have to realize that the forgiveness of sins comes by faith, not by feeling or sight. Similarly, our circumcision in Christ and our death in Christ are based on faith. Therefore, Colossians 2:12 says, "Through the faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead." We are crucified with Him through faith. Hence, we have to go to the Lord and say, "Lord, You have said that we are dead in You. I believe that whatever Your Word says will be accomplished."

BY FAITH

From the time I began to work for the Lord until 1927, I preached on the doctrine of co-crucifixion over a period of five years. Yet I really did not know how a person is crucified with Him. One day when I was in Shanghai, the Lord enlightened me and showed me that I am in Him, and that when He died, I also died. I saw that my death is as real as His death, because I was in Him when He died. I saw then that I was truly crucified with Christ. I was upstairs at the time. I ran down in joy and shouted in exhilaration, "Lord, I thank You. I praise You. I have been crucified with You." I saw it, I believed it, and I received it. A full

salvation is not one that merely washes away our sins while leaving our old man behind. Thank God, in His full salvation, our sins are forgiven and our old man is crucified.

What is faith? The Bible speaks of one kind of faith only—the faith that believes that things have already been done. All the things that I have spoken of tonight will not do us any good if we do not have a living faith. Mark 11:24 says that when we believe that we have received a thing, we will have it. Believing that a thing will happen, must happen, or hopefully will happen does not constitute genuine faith. In our spiritual experience, there are two kinds of "having." One is the "having" in faith, and the other is the "having" in experience. There must first be a "having" in faith before there can be a "having" in experience.

Most people seek for healing in three ways: (1) for small illnesses, they consult themselves; (2) for more serious illnesses, they consult the doctors; and (3) for very serious illnesses, they consult the preachers. Those who consult preachers for healing in this way have nothing to do with faith at all. Such people hope that God will heal them, instead of believing that God has healed them. You only need to listen to one or two words from a person's mouth, and you can predict whether he will get better or worse. No prayers uttered in the way of a hope will receive any healing. Only prayers that issue from faith will produce experience.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

THE LIFE-RELEASING DEATH OF CHRIST

Date: December 17, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

Scripture Reading: Luke 12:49-50; John 12:24; 14:16-20; 2 Cor. 5:16

THREE ASPECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

There are three aspects of the death of Christ. There is the aspect of His substitution for us, the aspect of His identification with us, and the aspect of His releasing His life for us. All three aspects of His death are needed in order to make God's way of redemption complete. If we only had one of these three aspects, we might feel insecure and might think that God's salvation was not trustworthy or complete. We might feel that God's salvation is like the light in this room tonight, flickering and dimming intermittently. All three aspects of the Lord's death are important. First, there is the Lord's blood. His blood speaks of His death as a substitution for us; He shed His precious blood on our behalf. Second, the Lord's death on the cross speaks of His identifying death. We do not have

any part in the shedding of His blood, but we can have a part in His cross, because when the Lord went to the cross, He brought us along with Him. We have to know what the Bible says, and we also have to know what the Bible does not say. The Bible says that we have been crucified with Christ, but it does not say that we have participated in the shedding of His blood. We cannot say that we have a part in the shedding of Christ's blood, but we can definitely say that we have been crucified with Him on the cross.

Third, the Lord's flesh refers to the aspect of His death that released His life. This aspect of the Lord's death has nothing to do with God or man. It refers to His flesh being given for the world. The Lord released His own life. The flesh signifies the Lord's life, the life released through the Lord Jesus' death. This is why it speaks of His flesh, not His corpse. The Lord Jesus was God. Yet He came to the earth, putting on a body of flesh and having the life of man. In order for Him to release His life, He first had to put off His human physical life. In Luke 12:49-50 He said, "I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" The word "pressed" means "constricted" in the original language. "Fire" does not refer to a physical fire that is lit by a match or any other kind of fire. The expression "cast fire on the earth" proves that this fire is not from the earth, but from heaven. The book of Hebrews says that our God is a consuming fire (12:29). Here fire signifies God's life, which is the life of Christ.

The Lord wanted to see all men filled with His fire, that is, His life. But when the Lord spoke these words, they had not received His life yet. Therefore, He said, "I have come to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled!" Following this He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with." This is a strange word. Was not the Lord already baptized? He was baptized in Luke 3; it had been done already. He had been baptized at least three years earlier. Why did He say that He had a baptism to be baptized with? We have to realize that baptism in this verse refers to His death on the cross. The meaning of baptism is death and burial. It was right to say that the Lord still had "a baptism to be baptized with." This meant that the matter had not been consummated. At that time, the Lord had not passed through death, signified by baptism.

CHRIST'S LIFE-RELEASING DEATH

God's life originally filled the whole universe. But after Christ was incarnated, it was limited by His flesh and was bound. God had no way to dispense His life to men. First, His life entered the flesh of the Lord Jesus. The Lord's aspiration was

to put off His body through the consummation of His baptism so that He could dispense His life to men. Luke 12:49 and 50 are the two most precious verses in the New Testament. At that time the Lord's baptism had not yet been consummated, and although the twelve disciples were very close to Him, they could not obtain any life from Him. This is why we say that the third aspect of the Lord's death has nothing to do with God or man; it was His own aspiration for the release and liberation of His life. We can see this even more clearly from John 12:24, which says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The death of the grain of wheat has nothing to do with sin. Neither does it have anything to do with identification. The death of the grain of wheat is a life-releasing death. Life is in the grain of wheat, but this life is surrounded by the shell. If you put a grain of wheat on the table, nothing will ever happen; it will forever remain as one grain. It has to be planted in the ground, allowing the shell to break, fall off, and decay through the action of water. Only then will life sprout forth, take root downward, and branch and grow upward. After two or three months, a hundred grains will be produced. Each of the grains will be impregnated with life, and the life within each grain will be derived from the one grain.

In the same way, when the only begotten Son of God died, millions of God's sons were produced. Before the Lord's incarnation, God's life was abstract and untouchable. After the Lord was born, God's life was locked in the flesh. However, the Lord went to Golgotha and was crucified on the cross. This released God's life. God's original intention was for His only begotten Son to become the firstborn Son so that He could have many sons. Through the death of the only begotten Son, His life was released, and this life produced many sons. The one grain has become a hundred grains. There are now one plus one hundred grains. Originally, the one grain was unique. Now it has become the first of many grains. Before the Lord's resurrection, God had only one Son. After the Lord's resurrection, God had many sons. Before His resurrection, Christ was God's only begotten Son. After His resurrection, Christ was God's firstborn Son. The Lord told Mary on the day of His resurrection of "My Father and your Father" (John 20:17). Originally, the Father was only the Father to Christ. We were not able to call God our Father. Hallelujah! After Christ was crucified on Golgotha and after His resurrection, He was no longer just the only begotten Son of God; He became the firstborn Son of God. Hebrews 2:11 says, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He

is not ashamed to call them brothers." Just as the Lord Jesus received His life from God, we have received our life from God. Our life is the same as His.

ANOTHER COMFORTER

Now we come to another problem. How does God dispense His life to us? We have to read John 14:16-20: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." The word "another" means that there was one already, and that this one is now another. The first Comforter was Christ. The second Comforter is the Holy Spirit. The word "comforter" is *paracletos* in the original language; it means a helper. The prefix *para* means to be alongside, just as the words parallel lines mean two lines that are alongside one another. This can be seen from two railway tracks which run alongside one another. Being parallel means maintaining the same distance all the time and being alongside all the time. God has given us a second Comforter, who will be alongside of us forever and help us all the time.

The word "another" also means another in kind, and not just another in number. Another Comforter does not mean the same kind of comforter. The kind that the disciples knew could die and leave them; He could not be with them forever. But the other kind would not be the same as this kind; the other Comforter would be with them forever. Verse 17 tells us who the other Comforter is. The other Comforter is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him. Hence, it was impossible for the world to receive Him. The other Comforter was different from the Lord, because the other One could be with us forever. John 14:17 reveals the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Lord could be present with men, but His presence was outward; it was not the kind of presence depicted in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the Lord is present within man; He brings His presence into man. Indeed, this is the real gospel! You and the Lord were two persons. But now you and He have become one, because He is present within you.

THE LORD BEING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The most mysterious part of this portion of the Word lies in the pronoun He in verse 17, which is changed to the pronoun I in verse 18. Why is this? Please remember that the He is the I and the I is the He. The Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. I am not denying the doctrine of the Trinity. I am merely saying that the Lord Himself says that He is the Holy Spirit. Today the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. This is like me saying, "A certain man is traveling to Pu-Chien-Ding to preach." Then I may go on to say, "I am preaching in Pu-Chien-Ding." What does this mean? This clearly means that the "He" in the first sentence is the "I" in the second sentence. Hallelujah! The Lord Jesus is now the Holy Spirit. Paul said that from now on he would no longer know Christ according to the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16). When the Lord Jesus was incarnated and put on flesh, He was immediately limited by time and space. Suppose the Lord was still in the flesh today, He would not be able to be in Tien-An Chapel if He was in the Savior's Church. If He was in the meeting in Ho-si Street, He could not be in the meeting behind the football field. If He was in London, He could not be in New York. If He was with the three disciples, He could not be with the other nine. If He was with the twelve disciples, He could not be with the other fifty-eight disciples. If He was with the seventy disciples, He could not be with the one hundred and twenty disciples. If He was with the one hundred and twenty, He could not be with the five hundred.

If the Lord was in Jerusalem, Christians would have to save money to make a pilgrimage once every three or five years to Jerusalem to see Him, just as Muslims make pilgrimages to Mecca. But today the Lord is no longer in the flesh. Before His death, He was in the flesh. He put on a human body in the same way that a man puts on a garment. But after His death, He put off the body of flesh and put on the Holy Spirit. The Lord has put off the flesh and put on the Holy Spirit. Today He is in the Holy Spirit. This is why He can be in us. I have often pondered the completeness of God's salvation. It is so complete that He Himself has become available to us. Today the Lord is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is omnipresent. Therefore, we can all receive Him. In Acts 2 the apostle Peter quoted the last verse of Joel 2, saying, "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 21). Paul even said that the Lord is near us, in our mouth and in our heart (Rom. 10:8). Please remember that the Lord can be such because He is in the Spirit. This is why He can be omnipresent today. John 14:18 says, "I am coming to you." This does not refer to His future

coming, which will be visible; rather, it refers to His coming in the Spirit. Today the Lord has come to us in the Spirit, and He is even dwelling within us.

KNOWING CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Some regret that they were born too late. They think that it would be wonderful if they had been born two thousand years ago because they could have seen Jesus. But I tell such ones that I would not exchange places with Peter even if I could. Although I am quite insignificant, I can say humbly that I know much more than Peter. Peter only knew a Christ in the flesh. But I know the Lord who lives within me. When I was in Europe, I passed through the Mediterranean Sea and was approaching Egypt. A friend invited me to visit the holy land, but I declined the invitation. I asked myself, "Can a man increase his knowledge of Christ by visiting Golgotha, the garden of Gethsemane, or Sychar? No! Absolutely not!" That was why I declined to go. Paul said, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer" (2 Cor. 5:16). Today we do not know Christ according to the flesh or outward appearance, but according to spirit.

Romans 8 tells us clearly that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ have nothing to do with Christ (v. 9). Who are the sons of God? They are those who have become God's many sons through His unique begotten Son. God has neither female nor male offspring. We can be His sons today because we are in His Son. We become the many sons in His Son. All of God's children in the Bible are male. Second Corinthians 6:18 does say that God is our Father and that we are His sons and daughters. But this verse does not speak of our position in Christ. This is why it says "sons and daughters," not "sons." In Christ there is no male or female. In Christ we are all sons of God, and we have all received the life of God's Son. Hallelujah! The life of God's Son within us has made us His many sons. The life within the sisters is the same as the life within the brothers.

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name." Receiving refers specifically to receiving God's life; it does not refer to sinners receiving Christ as Savior for their salvation. Rather, it refers to sinners receiving God's life to become His children. This verse has been borrowed by many for a long time and has been misused for a long time. Tonight we have to claim it back.

Let us summarize what we have covered tonight. The blood and the cross deal with man as a sinner, whereas the flesh deals with man as a man. The Lord's

blood deals with sin. This is before God and it is a vicarious work of the Lord. It is objective, and it is for cleansing, forgiveness, and justification. It deals with the negative things, and we receive it through believing. The cross deals with the old man. It is something done within man, and it is the Lord's identification work. It is subjective, and it is for removing and cutting off the flesh. It also deals with negative things, and it is accomplished through our believing. These two items remove all the barriers. Finally, the Lord's flesh deals with the person; it is for the dispensing of life. It is something done within man, through which the Lord releases His life. It is subjective, and it is for liberation, supply, sustenance, and reproduction. It is on the positive side, and we receive it also through believing. It is for the accomplishing of God's purpose. We must learn to thank and praise the Lord even more, because all of God's works have been accomplished. Tomorrow night we will talk about the way to receive Christ's life in a subjective way.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

MAN-MADE VICTORY

Date: December 18, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 1:30

Tonight we will continue with the subject of God's salvation for us. From the day that man sinned, the way to the tree of life was guarded by the cherubim and access to it was taken away. God no longer allowed a sinner to eat directly of the fruit of the tree of life. From that time forward, man first had to pass through God's redemption before he could receive God's life. God sent Christ to accomplish the work of redemption on the one hand, and to dispense to us His own life on the other hand. When a man believes in the Lord, not only are his sins forgiven, but he also receives God's life.

ABNORMAL EXPERIENCES AMONG CHRISTIANS

After a man is saved and has received God's life, a number of problems often arise. First, he still sins in his daily life even though he has believed in Christ and received Him as his Savior and life. Second, even though he is able to have a sweet and intimate fellowship with God at times, the fellowship does not last for long. He may feel wonderful in the morning for an hour. But by the time he goes to school, to his office, or to contact others in the hospital, the deep sense of fellowship with God is lost. He discovers that not only does he have besetting sins, but he is unable to have a sustained and sweet fellowship with God.

Third, there is always the problem of not receiving an answer to our prayer. The Bible does not say that receiving an answer to prayer is the experience of some special kind of Christians. No. Everyone who prays to God should receive answers to his prayer. The Bible promises us that we can enjoy the Father's care all the time. Yet how many of our prayers are answered? Is it not true that they are so few in number that we can count them on our fingers? God's provision for Christians includes answers to prayer every day; there should always be experiences of answers to prayer. But many people find that they have experienced very few answers to their prayers.

Fourth, there is a problem in understanding the Bible. Many people read the Bible without understanding it; they only touch the letters of the Word. The Bible is nothing but black and white letters to them; there is no revelation, light, or understanding. God has given this book to men. This book is the word of God; it is what men need for their daily living. God's children should receive nourishment from His Word every day, morning and evening, just like taking meals every day. God's intention is that when we open up the Bible, we would find joy, light, spiritual nourishment, and life supply. Yet many people open the Bible merely for the purpose of bribing their conscience. This is not the proper way for a Christian to live.

Fifth, there is a problem in understanding God's will. Sheep know the voice of their master. In the same way, every child of God should know His will. We are in the New Testament age; this is not like the time of Exodus, when the Lord had to lead the Israelites out by their hand. Today, everyone can know God's will inwardly. Hebrews 8 says that God has placed His laws within a Christian's heart. A Christian does not need to teach his neighbor or brother, because all will know God, from the little one to the great one (vv. 10-11). A New Testament believer does not need to continually seek counsel from others concerning God's will. In actuality, however, many people do not understand God's will nor can they obey God's will. This is not what a normal Christian life should be.

Sixth, there is the problem of an unwillingness to obey God. A victorious Christian has a heart that wants to obey God. He does not bargain with God. He has the power within him to obey God. A victorious Christian does not dodge the cross; instead, he embraces the cross with joy. We have to admit that many are not living this kind of life.

All of the above conditions are abnormal. God has prepared a full salvation for us. He is saving us to the uttermost. If we cannot experience God's full salvation,

it means that there are problems on our part. The Bible shows us what a victorious Christian is like. There are at least six conditions of a victorious Christian: (1) He should have overcome all known sins; this is the most basic condition. (2) He should be able to sustain an intimate fellowship with the Lord. (3) He should receive answers to his prayer. (4) He should enjoy reading the Word and be able to understand and receive light and supply from it. (5) He should fully understand God's will, and know God Himself. (6) He should be able to obey God.

MAN-MADE VICTORY

Many Christians realize that they are not living the life that God has ordained for them. Yet they desire to live an overcoming life. They aspire to overcome their temper, fleshly lusts, unclean thoughts, and pride. They employ all kinds of means, hoping that they will reach God's standard. However, their methods do not bring them the victory that the Bible speaks of. Let us consider the great difference between man's thought and God's thought, and the great difference between man's work and God's work. We can use temper as an illustration. Temper is a common sin. First Corinthians 13 is on love; both the first and last sentence relate to endurance or longsuffering. Being patient is not losing one's temper. There are a few common ways that man uses to deal with his temper.

Suppression

Suppressing one's temper is like trying to seal the lid of a bottle. When one's temper is about to burst, he tries to suppress it. He tries to swallow his anger. But swallowing one's anger is not genuine endurance. In her book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith mentioned the example of a girl who stayed with her aunt. One day someone rebuked her aunt for no reason, yet the aunt continued to smile. The girl saw this and afterwards admired her aunt, saying, "All my life I have admired your patience. If I had to talk to such an unreasonable person, my anger would flare up immediately." The aunt replied, "Perhaps there is something you do not know. Do not think that I was not angry. Although anger did not come out of my mouth, my heart was burning with anger." A brother was hit once by another Christian on the cheek. He said, "I will overcome by Christ. Christ has given me the power to overcome." Yet in his heart he was cursing the one who hit him. This is not genuine victory. The victory that the Bible speaks of is a victory that does not become agitated in the heart. Stephen's victory was a victory in which he prayed for his persecutors; he did not

have any feelings of revenge whatsoever (Acts 7:60). Genuine victory is one that is not touched or moved by anything. Swallowing one's anger is a man-made victory. Victory is not a matter of mustering one's strength to suppress oneself in the hope of not sinning and of attaining to perfection. Victory is a matter of inward transcendence before God. It has no animosity whatsoever.

Taming the Flesh

The most common way to tame the flesh is by trying to mellow the temper. The Chinese have an idiomatic expression that describes this: "Taming the dragons and subduing the tigers." This is the way many people suppress their temper. They try to turn a wild horse into a tame horse. Many people think that what they need is more time to tame their temper and cultivate their character. They think that victory is the ability to tame themselves. When I was in Peking, I met a brother who was over seventy years old. He had a quick temper. I asked him, "How was your temper thirty-nine years ago?" He answered, "Thirty-nine years ago, my temper was much worse than it is now. I am over seventy years old, and my temper is naturally more subdued." This is not genuine victory. The victory that the Lord gives is always instantaneous. Your salvation is instantaneous. Your victory is also instantaneous. Both your salvation and victory are works that the Lord has accomplished. You do not become subdued slowly, and you do not improve gradually.

Once I was in a restaurant, and I accidentally spilled some soy sauce onto a waiter's clothing. In front of everyone he said, "It does not matter, sir." But behind my back he cursed me, saying, "This man has his eyes in the wrong place!" This is the victory most Christians talk about today. This is man-made victory and is worthless in the eyes of the Lord.

Warring with Sin

Another group of people deal with sin by wrestling with it and trying to withstand it. They struggle to oppose sin in the hope that they will overcome it. Yet their striving, struggling, and wrestling eventually end in nothing but failure. These people often think that they have failed because they did not fight with sin long enough and were not resolute enough in rejecting sin. They try to fight harder the next time, and they do their best to withstand. Yet how many people have we seen who have overcome their sin through wrestling with it? The Bible tells us to withstand the devil, but it never tells us to withstand temptation. It tells us to withstand evil, but it never tells us to withstand sin. None of our temptations and trials can be overcome through withstanding them.

A young brother was working for the Lord in a certain locality. Once while he was conducting a meeting and was helping others to have the overcoming experience, a seventy-nine-year-old doctor came and listened to his preaching. This doctor had been smoking cigars for fifty-one years. He told others, "Smoking is my habit; I have been smoking since my youth. Originally I smoked twelve cigars a day. Now I have increased to twenty a day. I have been smoking for fifty-one years, and there is no way that I can overcome it." The young brother asked, "How do you deal with it?" The doctor said, "I have been wrestling with smoking for over twenty years but have never succeeded." Another young brother who was there smiled and said, "I overcame without any wrestling on my part. If you want to overcome sin, you can never do it by yourself. You have to trust in God's deliverance. There is no need for you to struggle in yourself." The brother proceeded to explain to the doctor the way of victory. In the end they prayed. In his prayer the doctor said, "Lord, from now on, I will stop all my wrestling. Lord, I trust in You. Victory is Yours. I cannot overcome by wrestling with my own strength." Three months later, he testified, saying, "I have been smoking for fifty-one years. Yet in an instant I was delivered from it. Formerly, when I woke up in the morning, my hand would reach out for a cigar before I opened my eyes. Yet on that day, I stopped suddenly; the thought for smoking was gone. Christ has indeed become my victory." Victory does not come by struggling through one's own strength. It is Christ in us who becomes our victory. Victory over sin is just one small item of the work of Christ within us.

Making Resolutions and Bridling Oneself

The fourth way to deal with sin is by making resolutions and bridling oneself. One makes up his mind and vows to do such and such a thing. Many Christians constantly resort to this method. They say to the Lord, "I will not do this anymore. I promise that I will not do it again." Yet their temper, pride, and anxieties do not respect their resolutions. Man cannot overcome his sins by his own determination. Every time a person determines not to do a certain thing, he ends up doing it instead. Those who make many resolutions find themselves constantly failing in spite of their year-round resolutions. Paul showed us clearly in Romans 7 that to will is present with us, but to work out the good is not (v. 18). God allows us to make resolutions again and again and to fail again and again in order to show us that we cannot overcome. God has said that we cannot overcome; we can never overcome our sins. His way of salvation is to remove

us, to remove the person who sins. Our identification with the Lord's death on the cross removes the sinning person. We are identified with the Lord in His crucifixion; therefore, we do not have to be a slave to sin any longer. It is absolutely futile for a person to try to overcome by his own strength.

GOD'S SALVATION

Romans 7 is between chapters six and eight. Chapter six shows us the doctrine of crucifixion and our living with Christ. Chapter eight tells us of the overcoming life. However, if we do not have the experience of chapter seven, that is, if we do not see our own failures, we cannot overcome. We have been Christians for many years already. Why does the Lord allow us to fail again and again? We have to realize that the Lord has a wonderful intention behind allowing us to fail. His intention is to show us that we cannot make it. We could not make it before we were saved, and we cannot make it now that we are saved. The Lord wants us to confess, "I cannot make it." If we can say this, we are almost there. In Romans 7, we see Paul's experience of victory only when he comes to the last two verses. His shout of victory, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25), follows his declaration, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). If we sin to the extent that we can do nothing but groan about it, we are close to deliverance. Once we stop making resolutions and cease struggling, our victory is in sight. We can listen all we want to teachings on victory, but if we do not cease our own struggling, we will not experience victory. I can make a prediction: Anyone listening to this message tonight who still thinks that there is some good in him will surely not overcome.

Thirteen years ago when I was in Foochow, a brother invited over twenty brothers to Yang-Shu-Pu to preach the gospel. We had to cook, shop, and do our laundry by ourselves. We all took our bath in the Pu-Tsai River because there was no place to take showers. One day while Brother Lee Teh-yuen was taking a bath, he suddenly had a leg cramp. Even though he could swim, I noticed that he was struggling and was about to sink. Brother Wei-san was very good at swimming. I shouted for him to rescue our brother, but he remained in the same place and did nothing except watch Brother Lee closely. Everyone was nervous and wanted him to rescue Brother Lee immediately, but he would not move. I was mad. When Brother Lee was about to give up and was close to sinking, Brother Wei-san swam quickly to his side. With one arm around him and the other arm paddling, he quickly brought him to shore. I immediately did artificial respiration on him. When his condition stabilized, I turned and rebuked Brother

Wei-san, saying, "Had you gone earlier, he would not have suffered so much." He then said to me, "There is a secret to rescuing people. Do not rescue the living and do not rescue the dead; only rescue the half-dead. If a person has died, you cannot save him. If he is still living, he will grasp hold of whatever he can grasp hold of in his desperation. When he sees you, he will cling to you and you both will sink together. One can only rescue a drowning person when he is about to sink. Then you can seize him without him seizing you and bring him to shore."

This is the way God saves men. We need to go through many failures in the course of our struggle over sin. In the end we have to give up struggling and admit that we cannot make it before God will come to our rescue. God's way of salvation is different from man's concept. Romans 6:14 says that sin will not lord it over us, for we are not under the law but under grace. What does it mean to be under the law? What does it mean to be under grace? Being under the law means that man is doing something for God, and being under grace means that God is doing something for man. If it is left to man to keep God's commandment, he will surely fail and sin. Our victory over sin does not depend on how much we do, but on how much God has done. We should not make the mistake of thinking that salvation is of God's grace, while victory is of man's effort. No. Victory is of God's grace, just as salvation is of His grace. Everything is accomplished by the Lord alone. God wants to secure all the glory; therefore, He accomplished everything by Himself. None of our ways work; they can accomplish nothing. We must give up our concepts and our ways.

Everything that I said tonight is on the negative side. The purpose of this word is to show you man's errors. All of these erroneous concepts and ways frustrate man from experiencing victory. Tomorrow night we will see the positive side. The positive side is very important. We must pray more and ask God to open our eyes to see what the life of God's Son is and to see that He is not here to be our Savior in an outward way, but our Savior in an inward way.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX
THE CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE OVERCOMING LIFE

Date: December 19, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 1:30

Last night we pointed out how man tries to overcome by his own efforts and how these efforts are futile. Even God cannot do anything with us when we try to overcome by ourselves. This is why God allows man to fall. He allows man to fall in order to show him the kind of person that he is. Of course, God has no intention for man to fall. But if man does not fall, he will not see himself and not acknowledge that he cannot make it.

We see from the Bible that God's provisions for man are always excellent. The blood of Christ has satisfied God's righteous judgment. The cross of Christ has crucified our old man together with Him. Furthermore, God has dispensed the life of His Son to us. Yet many people think that the life of Christ within us is mainly for us to have some power. They have not seen the salvation of Christ clearly. After they are saved, they try to imitate Jesus, copying Him like they copy calligraphy. Those who copy well are regarded as being good Christians, and those who do not copy well are regarded as being bad Christians. They pray for the Lord to give them the strength to be like Jesus, to be holy and humble like Jesus, to live a heavenly life, and to have a life of prayer like Jesus.

Man wants to do things by himself. No one wants to hear someone saying, "You cannot do anything; you are too evil." Many people have reviled me and have said that Watchman Nee is an evil person. I never get angry about this. On the contrary, I tell them that they have not said enough. Watchman Nee is actually more evil than they think. Within my small heart are the sins of the whole world. God has utterly given up all hope in me; He does not cherish any hope for me. Have you seen this? This is what man has. God does not want man to live his own life. He has given Christ to man so that He would become man's life and so that man would live out His life. This is God's salvation.

What is life? Life is something within our being. Without life we would cease to exist. Christ is our life. If Christ were taken away from us, we would cease to exist. Paul did not say that he wanted to be like Christ, that he had to trust in Christ, or that he had to trust in His power, that he had to imitate Christ, or that he had to take Christ as his pattern. He said that Christ is our life (Col. 3:4), and

that for us to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21). Paul recognized that his life was simply Christ, and that he lived because Christ was his life. If Christ had been taken away from him, he would have ceased to live.

THE OVERCOMING LIFE BEING CHRIST HIMSELF

God's provision for us in the gospel is for Christ to become our life. What does it mean to say that our life is Christ? Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ." This word is not a goal for us to attain. We could never accomplish this goal, because this is something that only the Lord Himself can do. This verse goes on to say that "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." In other words, Christ is living within us instead of us living by ourselves. Our heart is deceitful above all things and very evil. Unless Christ lives within us, there is no way for us to not sin. Since man's heart is evil and beyond any remedy, God must set man aside and install Christ His Son within him to be his life.

What is the overcoming life? The overcoming life is simply the Son of God living within us to overcome sin on our behalf—this is the overcoming life. The overcoming life is not the Lord giving us the strength to be holy or pure in our thoughts. No! The overcoming life is Christ being obedient in our place, Christ praying in our place, and Christ being humble in our place. Christ lives in us to do everything for us. There is a world of difference between these two things. Have we seen the difference between applying Christ's power to act in a humble way and having Christ within us as our humility? If we see the difference, we will be blessed.

Last year when I was conducting a conference in Chefoo, Mrs. Witness Lee said to me, "I have overcome in many areas. I have made confessions to my mother-in-law, and my mother-in-law has said that there is no longer any problem between us. But I still have two little children who are quite rowdy. It is difficult for me to overcome in this matter. I try to be patient whenever they are noisy. I can overcome the first five or six times, but I lose my patience when they become rowdy for the seventh or eighth time. Can you pray for me that God would give me a better environment so that I can overcome?" I answered, "No. I cannot ask God to make you overcome; God will not make you overcome, He will only make you fail. Victory is something that only God can accomplish. Christ within you is your victory. God does not help you overcome. If it were up to you to overcome, you might overcome when your children shout four times, but by the fifth time you will fail. But if the Lord takes care of your children in your place, would you lose your patience? You would not lose your patience after they shouted five or ten

times. In fact, after fifty or a hundred times, you would still come out more than a conqueror."

VICTORY BEING CHRIST LIVING IN US

Victory is the Lord Jesus living in us. Because the Lord lives in us, He overcomes for us. No temptation is so great that He cannot overcome it. God has not given us Christ to be our example. He has given us Christ to be our life. Four years ago I was in New York, and I met a Presbyterian medical doctor with his wife and four children. The wife was about forty years old, and she was very humble. She came to me and said, "You have to pray for me. Pray that God would give me patience. My four children are driving me crazy. I can tolerate one being rowdy, and I can tolerate two being rowdy. But when three start to become rowdy, my temper begins to flare up. If all four become rowdy, I completely lose control of my temper." I asked, "What do you lack?" She said, "Patience, of course!" I then asked, "Has the Lord ever answered your prayer for patience?" She said, "No." I then said to her, "The Lord has not answered this kind of prayer before, and He will not answer this kind of prayer in the future. You cannot be patient, and you will not be patient. What you lack is not patience." She said, "What do you mean? If I do not lack patience, what do I lack?" I said, "What you lack is Christ, not patience, meekness, or quietness." Patience is Christ. True humility, meekness, and holiness are just Christ.

A brother said to me in Shanghai, "I cannot be patient. What do I have to do before I can have patience?" I told him that there is a toothbrush factory in Shanghai that sells toothbrushes wholesale; it does not sell toothbrushes retail. This is what our God does—He is in the wholesale business; He does not care for retail business. If you want a little patience from Him, He will not give it to you. He has put all virtues in Christ. When you believe and receive Him, Christ becomes yours, and all the virtues also become yours. First Corinthians 1:30 says that God has given Christ to us to be our sanctification. I cannot be sanctified in myself; rather, Christ is my sanctification in me and for me. You may not realize how precious this substitution is. God has given Christ to us to be our sanctification. He is living out a life of sanctification within us and for us. If anyone sees this tonight, I will shake his hand and congratulate him; he is the most blessed man on earth. If you are living by yourself, you cannot be sanctified. But if Christ is living in you, you can make it. This is the victory that God has given us.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OVERCOMING LIFE

An Exchange, Not a Change

Let us consider the characteristics of the overcoming life. First, we must see that the overcoming life is an exchanged life, not a changed life. Victory is not a matter of being changed; it is a matter of being exchanged. We all want to be changed, but God wants to show us that we cannot be changed for the better. God has lost hope in us completely. He knows that we can never be changed for the better. The Foochow dialect has a colloquial expression Shi-wu-bien, meaning no change until death. A person who is Shi-wu-bien is one who can never change, even until his death. Thank the Lord. He has shown us that our life is not changed; it is exchanged.

Once when I was in Shanghai, I bought a watch. At the time I bought it, the shopkeeper gave me a warranty that guaranteed that he would fix the watch free of charge if it broke down within two years. The second morning after I bought the watch, I noticed that it was two and a half hours off. I took the watch to the shop and said to the man, "Why is the watch off by two and a half hours?" The man said, "Okay, okay, I will fix it for you." After two days I went back to pick up my watch. After using it for another day, it was off by an hour again. I took it back for repair a second time. After it was repaired, I took it home. The next day the time was the same as it had been the night before; it had not even moved. I took it back again and asked the man to find why it was not moving. The man said, "Okay, okay, you do not have to say anything more. We will fix it for you." After another week I took the watch home. The next day the watch was three hours fast. I went to the shop again and said to the man, "I have owned this watch for only twenty days. Of these twenty days, it has been in your shop for fourteen days and with me for only six days. Is this your watch or is it mine? Since you cannot fix it, could you exchange it for another one?" But the man said, "There is no such thing as an exchange. The warranty only guarantees repair work. If it breaks down again, you can bring it in and we will fix it for you, until the two year period expires."

Do you see what I mean? Repairing and exchanging are two different things. Repairing involves making good that which is broken, whereas exchanging involves getting rid of that which is old and replacing it with something new. Man's concept is to repair, but God's salvation is to exchange. Most people pray for God to give them power to change for the better. But this is like fixing my terrible watch; no matter how much one repairs it, it will never be changed for the

better. The only way is to exchange it for a new one. God's salvation does not help us change for the better; it does not help us to overcome. God's salvation is Christ overcoming for us. God never does a work of changing us; rather, He exchanges our life.

A year or two ago, I was in Chefoo. In a conference that was prepared specifically for Westerners, the subject of victory was brought up. A Westerner asked, "How can our lives be changed?" I answered, "Victory is not a matter of changing our life. Victory is an exchange of life. It is not a changed life, but an exchanged life. Man is concerned only with changing himself. But in God's eyes, man is too deceitful and evil. There is no way for him to be changed. Adam cannot be changed into a son of God, and tares cannot be changed into wheat. Instead, Adam is exchanged for the Son of God, and tares are exchanged for wheat. Today God has crucified our old man through the Lord's cross. Christ is living within us and is overcoming for us. Our life has been exchanged; it is not merely changed."

Here I must mention a story. Last year in Shanghai a Western missionary working for a mission came to me and told me of a person sent by the mission board to work at a school. The man had been in Shanghai for six years already, and no teacher or student in the school could get along with him. He had a terrible temper. No one in the school could do anything about him; neither could the mission board do anything about him. It intended to send him back to America by the first of November. When the Western missionary came to me for help, he said, "This man is very peculiar. He never laughs. Every time he sees others, he gives them a terrible face. He has a hot temper throughout the day, and everyone is afraid of him. When he shows up, others run away. He has been this way for six years. No one can get along with him in the school, and all four hundred students in the school are afraid of him. No matter where he goes, he gets into arguments with others. I am afraid that he is possessed by some kind of demon. Mr. Nee, you are familiar with the teaching on overcoming. What can you do to help him?" When I heard this, I rejoiced in my heart. Here was another hopeless case. Once man becomes hopeless, God has His way. God heals terminal patients. I promised the missionary that I would go and visit the man. After two days, I was in another person's home. That particular man also came. After introductions, everyone left. When I looked at the man, I almost fainted. I had never seen another man like him in my entire life. His eyes, nose, mouth,

and every feature on his face seemed to be designed specifically to express anger. I could not have agreed more with the one who spoke with me two days ago. When I saw the man, I froze. Perhaps he was indeed possessed by demons! But when he saw me, he began to cry. Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he said to me, "They do not want me anymore." It was hard to tell if he was sad or angry. But his face became even uglier.

I asked him, "How do you feel about yourself?" He said, "I have often bought gifts for others. I preach the gospel to others, and I pray for others. When others are sick, I pray for them, and they become well. But I admit that I have somewhat of a bad temper." I said, "Only somewhat bad?" He said, "Frankly speaking, it is terribly bad! I have a temper like a beast." I then asked him, "Were you like this from the time you were a child, or did you become this way later?" He said, "If I remember right, I have had a bad temper since I was four years old. When I was thirteen years old, my mother died, and my temper grew worse. Today I cannot do anything about my temper. Not only am I not glorifying the Lord, I am actually sinning all the time. I feel that I am the most pitiful man in the whole world. No one will nod at me or speak to me." While he was speaking, he was crying. I began to laugh. He said, "Do not laugh at my bad temper," and I said, "I am not laughing at your bad temper. I am laughing for joy. I am happy that you cannot make it. When you cannot make it, God will have a way."

I then said, "A person like you should not have any problem at all. It is not hard for you to overcome. You can overcome in an instant. The question is not whether you are good or able. The question is whether or not God is able. Victory has nothing to do with yourself. Victory depends on Christ. It is Christ in you who overcomes for you. Victory does not come by trusting in yourself. Victory fully depends on Christ and on Him overcoming for you within you. Victory can only be found in Christ, not in you." He said, "What should I do to stop my temper?" I said, "You do not have to do anything. Just let Christ do everything. Let Him live for you within you. Your eyes should not be set on yourself, but only on God's Christ. He alone can give you the victory." We talked for four hours, but the light still could not penetrate his mind. Later we prayed together, and he prayed, "God, I am too evil. I have lost hope in myself; I can do nothing about myself. From now on, I do not trust in myself. I cannot overcome. God, if You do not overcome for me, I will never make it by myself. From now on, I will not be responsible for myself. You must take responsibility for me!"

After he prayed in such an honest way, he asked, "What should I do after I go home?" I said, "You should do nothing." He began to smile. He took a few steps and then turned back and said, "Is there really nothing that I need to do?" I said, "Indeed, you do not need to move at all. If Satan comes to tempt you to exercise your patience, you should say, 'I cannot be patient. I will let Christ be my patience!'" He said, "That is right. That is right." He began to speak to himself, "I do not need to do anything. If I am ever saved from my temper, it is God's work and not my work." After a few days, I asked others about his condition. One man answered, "It is amazing. Truly amazing! The whole school has never been so quiet as it has been in the last few days. We have never seen him so quiet during the past six years as he has been in the past few days. There has been no noise at all. God has demonstrated His miracle and power in this man." Brothers and sisters, if that man could overcome, anyone can overcome. After a few days, he came to our meeting and began to smile. Later his colleagues and students testified that he had changed. Even the mission board that intended to send him home decided not to send him back because of his change.

Do not think that praying and reading the Word alone will give us the power to overcome. I am not saying that we should not pray or read the Word. There is a place for prayer and a place for reading the Word. But prayer and the reading of the Word alone cannot enable a person to overcome sin. Matthew 5 through 7 says that we are the sons of God. It does not say that we have to be sons of God. If it were up to us to be sons of God, we could never make it. Matthew 5:16 says, "So that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens." If a man has good works, the glory goes to the Father. This proves that the good works are done by God through man. This is why the glory goes to God and not to man. If Brother Chi delivers a good message, no one should praise Watchman Nee. If we have good works, why should others give glory to God? The only reason they give glory to God is that these good works are from God; they are done by God.

Obtained, Not Attained

Another characteristic of the overcoming life is that it is obtained and not attained. You can only obtain the overcoming life; you cannot attain the overcoming life. To obtain means to receive, but to attain means that there is a long way to go. Did you have to strive and struggle for your salvation? No. You experienced salvation as soon as you received. In the same way, victory is

obtained. It is not attained through struggling and striving. To obtain means to have something immediately. Let us look at 1 Corinthians 15:57: "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thank God that victory is not something that we attain through much labor. Victory is given by God. God has given it to us, and all we have to do is stretch out our hands to take it.

Mr. Trumbull was a very spiritual man. He realized that the overcoming life is a miracle. Once he testified to an elder that his temper disappeared from the time that he had received the Lord Jesus as his life; even the desire to lose his temper had disappeared. The elder said, "I believe this is true in you, but it is not a reality for me." Later Mr. Trumbull invited the elder to pray together with him. Afterwards the elder testified, "In my entire life I never experienced what I experienced that evening. It was a miracle! There was no wrestling and no strenuous work. The urge was gone, and even the desire was gone. It was wonderful. It was nothing less than a miracle." Not long afterwards, he wrote a letter to Mr. Trumbull telling him of an evil power at the place where he worked. In the past he would have tried to suppress himself, but from the time he prayed with Mr. Trumbull, he did not have to suppress himself anymore; even the desire to suppress himself was gone.

There was once an Anglican preacher in England by the name of Mr. W——. One day his daughter died. When he returned home from the funeral, he wondered what message he would deliver the next day, which was Sunday. He picked the text 2 Corinthians 12:9 as the subject of his sermon, which says, "My grace is sufficient for you." He knelt down and asked God to bless the subject. While he was praying, he asked himself, "Is the grace of God sufficient for me? If God's grace is not sufficient for me, how can I say to others that His grace is sufficient? My daughter has died and I feel sad, heartbroken, and hurt. This means that God's grace is not sufficient for me. I cannot lie." He thought about changing the subject, but there was no time. He could only pray, "God, help me to experience Your sufficient grace. May Your grace be sufficient for me." He prayed for a long time, but nothing seemed to work. Then he glanced casually at a verse on the mantel. The verse had been placed there by his mother while he was at the funeral. The verse was 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you." The words "My" and "you" were blue, the words "is sufficient" were red, and the rest were black. Suddenly he was enlightened by the Lord. He said to himself, "The Lord says that His grace is sufficient for me. Yet I am saying that

His grace is not sufficient for me." He began to confess his sin to the Lord, saying, "God, You have said that Your grace is sufficient. Yet I am still praying for Your grace to become sufficient for me." As he was confessing, he was also praising and thanking God for the sufficiency of His grace. Soon he was filled with joy and thanksgiving. The next day, when he stepped onto the podium, he delivered the best message of his entire life. When others asked about the secret of his message, he answered that he saw what faith is after his daughter's funeral. Faith is not asking God to fulfill His promises. Faith is praising and thanking God for what He has spoken. From that time he experienced a great change in his life.

When God's life comes into us, it enables us to live a life on earth that is just the same as the one His Son lived in Nazareth. God is raising up a new race—those who have God's Son as their life and who live out the life of His Son. Philippians 4:13 says, "I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me." The Lord in you is empowering you. You have to see that nothing is too difficult for you because the One within you is empowering you. This One is omnipotent. The Lord does not want you to be an ordinary person; He wants you to live a life that God lives, to speak what no man can speak, to do what no man can do, to experience what no man can experience, and to face what no man can face. When Christ lives in you, you can live such a life.

I want to say one word that may offend some people. Many people who go to church are quite dispensable. Whether or not they are around does not mean much, and whether or not they are gone does not mean much either. God can never use such people, because they have not lived the overcoming life. They cannot testify to the world of the life of Christ and cannot help others overcome. We have to ask the Lord to enlighten us and show us the characteristics of the overcoming life. Thank God that our salvation is a full salvation. God has not only saved us from the judgment of sin, but also from the bondage of sin. God's way of salvation is for Christ to suffer sin's punishment on our behalf, to crucify our old man with Him, and to release His life and dispense it to us. Today He dwells within us. His indwelling constitutes our overcoming life.

Thank the Lord that His throne is in the heavens as well as in man's heart. Thank the Lord that He lives in the heavens as well as within us. He can accomplish God's desire within us. All the great and difficult commandments in the Bible are not for man to keep. They are meant for the Lord to keep. The harder the commandments are, the more they prove that only the Lord can fulfill them. Miss

Barber once wrote the following words in her Bible beside the passage in Matthew that says we should love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, and will: "Lord, I thank You for this commandment." She knew that the Lord was the One who could accomplish this. The commandments in the Bible can only be fulfilled by Christ. Thank and praise the Lord. Christ is our life, and He is our victory.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN
BRIEF EXPOSITION ON
THE SECTIONS OF EPHESIANS

Date: December 20, 1936, morning

Place: Pu-Chien-Ding, Foochow

INTRODUCTION

Of all the Epistles of Paul, the book of Ephesians touches the highest pinnacle of the Christian life. This book can be divided into three sections. The first section covers chapter one through chapter three. It emphasizes the facts which we hold in Christ. The second section covers chapter four to chapter six, verse 9. It speaks of the things in Christ and how they are applied to man. The third section covers chapter six, verse 10 to the end of the book. In addition to what we have obtained in Christ and what is applied to men, this section speaks of the attacks from Satan and the way to withstand him.

We are not going to do a detailed study of the book of Ephesians today. We will only consider the spiritual principles revealed in the book. Ephesians 2:6 says that we are "seated" with the Lord in the heavenlies. The word sit is the key word in the first section. Ephesians 4:1 says that we should "walk" worthily of the calling with which we were called. The word walk is the key word in the second section. Ephesians 6:13 says that everything is done, and that we have to "stand." The word stand is the key word in the third section.

Every time we read the Bible we should pay attention to these three things: what God has gained, what man has gained, and what Satan has lost. If our position in Christ is right, our living before men will also be right, and we will also be right before Satan. The Bible shows us that the basis for us to be right before men and Satan rests in Christ. We can walk rightly before men because we have received our fullness in Christ. We are able to stand and defeat Satan because we are firmly established in Christ. No other person in the Bible spoke like Paul. Most people concentrate on what they can do; their focus is on man himself. However,

man can never meet the demands placed upon him. What he says is one thing, and what he does is another. In fact, what he does is often contrary to what he says. For example, Paul said that before there was the law concerning covetousness, he did not know coveting. But once the law came, coveting also came (Rom. 7:7-8). According to Paul's message, we can do something only because God has done it first. The outstanding thing about the gospel is that God's Son worked first, after which we work.

A doctor once told a nurse to give a patient some instructions. The nurse twice had to tell the doctor that the patient would not cooperate. When the doctor went himself, the patient said, "It is not that I will not do it, but that I cannot do it." He was extremely weak mentally. The doctor came back and said, "It is not that he cannot or that he will not. He is at the point that he cannot will." Not only was he short of the outward power to do the thing, he did not have the inward power to will to do it. He did not even have the inclination to will to do it. What makes the gospel so distinct is that God has first done something for man, after which, man does it accordingly. Figuratively speaking, God has not asked you to earn money to feed yourself; He has put money into your pocket already. With His money you can buy food. If you still do not buy food, it means that you are really hopeless. God has done His work. If you still say that you cannot make it, it is not because you cannot make it, but because you choose not make it.

Ephesians 1—3 speaks of the facts we have in Christ. Afterwards, chapters four through six speak of our walk in this world and our responsibility before Satan. This is Paul's message and his method. First he tells us what God has done, and then he tells us what we should do. For the past ten years I have only practiced God's way and Paul's way, which is presenting our position in Christ and then dealing with our daily walk and standing firm against God's enemy according to this position.

THE FIRST SECTION:

OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST—SIT

Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." This verse points out the central thought of the first three chapters of this book; it contains a most important point. According to Paul, this book is not about earthly things, but about heavenly things. God has given man every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.

When I was in Changchow, some brothers wondered how we have all the blessings in the heavenlies. I used the illustration of a water bucket to explain this matter to them. God's salvation is like a well. He has no intention that we draw out water with a water bucket, as the Samaritan woman did. It is too unreliable for man to draw the water himself. The rope may be too short and not reach the water. One may not have enough strength to draw up the water. Therefore, God has given us the whole well. He has given us everything that we need once and for all. The Samaritan woman's thought was only on the water bucket. But God has prepared everything for us in Christ Jesus His Son. Chinese has an idiomatic expression: "As long as the green mountain remains, there is no fear of shortage of firewood." If a whole mountain is yours, you do not have to worry about running out of firewood. But man thinks that as soon as he stops cutting wood, he will run out of firewood. Christ is our "green mountain," and as long as this "green mountain" remains, we have all the provisions we need; there is no need for us to worry anymore.

Ephesians 1:4-14 then speaks of how God selected and predestinated us unto sonship, how He redeemed and forgave us, and how we have received the Holy Spirit. All these are the heavenly blessings mentioned in verse 3. Since we have already received these things, why are we still so poor? My answer is that we are all millionaires, but that we are poor millionaires. Suppose a prodigal son does not realize that his father has left him a will. He will continue to live in poverty. When he takes out his father's will from the safe and reads it, and when he begins to claim his inheritance, he will become a rich millionaire. Spiritually speaking, we often are poor millionaires. If our eyes are veiled day after day, we will surely live a life of poverty. We will live a life that is beset by sin and frustrated by temptations. We will not see that God has given us everything in Christ. Our eyes must be opened to see the inheritance that God prepared for us in Christ.

This is why Paul continued to pray for the saints in verses 15 through 23, after he mentioned God's heavenly blessings in verses 4 through 14. He prayed that our eyes would be opened, and that we would have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know of our inheritance. Everything depends on God's revelation. We need God's revelation before we can see the riches in Christ. A preacher may preach the doctrine of salvation, but he may not be able to save others. A preacher may preach the doctrine of victory, but he may not be able to help others overcome. The Lord said, "He who has an ear, let him hear." Many people have the first part

of this sentence, but do not have the second part. They have ears, but they do not hear and they do not receive anything. We need to pray and ask God for revelation to see the riches of our inheritance in Christ.

Mr. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission did a good work in China, but at one time there were a few sins that he could not overcome. He could not sustain an uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord. One day he read in John 15 that the Lord is the vine and that we are the branches, and that those who abide in Him will bear much fruit. He thought that he had not been abiding in the Lord continually, and he prayed day and night to be a branch in the vine. He wrote to his sister, saying, "For a few months I have been praying to be a branch, but have not experienced it yet. I am in much turmoil. Please pray for me." Later, in another letter he wrote to his sister, saying, "The scales have fallen off from my eyes. I saw that the Lord's Word clearly says that I am a branch. Yet I was still praying to be a branch. How foolish I was." He saw that he was a branch, and that there was no more need to beg earnestly to be one. Once his eyes were opened, he realized that the Lord is the vine as well as the branches, the water, the sap, the soil, the root, the sunshine, and the fruit. The Lord is everything to the vine. As long as he remained in the vine, everything would be all right. From the day he saw this, his spiritual life took a great turn.

Here is a glass cup. It does not have to pray to be a glass cup. You are Ching-fan Chan. You do not have to pray to be Ching-fan Chan. A man can stumble upon salvation accidentally, but he cannot stumble upon victory accidentally. As soon as a man aspires to be holy and victorious, he will try all he can to seek after the Lord. But once his eyes are opened, he will see that he has inherited everything in Christ already. He will say what Hudson Taylor said in jubilation: "From now on I am a new man."

In chapter two, Paul went back to the time before man's salvation and told how God leads man step by step and guides his footsteps. Verses 11 through 22 tell us how we start from the point of being Gentiles, and how we are led from the lowest pit to the highest plane.

In 3:1-13 Paul goes on to say that he was appointed by God to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles are now able to receive the same grace. According to doctrinal sequence, verses 14 through 21 should immediately follow the last verse of chapter one. Ephesians 2:1—3:13 is actually a parenthesis; it describes our condition as sinners, our position as Gentiles, and Paul's apostleship for the deliverance of man.

Ephesians 1:23 is joined to verse 3:14. These two passages are Paul's prayers. What is the goal of these prayers? The prayer in chapter one is for us to "know" something through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The prayer in chapter three is for us to be "granted" something through the power of the Holy Spirit. Chapter one is on revelation; it enables us to know what we have. Chapter three is on the strengthening of the inner man; it enables us to be rooted and grounded. Chapter three does not tell us what we are in Christ, but what Christ is in us. If there is no air, we cannot survive. However, even if there is air, we cannot live if we cover up our nose. In order for a man to live, he must be in the air, and air must also be in him. Chapter three's emphasis is not on us being in Christ, but on the Holy Spirit being in us. Thank the Lord that the air that I am in is also the same air that is in me. In the first prayer, Paul mentioned revelation. Revelation shows man that everything is accomplished in Christ. In the second prayer, Paul mentioned faith. Faith is believing that what God has done is real. Revelation is always linked to faith. There are three main points in chapters one through three: (1) God's provisions, (2) God's revelation, and (3) man's faith.

THE SECOND SECTION:

OUR APPLICATION BEFORE MEN—WALK

Now let us come to the second section. Ephesians 4:1 says that since we are called, we should "walk" worthily of this calling. If a man has never sat, he can never walk. To sit is to rest. It indicates that everything is done, or that someone else has done all the work. This is like riding in the car or on a boat; someone else is moving the vehicle. We can sit in the same way because the Lord has done everything. He has done everything for us; He has identified Himself with us, and He has given us His life. When did God create Adam and Eve? He created them on the sixth day. Hence, the seventh day for God is the first day for man. Man's first day is God's Sabbath day. As soon as man was created, he entered into God's rest. If we cannot sit, it must mean that we have not yet received salvation. There was only one person who entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for sins—the high priest. Even ordinary priests were not allowed to enter (Heb. 9:7). The curtains of the tabernacle kept outsiders away from the sanctuary. God wants us to make no mistake about this—He does not want man to have any share in the matter of redemption. As far as man's forgiveness is concerned, he "sits" on the Lord's redemption. It is not a matter of serving God or seeking for salvation. God has freely given us the grace of forgiveness. Both the

problem of sin and the problem of the old man are dealt with by "sitting." If we have never sat down, we can never do any work. Wherever faith is, there is no work. Everything has been accomplished by God already; all we have to do is receive.

If we can sit, God will make us walk. The second section, Ephesians 4:1—6:9, is on walking. Ephesians 4:17 says, "That you no longer walk." Verse 19 says, "To work all uncleanness in greediness." Verse 22 says, "Your former manner of life, the old man." Ephesians 5:2 says, "Walk in love." Verse 8 says, "Walk as children of light." Verse 11 speaks of "unfruitful works," and verse 12 speaks of "the things which are done." Verse 15 says, "Look therefore carefully how you walk." Ephesians 6:8 speaks of "whatever good thing each one does." This portion of the Word repeatedly and emphatically mentions the matter of a Christian's walk.

Please remember that not only are we in the Lord, but the Lord is also in us. Once we are connected to Christ, His life will flow into us and we will be able to walk. This is like the electric light bulb; when the bulb is connected to the current from the power plant, electricity will be in the bulb and the bulb will light up. First God operates, and then we walk. Without God's operation in Ephesians 3:20, it would be impossible to have the walk of chapter four. First we overcome, and then we go into battle. Christ's salvation first brings in rest and then brings in a walk, unlike other religions which work first and then achieve something later.

Ephesians 4:2-16 tells us how we should relate to the brothers and sisters, to the church, and to the Body of Christ. Verse 3 speaks of the oneness of the Spirit. Paul said that we should "keep" the oneness of the Spirit, rather than "striving at" the oneness of the Spirit. Verses 17 through 24 tell us what we should do concerning our former manner of life. Verse 22 speaks of a putting off. A putting off is not a change. An experience of putting off is a precious one. The Lord has crucified our old man already; we only have to put off the old man as regards its former manner of life.

Ephesians 4:25—5:14 draws special attention to the words we speak with our mouth. Ephesians 4:17-24 deals with one's conduct, while Ephesians 4:25—5:14 deals with one's words. In Ephesians 5:15-21 the most crucial point is the filling of the Spirit and thanksgiving and praise. We can put Ephesians 5:15-21 together with the previous section. Ephesians 5:22-33 shows husbands and wives what each should do, Ephesians 6:1-4 shows parents and children what each should do, and Ephesians 6:5-9 shows masters and slaves what each should do.

Let us summarize the second section: (1) Keeping the oneness of the Spirit and not offending the brothers, because this grieves the Spirit. (2) Putting off the old man. The putting off of the old man is related to the growth of the new life within. This is like the shedding of old leaves from a tree. When new leaves grow, the newness of their life replaces the old leaves. (3) Paying attention to our speaking. We have to be delivered from all kinds of negative speakings. Our conversation should not be focused on the brothers and sisters, but should be words of thanksgiving and praise. (4) Giving a word to husbands and wives, with the emphasis being on the wives. According to God's conviction and commitment, the goodness of the woman lies in her testimony of submission. I wish I could be a woman so that I could submit. Christ was equal with God, yet as the Son, He submitted to God in everything (Phil. 2:6, 8; Heb. 5:8). In the same way, the wife is equal with the husband, yet she is willing to be submissive in everything. Submission is a sign of meekness. The Lord honors the woman by asking her to submit. This means that the Lord places higher hopes on the woman. (5) Giving a word to parents and children. Parents have to nurture their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. The word "nurture" means "to bring up." Many parents want to send their children to the Lord, yet they themselves do not go along. Some say to their children, "I am a grown-up; therefore, I can smoke. You are a child; therefore, you cannot smoke. When you grow up, then you can smoke." This kind of teaching is wrong. The parents must bring up their children. This means that they have to be a pattern for their children to follow. (6) Giving a word to masters and slaves. Slaves should not try to be equal with their masters. They should be obedient to their masters according to the flesh, as to Christ. Many people do not like to hire believers as servants, because brothers who serve as servants often think that they are the same as their masters because they both are brothers. Therefore, they think that they should be treated better, instead of being treated simply as servants. This is wrong. A brother who is serving as a servant should serve his master all the more diligently and should be obedient to his master, as to Christ.

THIRD SECTION:

OUR WITHSTANDING BEFORE SATAN—STAND

The third section of Ephesians begins with chapter six, verse 10 and goes to the end of the book. It is the "final" word. The final word concerns the way to deal with Satan. We must first understand that we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies and then understand our proper walk on earth. Finally, we need to

know how to deal with God's enemy, Satan. Paul told us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand. It says to stand because we do not overcome Satan by our fighting. The Lord has overcome and placed us in the position of victory. All we have to do is to stand and withstand. None of God's armor is for attacking; it is all defensive. Chapter two says that we are seated in the heavenlies. Sitting means that we have overcome the powers and principalities. Now we only need to maintain this stand. Chapter six does not mention any actual warfare; it only mentions withstanding. If a person realizes that he only needs to withstand and that everything is done, he will encounter no problems. Thank the Lord that we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Now we can walk on earth before men, and we can stand to withstand Satan. Thank God that we can "sit," "walk," and "stand."

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE OVERCOMING LIFE

(1)

Date: December 20, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:18-27; 19:1-10

Last night we saw what the overcoming life is. The overcoming life is just Christ; it is Christ living in us. Victory is not receiving some help to become like the Lord Jesus. Victory is the Lord living within man and living for man. Victory is not receiving some kind of power to be humble or to be free from anxiety; it is having the Lord within us becoming our humility and freeing us from anxiety.

But why have so many Christians not obtained all of God's provisions? Actually, they received the power of Christ's blood, His cross, and His flesh at the time they believed. Yet in their experience they may not have entered into the full realization of these things. This is like a person who has bought two packages of goods and opened only one of them, leaving the other one wrapped up for three or five years. It is a pity that this is what God's salvation is like to many people. Tonight I have borrowed two passages of the Bible. Although these two passages do not deal directly with our subject, I will quote them to show how a person can experience the overcoming life.

**THINGS IMPOSSIBLE WITH MEN
BEING POSSIBLE WITH GOD**

Luke 18:26 asks, "Then who can be saved?" Yet Luke 19:9 says, "Today salvation has come to this house." In chapter eighteen there is a rich young man who was a ruler. He came and asked the Lord what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Lord told him to keep the commandments, to not commit adultery, murder, and theft, to not bear false witness, and to honor his parents. The young man said, "All these things I have kept from my youth" (v. 21). When the Lord heard this, He said, "Still you lack one thing: all that you have, sell and distribute to the poor" (v. 22). When the young ruler heard this, he left in sorrow. Then the Lord said, "How difficult it is for those who have riches to go into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (vv. 24-25). When the disciples heard this, they asked, "Then who can be saved?" (v. 26). The Lord answered, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God" (v. 27).

The rich man in chapter nineteen and the rich man in chapter eighteen are quite different. The rich man in chapter nineteen was a tax collector, whereas the rich man in chapter eighteen was a young man who had inherited his wealth from others. Ordinarily an old man like the one in chapter nineteen should have been more stingy, whereas a young man like the one in chapter eighteen should have been more generous, because a young man is not as experienced in the human life as an old man and is not as conscious of the power of money. But Zaccheus did in chapter nineteen what the young man in chapter eighteen could not do. Why is this? Humanly speaking, a young man is relatively generous in the way he spends money and is not as thrifty as an old man. But this young man was different. He could not let go of his money. Actually, not only was the young man unable to let go of his money, even the aged Zaccheus would not have been able to let go of his money if he had been left to himself. But Zaccheus had experienced the Lord's working. Hence, 19:9 says, "Today salvation has come to this house." This means that it was God who made Zaccheus overcome his money. God's salvation came to him. Following this the Lord said, "Because he also is a son of Abraham." The phrase "a son of Abraham" denotes faith. Zaccheus became what he was by faith, not by his own works.

RECOGNIZING THAT MAN CANNOT MAKE IT

The Lord Jesus told the young man to sell everything and distribute the money to the poor. But the young man could not do it. The Lord did not ask the aged

Zaccheus to give away any of his money, yet he gave away a great sum all at once. Why was there such a difference? The difference lies in the phrase "the things that are impossible with men are possible with God." The young man was the best illustration of the first part of that verse—"impossible with men," and Zaccheus was the best illustration of the second part of the verse—"possible with God." Hence, the first secret to victory lies in the first part of 18:27—"impossible with men." You have to realize and learn that it is impossible with men.

The Lord's intention was not for the young man to sell all he possessed to be saved. His intention was to show him the meaning of "impossible with men." The young man was very good. He kept all Ten Commandments, and he thought that he was quite good. Because of this the Lord purposely showed him that he still lacked one thing. Many people have overcome many of the sins that they indulged in before their conversion. Yet there are still one or two sins which linger on that they cannot overcome. The Lord allows one or two things to remain in order to teach them that they cannot make it. This is like a hurdle race where all the contestants fail to get over one or two hurdles. The champion may fail to get over one, and the runner-up, the third, and the last may fail to get over more than one hurdle. God knows that you cannot make it, but you do not know that you cannot make it. If you keep all Ten Commandments, the Lord will show you that there is an eleventh commandment which you cannot keep.

With every one of us there are always one or two sins that we cannot overcome. These sins are our private sins. When I was in Shanghai, I once went out to buy something and met a brother on the way. I nodded at him. After I crossed over to another street, I met him again, and I nodded at him again. When I came to the front of the shop, he was there again, and I nodded at him once more. When I came out of the shop, he was still there, and we nodded again. Within the space of an hour, I nodded at the brother over ten times. This is our experience with some sins—we encounter them again and again. Today we encounter a certain sin, tomorrow we encounter the same sin, and the third day we encounter the same sin yet again. These sins are familiar to us; we frequently commit them. Our list of sins is never extensive. Our sins are very specific. Those who are stubborn are always entangled by stubbornness. Those who worry are always entangled by worries. Those who are proud are always entangled by pride. Those who are anxious are always entangled by anxiety. Those who are prejudiced are always entangled by prejudice. Those who are rash are always

entangled by rashness. Every person has "one thing." At a minimum he has "one thing." God wants to show us through such things that man cannot make it.

Last year in Chefoo a doctor's wife was seeking after the overcoming experience. Most of the people there had passed the gate of victory, and she was the only one who had not passed through. For a whole month she prayed every day. Many of her sins were dealt with in the first three weeks. But there was one sin that she could not overcome. One afternoon everyone went to the restaurant for lunch, and the wife was playing the piano. After a while she stopped and began to weep. I asked her, "What is the matter?" She said, "I cannot make it. There is one thing which I can do nothing about. During the past few weeks, I have been dealing with my sins every day. I have overcome many sins. But I cannot overcome my habit of eating snack food. I am a Presbyterian missionary, but I dare not tell anyone else of my sin." While she was speaking, she was weeping. As I sat and watched her weep, I was rejoicing and smiling. She asked, "Why are you smiling?" After some time I said to her, "I am so happy today. Now do you realize that you cannot make it? Over twenty days have passed, but thank God that you have finally come to the point where you realize that you cannot make it. You have to realize that the Lord allows this vestige of sin, this insurmountable barrier to remain in order to test the genuineness of your victory. The Lord just wants to show you that you cannot make it. Once you see that you cannot make it, God will have a way." The whole principle of God's work is to show you that you cannot make it, and that God alone can make it.

There was a sister who was a mother and a wonderful person. Her only trouble was that she worried about her children day and night. For a while she did not realize that her worrying was a sin. One day she saw it and could not let this matter go. Prior to that time she did not know herself well enough. But on that day she began to have a deeper knowledge of herself, and she felt that she could not go on in that way. Many people only know the doctrine of victory; they do not have the real experience of victory. One of the reasons for this is that they do not know themselves well enough.

NOT TRYING TO MAKE IT

We know that Christ is our victory, but in order to experience Christ as our victory, we have to fulfill one condition—we must first see that we cannot make it. If we constantly say in our hearts that we can make it, Christ will not be able to live for us; He will not be able to overcome for us, and He will not make it for us. Victory is for those who have utterly failed. But here is a problem: It is one thing

to say that we cannot make it, and it is another thing to say that we no longer try to make it. When were the lepers in Leviticus 13 and 14 cleansed? They were declared clean by the priests when their leprosy had spread from the head to the feet. The Lord raises only the dead; He does not raise those who are half alive and half dead. We have to see that apart from the Lord we can do nothing. The conditions for victory are: (1) seeing that we cannot make it and (2) not trying to make it. Being unable to make it and giving up on trying to make it are two entirely different things. Some people know very well that they cannot make it, yet they still try to make it. For example, something may weigh a hundred catties [a Chinese measure of weight], and you can only lift fifty catties. You know that you cannot lift the hundred catties, but you try to do it anyway. This is foolish. God knows that we are totally corrupted and that there is no other way to deal with us except crucifixion. But the problem with man is that he still tries to make it. As a result, he resorts to all kinds of methods and struggles in many ways. A person who struggles in this way will never be saved. Not trying to make it means that we not only acknowledge that we cannot make it, but also that we will not exercise any effort in trying to make it. We know that the Lord Jesus is living in us, and that He is accomplishing that which is impossible for us. His power is not for making up the lack in our work, and His life is not for making up the lack in our life. He is living within us by replacing us. Whenever we exercise our own strength, we will not experience Him living within us. Therefore, we must not only see that we cannot make it, but we must give up trying to make it.

Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?" Those who come to the Lord are not disapproved and have the Lord living within them. The Lord is within you, yet your old man is also within you. The two exist within you at the same time. Both Christ and your old man reside within you. This poses a problem. What should you do? One of the occupants has to move out. God's way of salvation is to move the old man out. He has crucified the old man and put Christ within you instead. This is victory.

Last year I met a Western sister in Chefoo who had three children. The children always caused her to lose her temper. She came to me and said, "I cannot be patient. What should I do?" I said, "If you cannot be patient, do not try to be patient. You have to say to the Lord, 'I cannot be patient. From now on, I will not try to be patient. Lord, You be my patience for me. I will not try to be patient anymore.'" If you learn to let go this way and not try to make it by yourself, but

instead trust in the Lord's power, you will experience victory all the time. This way of victory is glorious.

LETTING GO AND COMMITTING

Overcoming means to stop acting, to stop managing, to ignore, and to cease our own activities. It is forgetting about ourselves and committing everything to God. We have to say to the Lord, "I commit everything to You. From now on, I do not care if I am good or bad." Once we commit ourselves to the Lord in this way, He will take over. Once we let go, God will take over. Suppose I give you a cup. When I let go and you pick it up, the transfer is completed. But if I serve you a cup of tea, but do not let go of the cup, you cannot pick it up. The same is true with God. He wants us to let go before He will pick up. However, we expect God to pick up before we let go. But God is waiting for us to let go before He will pick up. God never does anything to supplement man's work; He will never help anyone. He wants to gain all the glory. This is why He has to do all the work. If we try to do anything by ourselves, God will not do anything. We have to let go completely before God will begin His work.

When a temptation comes, we can say to the Lord, "Here is a temptation. I cannot withstand it, and I will not try to withstand it. Lord, You must withstand it for me." If we let go in this way and allow the Lord to do it for us, He will become our victory. Every day that we live, we live by grace. I have seen many people, perhaps one or two thousand, who have been delivered from sin and are walking on the path of holiness.

A brother in Tientsin by the name of Lee once asked, "How do I let go?" I said, "Brother, what is your job?" He said, "I am the manager of the purchasing department of a fabric store." I said, "Suppose your boss Mr. Lin told you that the board of directors of the company had decided to let you go, and that you should start handing over your responsibility to others. What would you do?" He said, "I would have no choice but to start my resignation process." I said, "If a salesman came in to sell fabric to you, would you go to your abacus? Would you still have to find out how much you have in inventory, and how much you need to buy?" He said, "No. I would tell him that I am not working here anymore, that I have resigned, and that he should talk to the new manager." This is the meaning of letting go. We have been discharged by God; there is no need for us to do anything anymore. We only need to let go and let God do everything. When Satan comes, he does not tempt us first to sin. He just wants us to act on our

own. As long as we move, he will have a way. Our victory lies in our refusal to move or expose our head. We do not have to try to fight back at all. The more we oppose, the quicker we will fail. All we need to do is to commit ourselves to the Lord's hand and forget about doing or managing anything. This is victory, and this is letting go.

One brother said that he wrestled with sin daily. Another young brother told him that he should never wrestle with sin. The first brother asked, "If I fail when I fight and withstand, will I not fail even more if I do not fight or withstand?" The young brother said, "No! I would just say to God, 'I cannot make it. You have to make it for me. I commit myself to You.'" This is the secret to victory. Once you let go, the Lord will pick you up. Victory does not depend on how much you have done, but on how much God has done.

Once a brother was going down a dry well. He tied a rope to the edge of the well and lowered himself down by the rope. As he was lowering himself down, he suddenly found that he had come to the end of the rope. He did not know how much lower he had to go before he would come to the bottom of the well so he decided to climb back to the surface. But as he tried to climb up, he realized that he had exhausted all his strength. Since he could not go up or down, he cried for help. But it was a deserted place and the well was deep. He shouted until he was exhausted, but still no one came to his rescue. Eventually, he could not hold on any longer. Since he was a Christian, he thought that he should pray. So he prayed, "God, please help me to fall into eternity." Then he let go of the rope and fell from the air to the earth. However, he only fell two or three inches! He regretted that he had held onto the rope for so long and that he had not let go of the rope sooner. Brothers and sisters, overcoming means letting go! Let go! Do not be afraid; you will not fall into eternity. Rather, you will fall onto the eternal Rock. If you let go and do not take control, you will overcome. Victory is something that Christ accomplishes; it is not something that you accomplish. All you have to do is let go and give up. Christ will take over and everything will be accomplished. The overcoming life is for those who have completely let go.

When I was in Chefoo, a brother who was a doctor by the name of Shi came to listen to my preaching. He had a long history of smoking cigarettes. He had been saved for four years, and he had married a Christian sister. His wife had been to a seminary and was a very upright person. Brother Shi had tried to quit smoking for four years. Every year he would make seven or eight attempts, but the longest he was able to stop smoking was only four days. When a cigarette was

not in his hand, it was in his mind. He could do nothing about this, and he would eventually smoke again. He often smoked secretly at the hospital. When others came, he would snuff out the cigarette and put some breath freshener in his mouth to hide his smoking from others. He told me that his smoking had caused him much suffering. He had tried all kinds of ways to quit but had not been successful. He came and asked me what he should do.

When I heard his story, I was happy within, because I knew that another person was about to go through the gate of victory. I said, "Brother Shi, you are a doctor. If a healthy person comes to the hospital and asks to be admitted, would you admit him?" He said, "No. If he is not sick, the hospital cannot admit him. The hospital only admits those who are sick." When I heard this, I was even happier, because here was another visitor for the Lord's clinic, and this was one more opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate Himself. I said to him, "Do you realize that the Lord Jesus only takes terminal cases? You say that you cannot quit smoking. Is this not a terminal case?" He said, "Indeed it is. I have tried to quit for three or four years but have not been successful. This is a terminal illness as far as I am concerned." I then said, "Okay, now is the time for you to see what the Lord Jesus can do. What should you do? You only need to say to the Lord, 'I cannot quit smoking. I cannot make it. I will not try to quit anymore. Lord Jesus, I commit myself to You. Lord, You can do it; please save me.'"

Then I showed him Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 12:9, which says, "And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me." I said, "It is wonderful that you cannot quit smoking. Paul boasted in his weaknesses. What are you going to do with your weakness? Are you going to cry about it? No. You have to say to the Lord, 'I am weak. I have completely failed in my efforts to quit smoking. I cannot quit. I will always smoke, but Lord, You are in me. I will not try to quit anymore. You must quit for me.'" He prayed in this way, and after he prayed, he went home. The second day he came to me and told me what he said to his wife. He had said, "For four years you have been bugging me and arguing with me. Yet I continued to smoke. But yesterday I went to God, and in five minutes it left me." I asked him, "Will you smoke again?" He said, "Of course I will! I will always smoke. Tsai-lin Shi will always smoke; he will smoke even five years or ten years from now. It is the Lord Jesus who stops me from smoking." He had truly overcome.

When I was in Chefoo, a sister came to me. I asked her, "Do you believe that you can overcome all the time?" She said, "I believe that I need some time to answer your question." Her words indicated that she was defeated already. Victory is not something that is proven over time. Victory is believing that the Lord lives in us and that He lives for us no matter what may happen. Victory depends on our letting go and our believing. If we are not victorious, it is either because we have failed to let go, or because we have failed to believe. If we have not failed in these two things, we will surely overcome.

The secret to victory lies in: (1) realizing that we cannot make it, (2) completely letting go, (3) seeing that the Lord can make it, and (4) having a living faith every day, believing that the Lord is living for us. When we rise up from our bed in the morning and are happy, we should believe that the Lord is living for us. When we rise up from our bed in the morning and are not happy, we should still believe that the Lord is living within us. If we do this, we will always live an overcoming and glorious life. Please remember that we have to commit ourselves to the Lord and put ourselves in His hand. We must believe that He has received us and will live out His overcoming life for us. We should not try to see if this works; rather, we should trust in Him fully and believe in Him absolutely. The Lord will work only when we trust in Him fully. We have to believe from our heart that the Lord will live for us at all times. If we do not fail in letting go and in believing, we will surely overcome.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE
HOW TO EXPERIENCE
THE OVERCOMING LIFE
(2)

Date: December 21, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

We have seen that there are simple conditions for a person to have the Lord live in him, that is, to experience the overcoming life. All he has to do is resign, quit, yield, let go, and let Christ take over. When a man does this, he will overcome. We have been meeting here for nine evenings. Now I will ask a question. Have you let go? If you have not let go, you have to say to the Lord, "I cannot make it, and I do not intend to try to make it. I let go. I commit everything to You so that You can overcome for me." Some may feel that it is very difficult to let go, and some may not even know what letting go means. You have to realize that unless

you truly let go, you cannot fully overcome. Therefore, tonight we need to consider once again how we can let go and commit everything to Him.

LETTING GO

When I was in Chefoo, a sister came to me and said that she could not let go because she did not know how to let go. I asked her if she had ever taken a cab to her friend's house. She said she had. I then asked if she had ever arrived at her friend's house and as she reached into her pocket to pay the driver, her friend came out and tried to pay the fare, with each trying to pay and each trying to push money into the other one's hand. She said she had. I said, "Suppose your friend paid the twenty-cent fare for you, and the driver took the money and left. Since you did not want your friend to spend her money, you would attempt to put twenty cents into her hand before you left. As you were leaving, she would try to put the money back into your hand. After pushing the money back and forth a few times, you could place the money on the ground and tell her that you were leaving. In your heart, however, you would wonder if your friend had taken the money. You would also wonder what would happen if she did not pick it up and some passersby picked it up instead. Therefore, you would glance back quickly to see if she had picked up the money. If you saw that she had not picked it up, you would take a few more steps and look back again. If you did this, I can tell you that your friend would never take the money as long as you continued to look back. But if you left the money in the middle of the street and did not look back, walking straight ahead instead, your friend would surely come over and pick it up." After I told her this illustration, she became clear and began to experience the overcoming life.

Last night I spoke of a sister who loved snack food. A few days after I talked with her, she invited some guests to her house for a meal. During the meal, she wept again. She felt that she was still defeated and had not yet overcome. She still had not let go. Chinese has an idiomatic expression: "To let go and die." Once a man lets go, God can do His work. Man always tries to do something and to come up with some methods, but God considers us to be hopeless. He only asks us to let go. As long as we still want to do something, God will allow us to go on by ourselves. But when we can say, "Lord, I thank You that I cannot make it, but I believe that You can make it," our faith will bring in the Lord's work. On the one hand, many people commit themselves to God, but on the other hand, they cannot be at peace. They constantly look back, fearing that God will not take up their consecration. This is not genuine trust. God wants to be responsible for

everything. But if we want to take control, He will not take control. If we do not take control, He will surely take control. After we have committed everything to God, we should no longer take control or worry about anything. We have to say to God, "I have committed everything to You. From now on, I do not care if I am good or bad." Once we commit ourselves to God in this way, He will take over and be responsible for everything. If we let go, God will take over.

BELIEVING

However, after many people know that they should let go, they still fail because they have not believed. After a person has let go, he must continue to believe. Letting go is just the negative side of the matter. On the positive side, we must believe. We have to believe that we have overcome. Putting it more accurately, we have to believe that the Lord is living in us, that we have uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord, that we have a sustained prayer life, that we are obedient to God, and that we have the power to overcome sin.

Letting go and believing are definite steps that we must take. Every Christian should know the day that he let go and the day that he believed. These days should be as definite as the day of his salvation. Our letting go and believing must be definite, but after we have let go and believed in a definite way, we need to continue to let go and believe. Letting go and believing are things that we do continuously day by day; they are not things we do once for all. Some people say, "This is hard. How can I remember to do this? After I hear a message, I may be able to remember. But when I am busy, when I am studying, or when I am visiting the sick, I may forget. What should I do?" We have a brother who manages a factory that has more than a few dozen female workers. He said that he often has been driven almost to insanity by the noise of the machines. He did not know how one could be in Christ all the time. I asked, "When you have forgotten that you are in Christ, are you still in Christ in reality?" He thought for a while and answered, "Yes, I am still in Christ." Thank the Lord that this is not a matter of us remembering, but a matter of the Lord remembering. We can forget about the Lord, but the Lord will never forget us. We have to realize that there is no problem with us at all, because we are in Christ already. We can rest in the Lord, because He is responsible for everything.

COMING TO GOD JUST AS WE ARE

A brother once asked, "If I let go today, but cannot let go tomorrow, what will happen to me?" I said, "You can go to the Lord and say, 'Lord, I cannot let go,

and I will not try to let go. Thank You that You can make me let go!' If you find that you cannot believe, you can say to the Lord, 'I cannot believe, and I will not try to believe. Thank You that You can believe for me.'" There is not a single weakness in us that is so severe that it can frustrate God. We only need to come to the Lord just as we are. From now on there is nothing that is impossible with us. Hallelujah! After we pass the gate of victory, day by day we will find the Lord overcoming the sins that we could not otherwise overcome.

Another brother once asked, "Does this mean that if I let go and believe today, that I will never sin again?" No. You can still sin. But there is a big difference between letting go and believing, and not letting go and not believing. Before one can experience the overcoming life, failure is the rule while victory is the exception. But after one passes the gate of victory, victory is the rule while failure is the exception. Victory is the normal experience, while failure is the abnormal experience. The old sins are gone and his tone has changed; everything is different. He is no longer bound by the sins that once beset him. There is a big difference between his present state and his former condition when he had not yet experienced the overcoming life.

THE WAY TO DEAL WITH TEMPTATIONS

Those who are living the overcoming life may still encounter temptations. When temptations come, how should we deal with them? There are two kinds of temptation that Christians encounter in their daily life. The first kind of temptation comes slowly; it gives a person time to think about it. The second kind of temptation comes suddenly; it does not give a person time to think about it. These two temptations vary in the duration of time, and the way to deal with them is different. Let us consider the way to deal with these two kinds of temptation.

Dealing with Temptations That Come Slowly

The way to deal with the first kind of temptation is similar to the way one gets through the gate of victory. When this kind of temptation comes, he should not "stick out his head"; rather, he should hide behind the Lord. He should not resist or fight the temptation. He only needs to tell God directly, "I know I like to lose my temper. I will not try to be patient. Lord, I thank You and praise You because You can be my patience. I cannot overcome this temptation myself. Just as Your blood saved me, Your flesh, that is, Your life, will also save me." If he stands firm in this position, the temptation will go away. If he struggles with the temptation and tries to resist, it will never leave him. But when he says, "I cannot make it,

but God can make it," and when he boasts in his weakness and in God's strength, the temptation will go away immediately.

Dealing with Temptations That Come Suddenly

In order to deal with the second kind of temptation, we must first realize that sudden sins, temptations, and snares are like fiery darts that come upon us; they shoot us when we least expect it. The way to deal with these sudden, fiery darts is to lift up our faith as a shield. Many people use faith like "pliers." When fiery darts hit them, they try to pull them out with "faith-pliers." But this is futile. What is a shield? A shield is something that is between the enemy's darts and us. Every morning we have to pray with faith and ask God to deliver us from temptations so that we will not encounter unexpected temptations. Moreover, during the whole day, we have to believe that Christ will live His life out of us. We have to believe that just as we sinned without effort or resolutions when we were in Adam and joined to him, we can live out the patience of Christ and express His holiness without effort or resolutions now that we are in Christ and are joined to Him. Every morning when we wake up, we have to believe that God will deliver us from temptations that we do not even have a chance to think about. We also have to believe that Christ's life will manifest His victory through us without any conscious effort on our part.

If a man says that he cannot guarantee that he will not fail today, he will surely fail. If he says, "I believe that I will surely overcome today," he will still fail. But suppose he says, "Lord, I thank You because You have said that Your grace is sufficient for me. Lord, I am weak and will always be weak. I do not have any strength, and I cannot overcome sin. But You have said that Your grace is sufficient for me. I commit myself to You. I believe in You, and I believe that Your grace is sufficient." He has the Lord's Word. When he believes in the Lord's Word and stands on His Word, he will overcome. We must have the shield of faith with us all the time. The Lord's prayer to the Father in Matthew 6 is a very good prayer. He prayed that the Father would not bring us into temptation (v. 13). We also have to pray like the Lord, saying, "Lord, do not bring me into the sudden temptations." If we do this, we will see the Lord's deliverance.

HOW TO DEAL WITH TRIALS

Sometimes you encounter not only temptations, but also trials. Suppose a sister's husband persecutes her and does not allow her to come to the meetings. The way to deal with such a trial is by faith. If faith is genuine, an intense fire will only

prove its golden nature; the fire will not turn it into bronze. All genuine faith is long-lived. Whenever you encounter any trial, do not be discouraged and do not retreat. On the contrary, stand on God's Word and believe that God will manifest His victory through you.

When I was in Chefoo, Brother Witness Lee's wife came to see me once and said, "I have passed the gate of victory. But my victory is very short; it only lasts for a week. After a few days, I am defeated again. What is happening to me?" I gave her an illustration. I said, "Suppose your child is playing outside your house and a rickshaw driver comes and says to him, 'Your mother bought you from the herbal shop.' Your child will come home and ask, 'Was I born of you, or was I bought by you?' You will say, 'You were born of me. Do not believe the word of a stranger.' Your child may go out and meet the same man again, who says, 'You are silly. Your mother has deceived you. You were bought and not born of your mother. I was there when she bought you.' The rickshaw driver may repeat again and again that your son was not born of you. He may even present two or three witnesses to your child. Will your child believe your words, which do not have any proof, or the stranger's lies, which are apparently backed up by proof? If your son has faith in your word, he will be very bold. He will ignore the lies of the strangers, and he will even laugh at them in his heart and say, 'You are liars. You are just trying to deceive me. The more you speak to me, the more I do not believe.' In the same way, we believe in God's Word and do not need any proof. Whatever God's Word says, that is it. My feelings are lies, and my experiences are lies. I only believe that God's Word is true. If we can believe firmly in God's Word, we can even say, 'I wish more trials can come. Let them come. See whether or not I am nervous about them!'"

Once another brother named Lee testified that he lives a life of sitting at the bow of the boat. He can look down upon all the temptations and scorn all the trials, because the Lord is sleeping at the stern of the boat. Those who have faith will have such a confidence. Yet this will not guarantee that we will never fail. It is still possible for us to fail. Once we fail, we have to confess our sins immediately and repent to Him, asking for the cleansing of His blood. Then we have to return to the proper path and live the overcoming life once again. When we do this, the way of victory will shine brighter and brighter.

**VICTORY BEING PERFECT IN NATURE
WHILE THE EXPERIENCE OF VICTORY
BEING PROGRESSIVE**

Question: Is victory something progressive, or is it something that we experience once for all?

Answer: It is right to say that it is progressive, but it is not wrong to say that it is complete once for all. In terms of God living in us and overcoming sins for us, we can say that victory is complete once for all. However, there is a difference in degree. There is a difference in the amount God fills a person. For example, a cup, a bowl, and a bucket can all be filled, but the measures are different. Every believer can only overcome the sins that he knows about; he cannot overcome sins that he does not know about. For example, last year you might not have known that a certain matter was a sin. Obviously, you could not have overcome it then. When God enlightens you this year, you will know that it is sin, and you can overcome it. The light you receive is progressive. Therefore, the victory you experience is also progressive. The victory that a newly saved person experiences is the same kind of victory that is experienced by one who has been a Christian for forty to fifty years. But the latter has experienced victory in greater frequency and degree. Hence, in order to live the overcoming life, we must learn daily to know sin and the things that do not glorify God. If we do this, we will advance day by day.

I have a friend who is a missionary with the China Inland Mission. She was familiar with the overcoming life. She had a colleague who always gave her a hard time, spreading many unfounded rumors about her in England. All the co-workers disliked this one, but my friend endured her and outwardly maintained a cordial relationship with her. One day my friend read 1 Peter 1:22, which says, "Love one another from a pure heart fervently." God shed His light on her and showed her that not only is hatred a sin, but the failure to love one's brother is also a sin. She prayed and said, "Lord, make me love her. There is nothing lovable about her. She is not lovable at all. In fact, she is horrible. Lord, I can forgive her, but I cannot love her. I cannot love her fervently. I confess that this is a sin." For two to three days, her attention was on this new sin. One day she prayed and fasted the whole day, but still she could not love the sister. She prayed earnestly for another day and night. The next evening the Lord granted her the victory. She felt that she not only loved this sister fervently, but that she could even pray for her. Thank the Lord, after another week the co-worker who gave her a hard time also overcame and received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After we pass the gate of victory, there may still be warfare, but the

warfare we experience after passing the gate of victory is a warfare of faith. In the world one fights to win, but the Lord's way is to win first and then fight.

There were three Western sisters who were working in Shansi. Two of them decided to remain single, and the third was engaged. Her fiancé was in England. One day the sister who was engaged was praying in her room and felt very lonely. She began to weep and feel sorry for herself. When the second sister passed the room and saw her crying, she went to the third one and said, "If anyone should be crying, we should be the ones. She has a fiancé who writes to her all the time. Why does she have to cry?" Eventually the two were affected and began crying out of loneliness as well. A few days later the Lord reminded one of them of the word in Matthew 28:20: "I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age." The other sister read Psalm 16:11, which says, "You will make known to Me the path of life;/In Your presence is fullness of joy;/At Your right hand there are pleasures forever." They realized that even the feeling of loneliness was a new sin, and they prayed, "Lord, forgive us. You are with us all the time. Yet we feel lonely. This is a sin." After this they overcame. From that time forward, they never wept for their loneliness.

One sister had five children. She was a very good sister, but she worried for her children all the time. At first she even thought that it was right to worry; she did not see that worrying is a sin. Therefore, she did not overcome. One day the Lord enlightened her, and she realized that worrying is a sin. Subsequently, she overcame. If you have the Lord living in you, the more sin you know, the more you will overcome.

I was once ill-treated by a certain person, and I said a few rash words to him. The Lord pointed out this matter to me and told me to deal with it. I thought that he had wronged me. I did not hate him anymore and I had forgiven him. Yet the Lord wanted me to confess my sins to him. I felt that I could not do this, but whenever the Lord speaks, He will not give up. Whenever the Lord lays His hand upon something, He will never take it back. I read the Bible and prayed. One day I read the phrase "love your enemies." I had written a letter apologizing to him, but when I realized that I could not love him, I did not send it out. I prayed to the Lord, "If You do not give me a love for this man, I cannot love him by myself." When I honestly confessed that I could not make it, and that God was the only One who could, I was able to love him from my heart. I had been trying to deal with the matter for two months, but it was settled that day. I sent him the letter of apology the next day.

A sister who was very neat, tidy, and kept her house in good order did not care very much about her closets. Two months ago she testified that the Lord spoke to her, "You have to clean your closets; otherwise, you cannot glorify Me." She began to clean her closets. When I heard this, I was quite touched, and the Lord immediately spoke to me, "You have not made your bed. How can this glorify Me?" I began to make my bed. Before that time I had never made my bed. That was the first time I began to make my bed. Two months have passed now, and I have been making my bed ever since. Thank and praise the Lord.

The victory in Christ is complete in its nature, and there is no way to improve on it. However, the extent and degree of victory are constantly growing and increasing. The more light we receive, the more growth we experience. The less light we receive, the less growth we experience. The more we know our sins, the more supply we receive from God; the less we know our sins, the less supply we receive from God. If every day we acknowledge before the Lord that we cannot make it, that we will not try to make it, and that only God can make it, and if every day we believe that God lives in us to be our victory, we will advance continually. Hallelujah! On the one hand, our victory is complete, because this victory is accomplished in Christ. On the other hand, our victory is progressive, because as the light we receive increases, the measure of our victory will also increase.

CHAPTER SIXTY

TAKING UP OUR CROSS

Date: December 22, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:23-24; Phil. 3:10

GOD'S OBJECTIVE SALVATION AND SUBJECTIVE SALVATION

God's intention in creating man was not only for man to multiply and replenish the earth, but for God to have sons, that is, for Him to have a group of men who would have His life. This group of men would not only have God's image outwardly, but also have His life inwardly. In the garden of Eden, God intended only to do one thing, which was for Adam to receive His life. If Adam had done this, God's goal would have been achieved. After Adam fell, God had to do two things. First, He had to deal with sin, and second, He had to deal with man the person. God dealt with sin so that man would no longer be a sinner. He dealt with man so that man would no longer merely be man. Both as a man and a sinner,

man needs God's grace. A sinner needs God's grace in order to have the forgiveness of sins, and a man needs God's grace in order that he may receive God's life. The Adam in paradise needed God's grace, and the Adam outside of paradise also needed God's grace. In the first few evenings, we saw that on the objective side, God solves the problems of the sinner and man by the substitutionary work of the blood and the identifying work of the cross. In the next few evenings, we saw that on the subjective side, God deals with man's problem in life through Christ's flesh becoming our life. The result is that man can now live out the life of Christ.

God has prepared not only an objective salvation for us, but also a subjective salvation. The blood of the Passover signifies the objective redemption, whereas the lamb of the Passover signifies the subjective salvation. All of the Israelites, old and young, had to strike the blood and eat the lamb. This simple type shows us objective salvation as well as subjective salvation. By striking the blood, we receive objective salvation. By eating the Lord's flesh, our natural elements are eliminated daily, and the Lord lives out of us day by day. This is subjective salvation. Tonight we have to add another item, which is bearing the cross. We can explain this by a diagram:

I wonder how many of you realize the preciousness of this diagram. If there was a meeting concerning this diagram and I had to buy a ticket to get in, I would pay a hundred pounds to get in. Let us look carefully at this diagram.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST DEALING WITH SIN AND THE OLD MAN

First let us consider the sinner. There are two aspects to the sinner. The first is sin and the second is the old man. Sin is like the product of a factory, whereas the old man is like the factory. Because the old man is corrupt, the product is nothing but sin; one cannot expect any better product than sin. The Lord's blood deals with the product, that is, it deals with man's sin. It cleanses us of our sins and accomplishes an eternal redemption. There are two aspects to cleansing us of our sins. The first is cleansing before God, and the second is cleansing in man. The first aspect removes the record of sin before God and brings in forgiveness. The second aspect removes the guilt in man's conscience. The blood does not cleanse man's heart; it only cleanses man's conscience. Since the Lord has shed His blood on the cross and sin has been judged, God must forgive man's sin. This is most righteous. Man no longer has to worry or be threatened by his sins; he can now enjoy peace. In the Old Testament, after a

leper was cleansed, the priests had to sprinkle the holy place seven times and sprinkle the leper seven times (Lev. 14:19; 4:6; 14:7). This signifies that man is at peace when sin is forgiven before God.

However, the blood cannot cleanse our old man, self, or lusts. There is no place in the Bible that says the blood cleanses our old man. The old man must be crucified and annihilated. There is no way to deal with the old man except through death. Even God cannot do anything with it. The old man can only be dealt with by the cross. Hence, the cross of Christ deals with our old man. The sinner's sins are dealt with by the blood, whereas the sinner's old man is dealt with by the cross. The blood signifies the substitutionary death of Christ; He bore God's judgment on the sinner's behalf to secure the forgiveness of sin for us. The cross signifies the identifying death of Christ; our old man was crucified together with Christ and has been terminated.

THE LORD'S FLESH AND OUR CROSS

There are also two aspects to man. On the positive side, he lacks something—God's life. On the negative side, he still has the human, natural, and mortal life, and there is the need for him to be terminated. I want to say a few words here to the unbelievers. It does not matter whether you are good or bad. As long as you do not have the life of Christ, you have nothing to do with God. I have over ten friends who invited me once to a feast at the ancestral hall of a Chen clan, but because my last name is not Chen, I could not participate in the fellowship of that ancestral hall. You do not have to commit any sin to become a sinner. As long as you are a man, you are alienated from the life of God. God's way for man to receive His life is for man to eat His flesh. The Lord's flesh signifies His life which was released through death. This flesh is equivalent to the fruit of the tree of life. Both flesh and fruit are edible—fruit is the edible part of the tree, while flesh is the edible part of an animal. For us to eat the Lord's flesh is for us to regain the blessing of Adam which he lost in paradise.

The blood speaks of the substitutionary death of Christ. The cross speaks of the identifying death of Christ. The flesh speaks of Christ's life-releasing death. He died in order that man may eat His flesh to receive His new life, the life of God. But how can we allow the flesh, that is, God's life, to live within us? In practice, it is through the cross, that is, through bearing the cross. The bearing of the cross signifies our acceptance of God's work. It means that we lose our own soul life, natural life, and allow Christ to live within us.

After Adam sinned, man became the "old man." Before Adam sinned, man was simply man. When God crucified you on the cross with Christ, He crucified the old man; He did not crucify you as a man on the cross. Your hands, feet, mind, will, and emotion are still here. Your personality, self, and natural disposition are still here. What then does Galatians 2:20 mean, when it says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me"? The "I" in this verse refers to two different things: one is the old man, and the other is our personality. In this verse, the first two "I"s refer to the old man, while "me" at the end of the verse refers to our personality. The "I" of the old man is dealt with through crucifixion with Christ, whereas the "I" of our personality is dealt with through bearing the cross.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE CROSS

Our natural human life is mortal and animal. When Adam was in paradise, even before he sinned, his life was mortal; he did not have God's life within him. The natural life needs to be dealt with and the animal life needs to be dealt with even more. Otherwise, God's life will be bound by man's body. This is like the Lord Jesus when He was on earth. The life of God within Him was bound by the body He received from Mary, and it could not be released. However, He dealt with this mortal life and was able to express God's life through His body. The way to deal with the old man is by the cross. The way to deal with the mortal life is also by the cross. Are these two dealings identical? No. The first dealing has to do with the cross of Christ. His crucifixion deals with our sinful self; this is an accomplished fact. The second dealing has to do with our own cross. We have to bear the cross, and it deals with our natural self. This is something that we have to do every day.

TAKING UP OUR OWN CROSS

Every work spoken of in the Bible has its own specific application. For example, here is a chair. If we turn it upside- down, no one can sit on it. We have to apply the two aspects of the cross correctly. The cross of Christ requires faith. Once we believe, it is ours. Its purpose is to deal with sin itself. Our cross does not require faith; it requires obedience. Its purpose is to deal with the self which was there before sin even came in. This self can only be dealt with by obedience.

For your benefit I should mention one thing. I am not only condemning you, I am also condemning myself. Some people are more amiable than others. We tend to be attracted to them. They speak well, and there is nothing sinful or wicked about them. Yet when we are with them, we do not feel the presence of God. Although

such a person may talk about God, we can only sense his wisdom or cleverness; we do not sense God. Only his natural life is manifested in him. Eloquence, management skill, and kind dispositions are natural traits. They do not issue from God's life. When a person sits beside us, we may be attracted to him and he may make us feel very comfortable. This kind of natural goodness is often the very thing that frustrates God's life. The natural life is the totality of the life that we have inherited from our parents. It is what remains in our life after the sinful elements have been dealt with. The life of the old man, the natural life, easily veils God's life and keeps it from being released.

In Luke 9:23 the Lord said, "If anyone wants to come after Me"—this means if anyone wants to live as He lived on this earth—"let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Verse 24 continues, "For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it." The word "for" at the beginning of verse 24 tells us that verse 24 is an explanation of verse 23. The life spoken of here is the soul-life. Everyone wants to preserve his own soul-life, animal life, and natural life. This life includes such traits as our natural generosity, excellence, and good disposition.

THE CROSS IN PRACTICE

The Lord wants us to take up our cross daily because He wants to cut off our soul-life with the cross. How does the Lord do this? He allows man's misunderstandings to come upon us. When we are misunderstood, we always try to reason. It is not a sin to try to reason, and the natural life always likes to reason. But a Christian has to learn a lesson. He has to say to the Lord, "I thank You. When others misunderstand me, I am eager to justify myself. But vengeance is Yours. I will not try to justify myself." If we ignore ourselves and allow others to misunderstand us, and if we do not justify ourselves even when we have the chance, our capacity will be increased and God's life will become manifest. The daily cross is something that eliminates us day by day. We all want others to understand what we are doing and appreciate us. Yet God allows frustrations to come upon us so that He can eliminate us. Some people wish that their children would not make noise so they could read their Bible quietly; this would be wonderful for them. But those who genuinely bear the cross endure their children's distractions.

Once a father and son came and told me that they had countless grievances and that they needed someone to sympathize with them. I said, "There is nothing

wrong with what you have just said; saying these things is not a sin. In fact, you are quite justified in saying these things. But the question is whether or not you are bearing the cross. Please remember that the day you stop bearing the cross is the day that you stop growing. When you reject God's word, you stop growing in the eyes of God, even though you may still have a good appearance before men and may still maintain certain kinds of works."

Man's greatest suffering is finding his desires unfulfilled. When a person cannot satisfy his desires, he may rebel, disagree, or complain in his heart. But if he would lift up his head at that very moment and say to the Lord, "I thank You because this is Your will," his capacity would be increased. Without the cross, all spiritual blessings will stop. When harsh words, unkind expressions, or unhappy incidents happen at home, a person may weep. Yet if he would say to the Lord in tears, "I accept and am satisfied with the things You have permitted to come upon me," he would grow. Madam Guyon said, "Lord, even if You chastise me with a whip, I will still kiss that whip with my mouth." Miss Barber wrote in one of her hymns: "Let the spirit praise Thee,/Though the heart be riven" (Hymns, #377). This was spoken by one who truly knew God and who truly knew the cross.

The Lord has to dig away many unnecessary things in us. Once the cross stops its work in us, growth and victory will also stop. Man is prone to preserve himself, but the cross is here to strip us of our soul-life. The way to be a blessing to others is not by preserving our soul-life, but by losing our soul-life. The more we lose our soul-life, the more we will become a blessing to others.

Mr. Cowman was a person who had deep spiritual experiences in the Lord. While he was working in India, the Lord opened his eyes to see that he should be a servant to others, a "heel" to the Body, and that he should happily accept the ugly things that were heaped upon him. The suffering of the cross is not a suffering of wine mingled with gall. It is a suffering that refuses to avoid pain. Rumors were once circulated about me. At first my natural life could not stand it. I said, "Lord, if I remain silent and do not fight back, I will not be able to do anything." But the Lord showed me Matthew 5:12. His intention is not only that we should not fight back, but that we should accept these things with joy.

THE TONE OF VICTORY

Victory has a certain tone. The tone of victory is thanksgiving and praise. If you cannot give thanks and praise, you have been defeated already. If you are genuinely bearing the cross, you will be able to praise and thank the Lord. There

are two kinds of thanksgiving and praise. One is cheap; it thanks and praises the Lord for His grace. The other is expensive; it thanks and praises even when the cross is present. The second kind is better; it is the real offering of thanksgiving and praise. An offering is a sacrifice, and a sacrifice is something that brings about a loss. Many times, we have to learn to agree with other brothers and to deny ourselves. We often have to learn to agree with our enemy and to oppose ourselves. The crucial things about the cross are the dealing with our individual opinions and ideas on the one hand, and the denial of our preferences and desires on the other hand. If we can overcome our animal life, we will gain God's life. The more we lose, the more we will gain. If we lose our soul-life day after day, we will be on the way to glory day after day, and we will realize that chastisement is a joy.

THE RESULT OF VICTORY—

THE ABILITY TO BEAR THE CROSS

Please remember that victory results in our ability to bear the cross. If we do not have any opinion of our own, if others find it easy to take advantage of us, and if we do not fret while we are being taken advantage of, thanking and praising the Lord instead, we are bearing the cross. As a wife, husband, teacher, student, servant, or master, there are countless numbers of things that bother and disturb us every day. We have to realize that nothing that comes upon us comes by accident. All these things are crosses that the Lord has given us. Blessed are those who see God's hand in their environment. Those who avoid the cross are only lovers of themselves. They have not seen God's hand. As a result they miss many blessings. In the past we might not have been able to face the cross, because we were short of strength. But thank the Lord that we have the strength now, and we can face the cross.

If we want to know ourselves, if we want to know sin, and if we want to go on in the way of God's will, we have to learn to stand on the side of those who take advantage of us. We have to learn to love our enemies, to pray for those who curse us, and to have our self broken. We have to learn faith, learn to trust and obey, learn to cease fighting against our environment, and learn to submit to all of God's arrangements. Others may find a certain environment frustrating, but for us, everything is working for our good.

Eight or nine years ago, I read a story which rendered me much help. The story happened in one of the kingdoms in western Asia. The general of the kingdom staged a rebellion to usurp the throne, and the king led his personal guards to

confront the rebellion. He only had three thousand soldiers, while the rebellious army had a hundred thousand men. When the king saw the general, he called for him to surrender. The general asked how many soldiers were on the king's side, and whether the king knew how many men were on his side. The king did not answer, instead he asked one of his guards to jump off from a cliff. The guard obeyed immediately. The king asked a second one to jump into the ocean, and he did so accordingly. He then asked a third to draw a sword and kill himself, and this guard also obeyed without question. When the rebellious general saw this, he was terrified, and he asked how many such men did the king have. The king answered that every one of his men were this way. At that word, the general decided to drop his rebellion and surrendered to the king. Our God demands that we be those who want nothing for ourselves. He wants us to be those who would allow ourselves to be destroyed and trampled under the feet of others. He wants us to be the obedient ones. If we are such persons, we are bearing the cross. We will be those who accept God's arrangements and who do not fight back; our capacity will increase, and God's life will flow out of us in an unhindered way.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

TALKS

(2)

Date: December 23, 1936, afternoon

Place: Foochow

Question: The faith mentioned in Mark 11:24 is a promise. Can one lay hold of the faith in verse 23 as a promise also?

Answer: Yes, but there is a difference. The faith in verse 23 is a gift, while the faith in verse 24 is of grace. The faith in both verses is based on one's "faith in God" as described in verse 22.

Question: In Mark 11:12-14, the Lord cursed the fig tree. Was this too unfair to the tree, because the time of harvest had not yet arrived?

Answer: There are two harvests for figs, a winter harvest and a summer harvest. The harvest that the Lord was talking about was the winter harvest. There was not even one residual fruit left on that tree.

Question: Are all of God's provisions "wholesale"?

Answer: Objective grace comes "wholesale," it is not "retail." But subjective truths come to us item by item in our experience. If we go to the Lord for one or two items today, He will still give them to us.

Question: The Bible says that we should not have multiplicity of words (Matt. 6:7). What does that mean?

Answer: The multiplicity of words mentioned in Matthew 6 refers to prayers that are void of utterance, yet have many empty words added in for the sake of sounding pleasant to the ear. I may repeat words in my prayers, but I will repeat them because I cannot ask for anything further and there is nothing more to say except to thank and praise. There is a great difference between these two kinds of repetitions.

Question: Once a man lets go and believes, the Lord will live for him. Is this something instantaneous or is there a time factor involved?

Answer: With some people it is instantaneous, while with others it involves a long period of time. In your heart you should expect it to be instantaneous. However, if the Lord delays His work, you should be happy to accept His timing. This requires an enduring faith.

Question: Will believers today experience the kind of thorns that Paul was talking about (2 Cor. 12:7-8)?

Answer: No. Thorns are for those with great revelations, to prevent them from being puffed up. We do not have as great a revelation as Paul; therefore, we do not have his kind of thorns.

Question: Should we take a supplement of tonic when our sickness is gone, or should we take a tonic while we are still sick, believing that we are healed already?

Answer: If your faith will not be eaten away, you can take it. Some people eat away their faith when they take tonic. If this is the case, they should not take it.

Question: What kind of faith is the "shielding" faith? Is it the same faith as believing that the old man is crucified with Christ?

Answer: Yes. You can say that these two faiths are identical. We believe in God's Word and we believe in His promise. If we want to lay hold of one word, yet find that we do not have the strength, we should try to lay hold of another word.

Ying-ying asked: What should we do if we do not know the Bible that well?

Answer: Suppose you finish reading the Bible in two years and you understand and memorize everything, does this mean that you no longer have to read the Holy Scriptures for the rest of your life? Some people have spent thirty or forty years to study the Bible, and have only scratched the surface. Hence, it is always good to read the Bible, whether you read much or little. It also does not matter whether or not you understand what you read.

Question: Is the matter of Christ living for us the same as the fruit of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)?

Answer: Yes. When Christ lives in us, the Holy Spirit lives in us, and we live in them. This is like saying that the air is outside of us and also within us. If we are short of either one of these two aspects, we cannot live.

Question: Do we pray to the Father, the Son, or the Spirit? To whom do we pray the most?

Answer: Perhaps we should pray to the Father the most. It is also correct to pray to the Spirit, but we cannot make this a rule or a law. If we do, we will not be able to release ourselves.

Question: If we do not understand the background of a verse in terms of its time, place, and the person it is in reference to, will the Lord honor us and accomplish it for us if we still lay hold of it as a promise?

Answer: Yes, because the Lord says, "Believe that you have received them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24). The Lord did not say, "You must understand before you will have them." We have them because we believe.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

TALKS

(3)

Date: December 23, 1936, evening

Place: Foochow

We want to concentrate our fellowship this time on the following things: (1) the nature of our testimony, (2) God's will in the Bible concerning the ground of the church, the responsibility of the workers, the local assemblies, the responsibility of the local brothers, and the responsibility of the elders, and (3) the work in Foochow and the question of the co-workers.

THE PRINCIPLE OF OUR WORK

Let us first look at Acts 13 and 14. The basis of Acts 13 and 14 is the Lord's charge to the disciples to preach the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth (1:8). The disciples did not obey this charge. At the time of Pentecost, the disciples were in Jerusalem, and the gospel remained only in Jerusalem. Because the disciples did not go out to spread the gospel, the Lord allowed many persecutions to come to force them to leave (8:1). The spreading in Jerusalem, Samaria, and Caesarea cannot be considered as the proper pattern of gospel preaching. Only the spreading in Antioch followed the proper pattern of

preaching. Paul's work in chapters thirteen and fourteen are the proper pattern for gospel preaching throughout the ages. Acts 13 tells us of Paul's first missionary journey. This first journey was put in the Bible by the Lord as a pattern. Please remember that every time the Bible mentions something for the first time, the principle behind it remains as a guideline.

A Coordination of All Kinds of People

Chapter thirteen mentions five persons. Lucius was a black man, Manaen was a nobleman, Barnabas was a good man, Simeon was an educated man, and Saul was one who had persecuted the church. They represented different kinds of people. This shows that the Lord chooses all kinds of "bad" people. (In this list Barnabas ranked first. This was according to Paul's own record. At this time Luke had not come into the work yet, and this portion of the history was probably related orally by Paul to Luke, who then wrote it down.)

Being Sent Out by the Holy Spirit

Their going out was based on the Lord's calling. They fasted because they were afraid of making mistakes. In order to find the way to go on in the work, we often need to fast and pray. Verse 4 says, "They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia," and there they began their work. The words "went down" show that they set out for the work once they were clear about the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Traveling Around and

Not Remaining in One Place

They went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. In Cyprus they announced the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, and they passed through the whole island as far as Paphos. This is the apostles' pattern; they continued to travel and did not remain in one place. They passed through the whole island as far as Paphos. There the proconsul was saved. Then Paul set out again to Perga, and from there he went on to Pisidian Antioch. The record of many brothers today is a record of "being stationed" in a certain place, not a record of "moving" as shown in Acts. The record of Paul's preaching in chapter thirteen continued until verse 41. The result is seen in verse 42—they left the synagogue and the people begged for these words to be spoken to them on the next Sabbath. This verse proves that Paul had assumed a more prominent role than Barnabas had by this time. This is why the order of Barnabas and Paul is reversed in verse 43; Paul was mentioned first. When they were called by the Lord, the Bible says "Barnabas and Saul." But in the spreading of the work Paul

was manifested to be better and was more able to speak for the Lord. Consequently, the Bible changes its record to "Paul and Barnabas." They immediately engaged themselves in the work of edifying the believers, urging them to continue in the grace of God.

At the next Sabbath, almost the entire city gathered together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they blasphemed. The apostles then turned to the Gentiles (vv. 44-46). When Paul preached to the Gentiles, many of them were saved. On the previous Sabbath the Jews were saved. On this Sabbath the Gentiles were saved. Verse 49 follows, saying, "And the word of the Lord was carried through the whole region." The words "whole region" are wonderful words. The last part of verse 51 through verse 52 says that they departed to Iconium, and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. The reason many disciples are not filled with joy today is that their "pastors" have presided over one place for too long. We must remember that God does not want His workers to remain too long in one place. Wherever human control abounds, the Lord's hand stops. In many places today, saints cannot experience the filling of the Holy Spirit because the preachers are restricting the work of the Spirit. As long as Elijah remained on earth, there was no possibility for Elisha to receive the double portion of the Spirit. Elijah stood in the place of the Holy Spirit. Once Elijah left, Elisha received the double portion of the Spirit.

A Worker Not Being Bound by One Locality or One Assembly

They worked in Iconium and started another assembly. Acts 14:4 indicates that the multitude of the city was divided into two groups. Some followed the Jews, and some followed the apostles. This shows that the number was quite large. Verse 6 says that the apostles fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the "surrounding" region because some were trying to treat them outrageously. According to the Bible, the Lord has no intention for a worker to go to a place and remain there. A worker should be above any locality or any assembly. An apostle is for the whole church. In Lystra Paul healed a lame man. Verse 20 says that the disciples "surrounded" Paul, and verse 21 tells us that there was a "considerable number of disciples." This proves that there were many disciples. Although Paul was wounded, he rested only for a night and went

to Derbe the next day. He did not go to Derbe to recuperate from his wound, but to preach the gospel.

Paul and Barnabas passed through all these places. Once a number of people were saved, they moved on to another place. They did not stay in a church to "edify" men. Paul kept moving forward to sow. After he went through all the places, then he returned to build up the saints. They went forward first to establish the churches, and then returned later to strengthen them.

Acts 14:23 says that the two appointed elders in all the churches. They appointed elders in "every" church; there was no exception. We would think that an assembly needs ten or twenty years before some saints mature and are old enough to be appointed as elders. But the apostles handed over the responsibility of the assembly to the local brothers very quickly. The workers are responsible for the extra-local work of the assembly. The local responsibility must be taken up by the local brothers.

CONCERNING THE ELDERS

The Appointment of the Elders

The Bible gives us very brief qualifications of the elders. When a worker goes to a place, he cannot appoint elders immediately. When he returns from another place and sees that a group of saints are still meeting, he can be assured that they are trustworthy. From among them, he will spontaneously find some who are particularly seeking spiritually and appoint them as elders.

THE WORKS OF AN ELDER

An elder does not monopolize everything in the church. The works of the elders are: (1) managing the administrative affairs of the church, taking the lead in receiving the saints, making arrangements for the meetings, and collecting offerings; and (2) caring for the local believers, preaching regularly to the congregation, and nurturing the brothers and sisters spiritually. Administration and preaching are the main responsibilities of the elders. According to 1 Timothy 5:17 there are two kinds of elders. One kind takes the lead in the church. The other kind not only takes the lead in the church, but labors in the word and teaching. The regular preaching and shepherding work in a local church belongs to the elders; they are not the work of the apostles.

Titus 1:9 says that the elders have to hold to the faithful word and to exhort and convict by the healthy teaching. This shows us that an elder must not only bear administrative responsibility, but must bear spiritual responsibility as well. However, the workers do not bear any responsibility for a local assembly. In

other words, the preaching on the Lord's Day, Wednesday, and Saturday should be the common responsibility of the local brothers and sisters. The church in Shanghai does not have any worker. I thank the Lord for this. Someone in the church in Swatow has said that a church cannot be without a worker. This is a joke. Paul and Barnabas established over ten churches. If they presided over a church, how could they have been distributed among all these churches?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORK OF THE WORKERS AND THE WORK OF THE ELDERS

The workers' work is restricted to activities such as special gospel meetings and spiritual edification conferences. The regular weekly preaching and edification remain the work of the elders. In other words, the elders are like the pastors we see today, whereas the workers are like the revivalists we see today. The workers who intend to remain in one place are not qualified to be apostles. The works of a worker are to preach the gospel and establish churches in places where no gospel has been preached. In a place where the gospel has been preached, he engages himself in special spiritual edification. Therefore, a worker cannot have a place that he can call his own. The elders are like wives who cook every day, three meals a day. The workers are like special catering cooks. They are invited to prepare a few lavish dishes and then leave. If you ate lavish dishes every day, sooner or later you would have to see a doctor. You have to be content with ordinary meals. Hence, every brother and sister must be satisfied in their mind with "workerless" meetings.

In the first century, during the first thirty or forty years of the church's history, the relationship between the work and the churches was proper. By the fourth century, after the Roman emperor embraced the Christian faith, and Christianity was formalized as the state religion, men were encouraged to join the church, babies were sprinkled, and the church was filled with false Christians. Because of the great influx of nominal members in the church and the fact that those in authority could not bear spiritual responsibility nor could the laity help edify others, the emperor was forced to give the more spiritually mature believers a monopoly on spiritual responsibilities. In the end they became a special class of people. This group of people would work seven days a week, while the rest of the people would work only six days a week. The members would offer their money every week to support the church and the clergy's need. Eventually the priests in

the Catholic Church became a professional class of people to bear spiritual responsibilities. Protestantism improved on the sacerdotal system and instituted the pastors, who are a little better than the priests, but in principle the two groups are the same.

Our work during the past ten or more years has practically annulled the system of the pastors, but unconsciously we have replaced it with the workers, and now the workers have become pastors in disguise. This is wrong. The workers should pioneer or help the meetings in all the places. They should not stay in a place and replace the work of the elders. The brothers in all the localities should be under the direction of the elders. Even when a worker resides in Foochow, he should only be a brother in Foochow. In the work there are workers, but in the church there is no such thing as a worker. For nine years I have been telling the brothers in Shanghai that I was not working there as a worker. This is a principle that a worker must absolutely keep in his work. As far as a worker's work is concerned, the Bible only gives the principle of planting and watering; it does not say that the workers have to stay behind to oversee the growth. We see this in Acts 13 and afterwards.

There was a brother in Shanghai who was not that mature. Yet when he moved to Lung-Ya, he became an elder there and began to grow very much spiritually. He did a good job there, and the brothers liked him very much.

The elders must be under the instruction of the apostles. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to put the sinning one out from the church (1 Cor. 5:13). But he could not do it for them. If you find that a worker is improper, your locality can reject him, and a worker should accept this rejection humbly. There should be a plurality of elders. Overseers are the same as the elders, and they should be plural in number.

CONCERNING FELLOWSHIP

If a local assembly is standing on the ground of the church, it will surely receive all Christians. A local church must include all saved and regenerated Christians. You can chase out the foreigners from the Foreign Concession District in Shanghai, but you cannot chase out the Chinese who are living there. The church can only remove unsaved and unregenerated people; it cannot remove those who are saved and regenerated. Seventy percent of the money collected in the church in Shanghai is used to help weak brothers. Although these brothers are weak, they are still brothers. There should also be fellowship between the different assemblies. There also exists a relationship among the workers. If one

place recognizes a brother as a worker, other places should also recognize him as a worker.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

TALKS

(4)

Date: December 24, 1936

Place: Foochow, Brother Nee's mother's home

A NARRATION OF HISTORY

In 1921 Brother Leland Wang and I were being raised up by the Lord together. In 1920 Miss Dora Yu had come, and Sister Ding, Sister Hwang, Brother Leland, and myself had all been saved. Pastor Hsu Je-chou was saved at that time also. My mother and brother began to have a Bible study meeting with a few other brothers. The first year after I was saved, there was a Bible study meeting every Thursday at my home. Most of the ones who came to the Bible study were older ones. Brother Leland and I were the youngest among them, and naturally we were together quite often. I was baptized in 1921. None of the others were baptized at that time; I was the only one who was baptized. After I was baptized, I still enjoyed my worldly amusements. In 1922 Leland and I began to see the truth concerning the breaking of bread, and we began to break bread together. In the beginning of 1923, four or five hundred people were saved, and there was a revival. Brother Leland and I shared the responsibility: I took care of the work in Foochow and the literature work, while Leland took care of the work beyond Foochow. Brother John Wang also left his denomination during the second half of 1923 and joined us in our work. Originally, John did not agree with the matter of baptism. Later he also saw the truth about baptism, and I baptized him.

In 1922 I began to see that denominationalism was wrong and that missions were also wrong. I saw that God wanted local assemblies. In 1923 Leland had a disagreement with me concerning some doctrines. His burden was for evangelism, while I saw that God was after the local assembly. In other words, Leland's work was hawking his goods, while my work was setting up stalls for my goods. John was not as experienced in the truth, and therefore was not involved in the dispute. In 1924 the dispute resulted in the assembly calling itself "The Church of Christ in Foochow," and the stamp of the assembly was changed to read "The Church of Christ in Foochow." I questioned Leland and told him that this was not scriptural. If we named ourselves in this way, many unsaved ones

would also be included. Moreover, there were not many saved ones among us, and other groups had four or five hundred saved ones. Therefore, we could not call ourselves "The Church of Christ in Foochow."

During the first half of 1924, Wu Ai-lan's father (Mr. Woodbury) wanted to come to ordain Leland as the preacher, myself as a teacher, and John also as a teacher. I said that I needed a few weeks to study the Bible before I could say either yes or no. After I studied the Bible, I realized that pastors and teachers are gifts and cannot be ordained. One can appoint elders, but one cannot ordain pastors and teachers. The pastors or shepherds and teachers are like carpenters and concrete workers—one cannot ordain them. If a man is a carpenter or a concrete worker, he simply is one, and there is no way to ordain him as one. It is the same with a teacher—one cannot ordain a teacher. One can appoint a registrar or a principal, but he cannot ordain a person to be a teacher. One can appoint elders and deacons, because these are offices, but one cannot ordain pastors and teachers.

During the last term of the eighth year at Trinity College, Leland told everyone a few weeks before the final examination that Mr. Woodbury would come the following week. When I heard this, I knew that the situation had become critical. At that time I was conducting a Bible study on the Lord's coming, and I changed the subject to a study on the ark. I saw that God's testimony followed the ark, which was a type of Christ. When the ark was in the tabernacle, God's glory was there. But when the ark left the tabernacle, the tabernacle became an empty shell. God's countenance left the tabernacle and went with the ark. I presented this truth to everyone. I wrote to the co-workers, made a copy of it, and distributed it to every brother and sister. After the letter was distributed, Mr. Woodbury did not come, and I was very happy.

After this I was invited to preach in Hangchow, and the co-workers in Foochow excommunicated me because of that letter. All the brothers did not agree with the view of the co-workers. The brothers believed me, but the co-workers rejected me. When I returned in July of 1924, I persuaded the brothers to continue to work in oneness. I proposed that I go from Foochow and work elsewhere. I did not want to have a split because of this dispute, so I left Foochow. I thought that I could preach the truth about the local assembly in other provinces. Later, the truth that the Lord had entrusted to me did spread to other places. From 1924 to 1936, in a period of a little over ten years, over two hundred assemblies were raised up throughout China. Foochow became an exception; it has never been

clear about the truth. In spite of this, we have always believed that God could accomplish His own work. We were not hasty; we waited for over ten years. During this time, there were over ten proposals by various brothers to start another meeting in Foochow. Personally, I have been against starting another meeting. But if you want to do it, I will not oppose it.

FOOCHOW'S PRESENT PROBLEM

At present there are three problems. First, we have to receive all those who are redeemed by the blood, even the weak ones. As long as a person has not committed any sin worthy of excommunication, we have to receive him. If a foreigner is caught in the Foreign Concession District as a thief, we can put him out of the Concession. But if we catch a Chinese, we cannot put him out; we have to receive him. Even if we have to punish him, we must punish him on Chinese soil. The same is true with the church; we cannot put out any genuinely saved and regenerated person. Second, there should be no problem in fellowship among all the assemblies in China. The fellowship between one assembly and another should pose no problem at all. The only place that poses a problem now is Foochow. All the workers understand the problem here, but they have not told the other brothers. For this reason, ordinary brothers are kept in the dark about this problem and are not clear about it at all. The problem of Foochow's fellowship is not just a problem with Shanghai; it is a problem that exists between Foochow and all the assemblies in China.

Third, there is the problem of the traffic of the co-workers. There is a problem among the co-workers. Three years ago I returned to Foochow, and there was a problem in Foochow concerning head covering. The local assembly did not see the truth concerning head covering. Some wanted the saints to wait for the responsible brothers to become clear before the sisters covered their heads. They had the authority to request this. Consequently, my mother and sisters removed their head covering. But it was a difficult situation. I told John that we did not demand that the sisters cover their heads when they came from Foochow to Shanghai. But some workers in Foochow rebuked some of the sisters who came to Foochow from Shanghai for covering their head in Foochow, and they demanded that these sisters adopt their stand. But our condition for receiving one another is based on life; it is not based on light. Take the matter of baptism as an example. Whether or not a believer is baptized cannot be the basis of receiving or rejecting him. In the same way, whether or not a sister covers her

head cannot become a criterion for receiving. Because of this one thing, our fellowship with Foochow was interrupted. This interruption lasted for three years. They have promised that they would give us a reply in the near future. According to the Bible, an assembly cannot receive only local saints; it has to receive everyone that the Lord has received. Brother Weigh is a very careful person as far as his way before the Lord is concerned. He considers everything carefully. If he comes to the assembly in Foochow, and the assembly in Foochow does not receive him, then it will be a problem whenever he comes to Foochow, and it will be a problem whenever any worker from China comes to Foochow.

I am not speaking for myself this time. I have been delivered from myself. If there is one strand of hope to recover the assembly in Foochow, we would do it even if it meant the three of us going to them and kneeling down before them to beg. But it seems that the separating wall has become thicker and thicker. If it can become thinner and thinner, we will wait, even if it means waiting ten or twenty years. If the wall can be dissolved one day, like snow melting away, we are willing to wait as long as necessary. We want to remove the wall of separation. However, this problem has been existing for thirteen years, and is difficult to be solved.

At present, there are three problems with Foochow, but more than three harms have come in. All those who have had some experience of working in Fukien province know how easy it is to get fruits in the work here. We have assemblies all along the coast of south Fukien already, and they are all practicing the principle of Acts 13 and 14. We should have moved west from here, and Foochow is the locality that should naturally bear the responsibility of spreading the gospel throughout the whole province of Fukien. There should be a strong meeting in Foochow to bear the responsibility of the work. But at present, circumstance does not allow this to happen, and this is a great loss to us.

The most important thing for Brother John Wang is the Lord's Day morning pulpit, but we are after a testimony. Our goal is to teach the brothers and sisters to understand the truth about the church and to know life. On the one hand, we preach the Word, conduct meetings, and lead many people to the Lord. On the other hand, we are here to bear the testimony of the church. The assembly in Foochow should take up the responsibility for the spreading of the gospel to neighboring villages and towns. An assembly should take up the responsibility of its neighboring areas in addition to bearing its local responsibility. The money in Shanghai should not simply remain in Shanghai. It has to be sent to out-of-town

places. The workers in Shanghai do not receive one cent of supply from the local assembly. The spiritual principle is not keeping but spending. There are "saving" millionaires and there are "spending" millionaires. If the meeting in Foochow was normal, it would have taken up the responsibility for the spreading of the gospel to neighboring towns and villages.

The assembly is a big family, and our meeting should reflect such a family atmosphere. If everyone fellowships warmly with one another and loves one another, the meeting will surely be a success. I can predict that as soon as a meeting loses a family atmosphere, the meeting will fail. The churches in the first century did not have any chapel. They met in the wilderness. There were no church bells, and even when they sang, they had to sing softly. The Bible says that in a meeting Eutychus fell asleep and fell down from a window. Paul was halfway through his message, but he went down and embraced him (Acts 20:9-11). If this happened today, it would have been forbidden for anyone to interrupt a meeting. This is far from the condition at the beginning. This is where the meeting in Shanghai has failed—it has lost the family flavor, and it is difficult for brothers and sisters to have intimate fellowship one with another.

This morning I had a detailed discussion with Brother Wang Wei-san. He thinks that there is no longer a problem among the co-workers and their fellowship, but Brother John does not want to divulge the content of that talk.

As far as denominations are concerned, there are at least four or five Methodist churches in Foochow alone. We had thought of having another bread-breaking meeting between the assembly in the city and the assembly in Chang-Chien-Shan. If we cannot break bread together, we can have at least two bread-breaking meetings. This will give others a chance to choose. Prior to the Overcomer Conference in Chuenchow, we had suggested this already. After the conference in Chuenchow, the matter was dropped. Now Brother Weigh has also taken the same view concerning this matter. At present, he has some burden for the work in Foochow.

THE SOLUTION

As far as the problem with Foochow is concerned, there are a few ways to solve it. First, the fellowship should absolutely be one. Second, the work can be separate. Since the work in the city and the work in Chang-Chien-Shan cannot combine together, we should at least maintain a oneness in fellowship. As to when we can be combined as one, and what the criteria is for waiting, it is hard to say.

Ephesians 4 says that we should be "diligent" to keep the oneness of the Spirit (v. 3). This is the oneness of fellowship. First Corinthians 15 says that we should be "diligent" in the work of the Lord (v. 58, according to the Chinese Union Version). Hence, we must be diligent to work on the one hand, and diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit on the other hand.