

《Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship(Vol.3)》

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PREFACE

Volume 43 of The Collected Works contains five sections that include various messages given by Watchman Nee in 1937 and 1938.

Section Six contains messages given in Canton in the spring of 1937, including topics on the revelation of Jesus Christ, God interrupting man's speaking, and basic gospel truths. Section Seven includes fellowship with the co-workers in Shanghai in June 1937. It is a record of two private words of fellowship. Section Eight contains the messages given in a conference in Singapore, August 1937, concerning Christ's full salvation and the overcoming life. Section Nine contains the messages given in a conference in Penang, April 1938, concerning various subjects of interest. Section Ten is a message given in Shanghai in 1938 on material offering and its relationship to our praise in the Lord's table meeting.

SECTION SIX

MESSAGES IN CANTON,

APRIL 1937

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Date: April 11, 1937, afternoon

Place: Canton

Scripture Reading: Mark 9:1-8

JESUS CHRIST AND THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

John 3:16 says that God gave us His Son; Revelation 1:1 says that God gave us the revelation of Jesus Christ. God has given us two great blessings: Jesus Christ and the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The word revelation in Greek is apokalypsis. Apo means "to lift," and kalypsis means "veil." Together they mean to lift the veil and to reveal what is behind the veil. If we only have Christ but do not have the revelation of Jesus Christ, we still do not know who Christ is, and it is as if Jesus Christ is still behind the veil.

Our revelation of Jesus Christ will be full only when we have put off our bodies and are face to face with the Lord. Then we will see Him clearly. However, there

are some people—not all, but some—who are seeking and who draw near to God. These ones not only have Jesus Christ today but also the revelation of Jesus Christ.

SEEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME IN POWER

In Mark 9:1 the Lord said, "There are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the kingdom of God having come in power." This means that Christ was about to be manifested. The Lord's promise in this verse implies that man can know Him at the present time. There is no need to wait until one's death. The kingdom of God is something abstract; one cannot touch it or lay hold of it. Yet we have to realize that the kingdom of God is the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the reality and content of the kingdom of God. The manifestation of the Lord Jesus is the very manifestation of the kingdom of God. Mark 9:1 presents the main subject of verses 2 through 8, which describe how Christ manifested Himself. These seven verses are a full explanation of verse 1.

"AND AFTER SIX DAYS"

Verse 2 begins with the phrase "and after six days." This means that it is the seventh day. The principle of studying the Bible is that whenever you come across a certain word or phrase that you do not understand, you should refer to the first mention of it in the Bible. The six days in Genesis 1 refer to the six days of God's work. The seventh day is the day of God's rest. God spent six days to create the universe and all the things in it. The seventh day is the day of rest. Even Adam and Eve rested. The moment Adam and Eve were born, they rested; this is the proper way. They were not born to work. Adam and Eve rested in God's work. They had the best situation. If it had been up to Adam and Eve to create the universe, they would have had to spend more time to do it. They would not have been able to complete the work even if they had six thousand years.

We are saved through realizing that God is the One who accomplished everything. We must realize that we should live by resting in God's work as well. We are here to enjoy God's work. Simply put, God does a work that is both full and complete. There is no need for us to do anything. All we have to do is enjoy what God has done. Thank the Lord! All that God has accomplished is good and complete. Whatever man has done and whatever sinners have produced are just vile and incomplete. The revelation of Jesus Christ comes "after six days." This means that God has accomplished everything. Man has no part in it whatsoever.

In spiritual matters our vision is based on God's work alone; we have no part in it. God's work enables us to see God's revelation.

"JESUS TOOK WITH HIM PETER AND JAMES AND JOHN"

Verse 2 continues, "Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John." Why did Jesus not take all of the twelve disciples? Why did He only take these three disciples? All twelve disciples had Jesus Christ, but only three had the revelation of Jesus Christ. Having the Son of God is having eternal life, but not everyone who has the Son of God has the revelation of the Son of God. Without the revelation of Jesus Christ, there will not be a clear and adequate realization of Jesus Christ. The Lord brought three disciples. Thank the Lord that at least three people were able to receive the revelation of Jesus Christ. If they can have the revelation, so can we.

"INTO A HIGH MOUNTAIN"

Jesus brought the three disciples "up alone into a high mountain privately." Why did the Lord bring the three disciples to a high mountain? This is because level ground is not the place for receiving revelation. Moses was on a mountain when he received the law. Elijah was on a mountain when he served as a prophet. High on the mountain is where one gets away from people, far away from the earth, and close to heaven. To climb up a high mountain requires strength. If one wants to receive revelation, he must leave all men behind to be far away from earth and close to heaven. He must pay the price.

"HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM"

While they were up on the high mountain, the Lord was transfigured before them. Why was the Lord transfigured? What would have happened if He had not been transfigured? In this verse we see that Jesus Christ is actually God in disguise. If God were not disguised, we would all know Him. But God is disguised in Christ. This makes it difficult for us to recognize Him. Perhaps we know that there was a carpenter in the land of Galilee, a man in Nazareth; perhaps we know that He was a brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. In a sense everyone who has read the Bible knows Him, because the Bible talks about Him. His name is Jesus. But those who only know Jesus Christ in this way do not really know Him. They merely know a "disguised" Jesus Christ. The Jesus Christ whom the disciples knew was the "disguised" Jesus Christ. I am afraid that the Jesus Christ we know

is merely the Jesus Christ spoken of in the four Gospels or the Jesus Christ taught by some preachers.

The Lord's transfiguration was the Lord's removing of the "disguise" in front of the disciples. It is essential for all of us to see the Lord who is outside the flesh. If we say that the disciples did not know the Lord, they could argue that they had a history of following the Lord for three years. It is inaccurate to say that they did not know the Lord. However, we could not say that they really knew the Lord, because they were so ignorant. This is why the Lord had to be transfigured; He had to remove the disciples' veil of false knowledge. God the Son manifested Himself on the mountain and removed the veil in order for man to know Him in a clear way.

After Peter saw the Lord's transfiguration on the mountain, what did he say? According to 2 Peter 1:16-17 he said, "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we became eyewitnesses of that One's majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, a voice such as this being borne to Him by the magnificent glory: This is My Son, My Beloved, in whom I delight." Peter had such great power and such clear understanding of the Lord's coming because he had received the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter followed the Lord to the mount of transfiguration and experienced a great change. He saw the revelation of Jesus Christ, and his living was drastically changed. How do we know whether a person really knows the Lord and has seen the revelation of Jesus Christ? If one knows the Lord and has seen the revelation of Jesus Christ, his living will surely have a drastic change. This is an indicator that a person has received the revelation of Jesus Christ.

"ELIJAH WITH MOSES"

After the Lord was transfigured, suddenly Elijah and Moses appeared before the disciples and conversed with the Lord Jesus. Peter must have thought, "This is such a rare opportunity for the three of us to be with the three of you." He proposed to the Lord, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Yet the Lord did not answer him. What does this mean? Suppose someone invites you to tea and you only stare at him without saying a word. Saying nothing is more severe than saying "no" to him. Not saying anything means rejection. Silence means resistance. Christ should never be ranked equally with Moses and Elijah. The

kingdom of God has replaced the law and the prophets. If the kingdom of God is here, Moses and Elijah must go away. Only then can Jesus Christ of Nazareth come. If Moses and Elijah are still here, Jesus cannot come. Moses and Elijah cannot be mixed together with Jesus. If the Old Testament continues, the New Testament cannot come. The disciples did not realize this.

Mark never followed the Lord Jesus. He was a young man, and he was a disciple of Peter. The Gospel of Mark is Mark's written account of what he heard from Peter. Peter spoke the words, but Mark recorded the message. This is an historical fact concerning the Bible. The Gospel of Mark is actually the Gospel of Peter. This is why the Gospel of Mark gives us more specific details concerning Peter. Peter loved to talk. Wherever he was, he always had something to say. At this point he said something foolish again. But after he said it, he did not know how to go on. The Lord was silent, and Peter did not know what to say. But God spoke at this juncture. The Father's words seemed to be directed at Peter specifically; they were words of rebuke. The Father seemed to be saying, "You should use your ears and not your mouth. You should listen to the Lord instead of asking the Lord to listen to you." Here we see what the New Testament is all about. We should not listen to the law and the prophets any longer. Instead, we should listen to the beloved Son of God, Jesus Christ. The prophets should be put aside, and the law should be put aside. The New Testament is Jesus Christ revealed. A life according to the New Testament is just a life of obedience to the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Moses represents the law, which tells us that God has established regulations for man. In addition to the Ten Commandments, the Pentateuch contains hundreds of additional commandments. These are also laws. The Old Testament only contains God's law. When men in the Old Testament wanted to know whether a certain matter was right, all they had to do was find the answer in the law. They did not necessarily have an inner sense of right or wrong. Their "yes" and "no" were written in the law. If a person observed the various ordinances and laws, he would be justified. In the Old Testament all problems were dealt with by the law; the law determined what was right and what was wrong. Hence, the law separates man from God. It sets up a standard of right and wrong apart from God. But these are dead standards. Thank the Lord, the Old Testament is over. The law is over. Today in the New Testament dispensation, only God is our "yes" and "no." God in us becomes our law. If a man does not have God and only has regulations, and if all he knows is "yes" and "no," he is still in the Old Testament.

Once a person has God, he will be delivered from right and wrong, and he will truly be one who lives in the New Testament.

I have a servant in my house called Mr. Wong. His disposition is entirely opposite of mine. He likes to have rules and regulations for everything he is about to do, and he likes to work by these rules and regulations. However, all I want is for him to obey me and to do things according to my desire. What he wants is in the principle of the Old Testament; what I like is in the principle of the New Testament.

With the law there is no need for man to draw near to God. He can know what is right and what is wrong. The law is a set of dead moral standards apart from God. It is something that once it is known, will be known forever. But the New Testament requires a daily knowing and a moment by moment knowing. In the New Testament Moses cannot exist; the law cannot exist. True knowledge of the Lord is not the knowledge of yesterday; nor is it derived from books. It is knowledge that comes from the Lord who is living and speaking in us; it is always in the present tense.

What do the prophets represent? The prophets supplemented what was lacking in the law. They were the ones who inquired of God on behalf of men. A prophet was one who sought God's will on behalf of others. For instance, you might be sick and not know whether you would become well or not. You could send for a prophet to inquire of God to see whether or not you would become well. Or you might not know whether or not you should go to a certain place. You could ask someone to inquire of God's will for you. This was the work of a prophet. The law enabled you to know right and wrong according to dead regulations, while a prophet told you what was right and wrong in place of you knowing it yourself.

God said that we should not listen to Moses or Elijah. However, there are many Elijahs today. Suppose we have a very spiritual brother or sister among us. If you have a problem, it is easy to ask him or her to inquire of God for you. If you are not clear about God's will, it is easy to charge him or her to inquire about God's will for you. This is the principle of a prophet. This is what Elijah did. The law takes away man's direct communication with God, and the prophet also takes away man's direct fellowship with God. Both the law and the prophets stand between man and God and separate man from God.

Some may ask why there are prophets in the New Testament. What is the difference between New Testament prophets and Old Testament prophets? New Testament prophets are completely different from Old Testament prophets. The

Lord gave some prophets in the New Testament. Their principal work is the building up, encouragement, and consolation of men (1 Cor. 14:3). They only explain the principles of God's will. They do not go into the details of God's will.

"THIS IS MY SON, THE BELOVED. HEAR HIM"

Isaiah prophesied that one day, "the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah,/As the waters cover the sea" (11:9). God's words are marvelous. He says the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah. "Full" means there is no longer any need. 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." This means that neither a fellow citizen nor a brother can be one's prophet any longer. We have to know God ourselves. This is the New Testament. The New Testament is the Lord living in us, telling us what is from God, what is right, and what is wrong. The New Testament is the Lord leading us inwardly. Because of this we have no need for others to instruct us anymore. We can receive spiritual help from others, but the detailed leading of God's will is strictly a matter between us and God. Today the prophets and the law are over. Thank God! We need to hear, "This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him!"

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

GOD INTERRUPTING MAN'S SPEAKING

Date: April 12, 1937

Place: Canton

Scripture Reading: Mark 9:5-7; Matt. 17:24-27; Acts 10:14-16, 28-29, 34-35, 43-45

GOD INTERRUPTING MAN'S SPEAKING

All the verses we have read tonight are related to Peter and his speaking. Peter was particularly fond of talking. He always had something to say even though it was not always the opportune time to say it. Of the many times that Peter spoke, God interrupted him three times. First, the Father interrupted his speaking; then Christ interrupted his speaking; and finally, the Holy Spirit interrupted his speaking. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit interrupted Peter's speaking three different times. These three instances are very unusual. First, God came in to restrict Peter when he had run out of words. Second, God restricted Peter before he had even begun to speak. Third, God restricted Peter after a lengthy speech

as he was about to continue. These three instances were recorded in Mark 9, Matthew 17, and Acts 10.

The Father Interrupting Peter's Speaking on the Mount of Transfiguration

On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord Jesus changed His appearance, and Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared. When Peter saw this, he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tents, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Mark 9:5). Peter often addressed Christ as Lord (Adonai). But here he addressed the Lord as Rabbi. The Bible continues, "He did not know what to answer." On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter saw Christ as the Rabbi, and he also saw two others in addition to Christ—Moses and Elijah. While Peter was saying, "It is good for us to be here," God would not allow him to go on. He stopped Peter's speaking: "And a voice came out of the cloud: This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him!" (v. 7). This was the Father interrupting Peter's speaking.

Christ Interrupting Peter's Speaking in the House at Capernaum

In Matthew 17 when the Lord was in Capernaum, the temple-tax gatherers came to ask Peter, "Does not your Teacher pay the temple tax?" (v. 24). Peter said, "Yes." After Peter answered, he thought, "What if Christ does not pay the tax?" Therefore, he came into the house to tell the Lord. But the Lord had already prepared something to say to him. Verse 25 says, "Jesus anticipated him, saying..." This means that Christ would not allow him to speak. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father interrupted Peter's speaking. Inside the house beside the seashore, Christ interrupted Peter's speaking.

The Holy Spirit Interrupting Peter's Speaking in the House of Cornelius

Peter was a Jew, and Jews did not associate with Gentiles. However, God purposely chose Peter to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles; He did not choose anyone else. One day Peter saw a vision. "He beheld heaven opened, and a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners onto the earth, in which were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of heaven. And a voice came to him: Rise up, Peter; slay and eat! But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common and unclean. And a voice came to him again a second time: The things that God has cleansed, do not make common. And this occurred three times; and

immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven. Now as Peter was utterly perplexed in himself as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made diligent inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate. And they called out and inquired whether Simon, who is surnamed Peter, was lodging there" (Acts 10:11-18). The Holy Spirit then urged Peter to go with them.

The next day Peter went with the messengers of Cornelius. When he arrived at the house, he preached the gospel to the people with the opening words: "In truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation he who fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him" (vv. 34-35). Peter evidently perceived the significance of the vision, but did not entirely agree with God. He went on and on with his speaking, but the Holy Spirit did not wait for Peter to finish. He fell upon all those who heard the word (v. 44). This was the Holy Spirit interrupting Peter's speaking. When Peter saw that the Holy Spirit was being poured out on the Gentiles, he said, "Can anyone forbid the water so that these would not be baptized?" (v. 47).

THE REASON GOD INTERRUPTS MAN'S SPEAKING

Let us consider the reason God interrupts man's speaking. Of all the books in the Old Testament, Job contains the greatest amount of man's speaking. There is not another book in the Bible that contains more speaking from man. The three friends of Job had much to say; they spoke unceasingly. Even Job spoke unceasingly, and at the end, Elihu opened his mouth to say many words. After Job's three friends finished speaking and after Job and Elihu finished speaking, God began to speak. There are forty-two chapters in Job. Most of them are man's speaking. God only speaks at the end. It seems as if God patiently endured their speaking. From this we can see that God is not only the God who speaks but also the God who listens.

God listened to the incessant speaking of Job and his friends, yet it seems that God did not have the same patience with Peter. Was it because God had become impatient? No, if God were impatient, He could have stopped Job and his friends while they were talking. God was not in haste to stop man's speaking. In reading the book of Job, we see that God likes to listen to man's talking. He can listen to man's talking. God interrupts man's speaking for a definite reason. Sometimes, God cannot allow man to continue speaking, because man will go astray. We should realize that God interrupts man's speaking not because He is

impatient; He interrupts man's speaking because what is said should not be said. They are words that should not be heard, words that need to be stopped.

The Reason the Father Interrupted Peter

Peter's speaking was interrupted first by God on the Mount of Transfiguration. After the Lord was transfigured before the three disciples, Moses and Elijah also appeared. If you had asked Peter on that day whether he would choose the law, the prophets, or Christ, Peter would have probably answered, "I cannot choose just one. I want all three." Peter, as well as many Christians, wanted to have the law and the prophets in addition to Christ. We all want to have regulations and help from spiritual ones. Christians may think that they have the Spirit living within and that they have Christ as power and life. But they also need outward statutes, regulations, laws, and help from others. This is man's thought; it is not God's way. God the Father spoke to Peter from heaven: "This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him!" This means that God will not tolerate our putting Christ on the same level with the law and the prophets. Today those who have not received Christ may want the law and the prophets. However, since we have received Christ, God will not tolerate the law and prophets.

What is the law? The law tells us what is right and wrong in an outward way, while Christ tells us what is right and wrong from within. The law is the outward fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; but Christ in us is the inward fruit of the tree of life.

Eight or nine years ago, I was at Kuling Mountain recovering from an illness. At that time I met an electrician who installed electric lights. He was not very literate. (Today he is able to read the Bible.) As I read the Bible daily, I would read portions of it to him. Later, he was saved. Not long after, I returned to Shanghai. I was somewhat worried about him because he drank quite a bit. Every night he had to drink. He could drink a few bottles of wine at one time without getting drunk. However, every time he drank, he could not stop until he was drunk. I was worried about what would happen after he had spent all his money on drinking. While I was still with him, I often wanted to urge him to stop drinking. But I did not say anything. After I returned to Shanghai, he came to visit me one day. I asked him how he was doing and whether or not he had experienced any temptations recently. He replied, "Mr. Nee, don't you know? I am a wino. I love drinking. After you left, my wife set the table with the food and wine on it. I wanted to drink, and I was getting ready to open my mouth to give thanks for the food. But I could not pray. I asked my wife to bring the Bible to me so that I could see what it said

about drinking. I searched for a long time, but I could not find anything regarding the matter of drinking. I thought to myself, 'It is a pity that Mr. Nee is not here. If he was, I could ask him.' Since I could not ask you and since my wife and I only knew bits and pieces of the Bible, I thought that it would not matter if I drank. I thought that God was not concerned about this matter, so I prepared a glass of wine. But I could not put the drink in my mouth. I had to ask my wife to take the wine away. Only then was I able to pray and take my supper. I was very puzzled. I told myself that when I went to Shanghai the next time, I would ask you for the reason."

I asked, "Why did you stop drinking?" He said, "I don't know why. All I know is that when I tried to drink, the 'householder' in me would not allow it. Therefore, I did not drink." Then I said to him, "Yes, indeed, if the 'householder' in you will not allow you to drink, you should not drink. From now on you have to listen to the speaking of the 'householder' in you." "The householder forbids it" is the new testament. The new testament is just the living Christ in you. This is completely outside of the law and the prophets. If the Bible were just regulations, if there were no living Christ within you, nothing would work. If Mr. Nee were a prophet in Shanghai, everyone would have to come to Shanghai in order to know God's will. If one must search the law to know what is right and wrong, one must first know how to read. Does this mean that a person who is unable to read cannot know God's will? Does this mean that one must find a prophet before he can know God's will? Thank God, those of us who can read the Bible are able to know God's will, and the villagers who cannot read the Bible are also able to know God's will, because Christ lives in them.

The Bible only gives us a general direction of how Christ guides us in an inward way. This kind of direction only gives us an outward standard, and while the Bible has many major functions, it cannot replace Christ. The electrician knew Christ; the Christ he knew was an indwelling Christ. This is the new testament. This is the salvation of Christ. We should listen to the speaking of the householder within just as the electrician did.

However, Peter was not this way. In addition to Christ, he had the law and the prophets. The new testament is not Christ plus the law and the prophets. The new testament is Christ replacing the law and the prophets. God's interruption of Peter's speaking was a declaration that Christ cannot be added to the law and the prophets. Rather, Christ replaces the law and the prophets. The law and the

prophets are over. Today it is the living God, Christ, who lives in us. This is the new testament.

In traveling to many places, I have found that many Christians often say the right thing. For example, one person may say to another, "You must pray much regarding this matter to see whether or not the Lord will lead you in this way." The other person's response may be, "The Bible says nothing about this." Many people are like this. When situations arise, they deal with them according to the teachings in the Bible. Many people only want outward regulations; they do not care for the inward Christ. However, before finding out whether the Bible says something, we should first find out how Christ is leading us inwardly through the Spirit. Our life and work do not necessarily have to be guided by outward laws. Many people consider the Bible to be the most perfect law; they think that it tells us everything about "do's" and "don'ts," right and wrong. Actually the law for a Christian is not the Bible; the law is the Christ living within him. The Christ living in us is our law. If Christ in us says that something is right, it is right. If Christ in us says that something is not right, it is not right. Often before we read about a certain matter in the Bible, we already know inside how we should conduct ourselves. Some say that when the co-workers are not around, they have no one to consult with and are at a loss. But I say that it is better for the co-workers to not be around, because they can learn to consult the Spirit.

The fundamental difference between Christianity and Judaism is that Judaism emphasizes the outward law, whereas Christianity emphasizes one's personal contact with Christ. The new testament addresses what is right and what is wrong according to life. The new testament is a matter of touching the living Christ and receiving His inward leading. Please remember that in the new testament, once our inward, personal fellowship with Christ is taken away, everything else is futile and useless. Moses and Elijah are a glory of the past. They must not become a hindrance to the new testament. Both the law and the prophets need to be put aside. This is why God interrupted Peter's speaking. Peter had placed the law and the prophets on the same level as Christ.

Brothers and sisters, we all have the same ability to accomplish God's will. The problem is that men will not listen to what Christ is saying inwardly. Instead, they study the Bible blindly or inquire of others. If a certain matter arises and one person says one thing, another says a second thing, and still another says a third thing, whose word should we take? I would ask, "How do you feel inwardly?" Why do we have to take the word of outward teachers? Today we must listen to

the speaking of the Christ within us. God's interruption of Peter's speaking meant that the law and the prophets should not occupy any place in us.

The Reason Christ Stopped Peter

Peter's speaking was interrupted the second time by Christ in a house in Capernaum. Peter seemed to be the spokesman of the twelve disciples, and some came to ask, "Does not your Teacher pay the temple tax?" Peter should have asked Christ first. But he did not do this. Instead, when he was asked, Peter mindlessly answered, "Yes." Then he went in to check with the Lord. He had made a decision already; He was only informing the Lord after the fact. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father interrupted Peter after he had spoken a few sentences. But Christ did not wait for Peter to speak at all. He anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive custom or poll tax, from their sons or from strangers?" Christ stopped Peter because He wanted Peter to know that no one had authority over Him.

The kings and leaders of the world only collect taxes from outsiders. They do not collect tax from their own sons. The temple tax was for the temple, not for Caesar. In name the temple tax was for God. In reality it was appropriated to the priests. In Matthew 16 and 17 Christ was manifested specifically as the Son of God. The incident with the temple tax occurred immediately after Caesarea Philippi, where the Lord asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In chapter seventeen, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father said, "This is My Son, the Beloved." Both of these two chapters speak of Christ as the Son of God. In chapter sixteen the recognition was from men. In chapter seventeen the recognition was from God the Father. In chapters sixteen and seventeen, both men and the Father acknowledged Christ as the Son of God. But what about those other than the disciples? Did they acknowledge Christ as the Son of God? At the end of chapter seventeen those who collected the temple tax came to collect tax. If Christ was just another Jew, no one would have bothered to ask about tax. But Christ was different; His words and actions were very particular. He performed miracles, healed the sick, caused the lame to walk, raised the dead, and even proclaimed that He is the Son of God.

Undoubtedly, the Jews saw all of these things. Yet inwardly they doubted whether He was really the Son of God. Peter's answer eliminated the question from their minds because he placed Christ on the same level as all the other

Jews. Peter treated Jesus the Nazarene as an ordinary person. He forgot that the Lord was the Son of God. The entire salvation of Christ stands upon the foundation that Jesus the Nazarene is the Son of God. If Jesus the Nazarene is not the Son of God, there is no salvation of Christ. If there is no salvation, there is no church. The church proclaims that Jesus the Nazarene is the Son of God. If we do not know that Jesus the Nazarene is the Son of God, nothing will avail. Therefore, after Peter proclaimed that Christ was the Son of the living God in Matthew 16, Christ said to him, "Upon this rock I will build My church." The Son of the living God is the rock. The church is built upon this rock, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Therefore, if Jesus the Nazarene were just an ordinary person, it would have been impossible for the church to be built up, because there would have been no foundation.

Friends, what is the salvation of Christ? The salvation of Christ is a faith that believes in Christ being the Son of God. Our faith is not the cross, resurrection, ascension, etc. These are only the works of Christ. The Bible does not ask us to believe in His works. It only asks us to believe that He is the Son of God. This means that we are to believe in His person. If we believe in His person, we will spontaneously believe in His works. The Bible says that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God (1 John 5:1). Everything hinges on believing in Him as the Son of God. Do you believe in the Son of God? If you read the book of Romans, the Gospel of Luke, or the Epistle of First John, you will find that everything hinges on whether or not Christ is the Son of God. Perhaps you do not consider this question to be that important. But God considers this question to be very important. When a person believes that Christ is the Son of God, he receives salvation and eternal life. "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (v. 12). Jesus the Nazarene is a man. He is also the Son of God. The Son of God is the very Jesus the Nazarene. This means that the Son of God became a man. If Christ had not put on human form and instead had the sun on His head, a face like lightning, and a voice like thunder, everyone would have naturally believed that He was the Son of God. But the Lord Jesus was not like this. When He came to this earth, He came to Bethlehem and was born as a human being, just like you and me. Then He grew up gradually. Without revelation, men cannot recognize Him as the Son of God.

What is the Christian faith? The Christian faith tells us that throughout history there is one person who stands out uniquely among all men. This person is the

Son of God, the God of heaven; that is, He is God Himself. This is the One whom we believe in. The Christian faith is altogether a matter of Jesus being the Son of God. This matter is so important because if Jesus the Nazarene were not the Son of God, it would be impossible for men to contact God, even if we knew that God exists in heaven. Even with such a God, He would not be a revealed God. Men would only know that there is a God in heaven but would not know anything about Him. They would be like the Greeks, who addressed the God in heaven as the "unknown God" (Acts 17:23), that is, a God whom no one knows. Jesus the Nazarene is the God in heaven, the God whom no one could know. Today He has come and put on a human body so that man can now touch Him and know Him.

Paul told us that the Athenians worshipped an unknown God. They thought that the God in heaven was like the lightning in the sky. We can say that Jesus the Nazarene is like the electricity in electrical wire. The electricity in electrical wire makes electricity real and approachable to us; electricity thus becomes something that can be touched, felt, seen, and known. Christianity does not worship a mysterious God. Christianity is about a God who has come to earth; it is about a God who has come among mankind so that man can know and realize Him. God has already come among mankind—this is the Christian faith. If Jesus the Nazarene were not a man, it would be impossible for men to know God. The God in heaven is a God that man cannot see, but Jesus the Nazarene is the revealed God. Jesus the Nazarene is God being seen, heard, and touched by us. This is why Christ would not let Peter go when he told the ones who took up the temple tax that Christ would pay the tax. Perhaps Peter was ready to pay the tax, and if Christ would not pay it, he would persuade Him to pay. Peter was so sure that Christ would pay the tax. His words to the tax collectors seemed to be a guarantee that Christ would pay. Peter never imagined that Christ would stop him. Although Christ did not do much, His answer was a proclamation that He is the Son of God. O friends, do you know who Jesus is? Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the God in heaven who has come to earth to be a man. In the end Christ did pay the tax, but not because He was not the Son of God. In His status as the Son of God, He did not have to pay. But He paid the tax because He did not want to offend others. This is a practical lesson for us. It is often not a matter of whether or not we should pay tax. There is also the matter of not stumbling others. Christ would not leave any excuse for others to accuse Him of anything; He did not want to stir up anything. As far as His status was concerned, He had

the right to ignore and forget about the tax. He had the absolute sovereign right to do this. But He paid the tax because He would not offend others.

Here lies a principle: We can exempt ourselves from many obligations if we insist on our rights and status. But to avoid offending and stumbling others, we should take care of the obligations anyway. This is the practical cross. It is always precious to exercise a care for others and their interests. A humble Christian is a loving Christian. In asking whether or not something should be done, we often find that the real issue behind the matter is not whether or not something is a sin, but whether or not we are willing to suffer loss. As far as our qualifications, our life in God, and our status as God's sons are concerned, we may not need to pay any tax. But for the sake of bearing the cross, we should do it. Here we see the preciousness of Christ's meekness. Man could not demand one shekel from Him, yet He was unwilling to hurt anyone's feelings. He paid because He did not want to stumble anyone. Christianity is not just concerned with righteousness. It is true that there is righteousness in Christianity, but it is also full of grace. The salvation of Christ enables us to suffer loss, to bear the cross, to not vindicate ourselves, to be defamed, and to please others.

The last verse of Matthew 17 is marvelous. Christ even paid the tax for Peter. The only One who was exempt from paying the tax was Christ. But if Christ did not pay, others would be offended, and it would involve more than just Christ. It would involve Peter and Christ. Therefore, not only was Christ involved in this matter, the Christian (Peter) was also involved. The Lord asked Peter to take the tax money to give to them for "Me and you." We should not cause others to stumble. We do many things that we do not have to do. We are willing to bear the cross so that others will not suffer because we are Christians. Rather, we ourselves would suffer the pain. The Lord seemed to be saying, "From now on every Christian has to work together with Me ('Me and you') to keep others from being unhappy."

THE REASON THE HOLY SPIRIT INTERRUPTED PETER

Acts 10 shows us the first time the church preached the gospel to the Gentiles. The church had been in Jerusalem for about eight or nine years. But the gospel had only reached the region between Samaria and Jerusalem; it had not reached the Gentile places yet. The Jews thought, "We are Christians, but we are also Jews. To be a Christian is to believe in Christ, to have our sins forgiven, to have God as our righteousness, and to have Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. But

at the same time, we are also Jews; we cannot associate with the Gentiles." In the eyes of the Jews, the Gentiles are a filthy and unclean people. But in Christ there is no difference between Gentiles and Jews (Eph. 3:6). If a person wants to be a Jew, he cannot be a Christian believer at the same time. If he wants to be a Christian believer, he cannot be a Jew. The believers at that time did not know this; therefore, they brought the Jewish element into the church. God first showed Peter that it was wrong for Christians to dissociate themselves from the Gentiles. Peter, however, only went to the Gentile house reluctantly. Peter thought that if he went to a Gentile home, he had already done them a great favor. He did not know that the Holy Spirit would grant a greater favor to the Gentiles. The Bible says that while Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word (Acts 10:44). Up until this time the thought had never occurred to Peter that the Holy Spirit would descend upon the Gentiles just as He descended on the Jews at Pentecost. Peter could not go on speaking. The Holy Spirit was showing Peter that the grace God gave to the Gentiles was exactly the same as that which had been given to the Jews.

The Holy Spirit descended on the Jews as well as on the Gentiles. This is the salvation of Christ. This is the church. In the church there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. How is the church today? Are there any distinctions between male and female, master and slave, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, Chinese and foreigners? I thank God that we are neither the Chinese Christian Church nor the Anglican Church. The Lord says that in the new man there cannot be Greek and Jew, slave and free man, noble and lowly, rich and poor, respectable and despised (Col. 3:11). In the church we are all brothers and we are all members of the Body of Christ (Matt. 23:8; 1 Cor. 12:12-13).

In Kumming I said to some, "If you have the Chinese you do not have the church; if you have the church you cannot have the Chinese. There is absolutely no such thing as a Chinese Church." After the First World War, several British brothers went to Germany. They were introduced as "British brothers." Right away they made a correction, saying, "We are not British brothers; we are brothers from Britain."

Several months ago I was holding some meetings in Kaifeng. Many important government officials were saved. Afterward, a group of people said, "We cannot go to an ordinary church because the people there do not dress well and the preaching is not that sophisticated." One of the saved officials said, "We should build a big hall and invite a high-class preacher to preach. Then the high-ranking

personnel from the party, the administration, and the army can come." I asked them, "What sign would you hang on the outside of the hall?" While they were considering, I said, "You could hang a sign with the words The Christian Church of the Officials. They said that they could not do this. I said, "Why not? That is what your words suggested." I then spoke a very frank word to them: "Outside of the church, you are over the common people, among whom I am one. But in the church there is no difference between officials and common people." This is like what we see here today. All those who are in Christ are brothers. There is no difference in rank or position. Everyone who believes in the Lord receives the same redemption by the precious blood and the same life. If there is the church, there cannot be officials. If there are officials, there cannot be the church. Our church is not an anti-Western church; neither is it a special establishment for a special class of people. Some have asked me whether it is proper to establish a women's church. If there is the church, there are no females. If there are females, there is no church. There cannot be a women's church. The church is established for all those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and who have received the life of the Son of God.

Thank God for interrupting Peter's speaking three times. Through these interruptions we see what the Christian faith is and what the church is. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father interrupted Peter's speaking after a few sentences. Inside the house at Capernaum, Christ interrupted his speaking even before he began. In the house of Cornelius, Peter gave a long message, and then the Holy Spirit interrupted his speaking. These three interruptions by the Triune God are very much related to the salvation of Christ and the church. The content of the salvation of Christ and the church is just Christ Himself. The law and the prophets cannot be brought into the picture. The salvation of Christ and the church stands on the fact that Jesus the Nazarene is the Son of God. The Son of God is the only foundation of the church. In the church of Christ there is no difference among races and ranks. The church includes all those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and who have received the life of the Son of God. If any one of these three items is missing, we lose the salvation of Christ and the church of Christ. Therefore, God would not listen to man's speaking. God wants man to listen to Him. God wants man to listen to the speaking of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

MAN, SINNER, SIN, AND SINS

Time: Spring 1937

Place: Canton

(Editor's Note: In the spring of 1937, Brother Nee conducted two studies on "The Gospel of God" in Shanghai and Canton. The Shanghai messages have been published as The Gospel of God (Volumes 28 and 29 of The Collected Works.) The following two chapters are based on the Canton messages, and they are similar in content to the first two chapters of The Gospel of God. The dates of these articles are not known.)

Tonight I am not here to preach the gospel. Rather, I am here to teach the gospel. In the Bible, there is gospel preaching and there is also gospel teaching. We need to teach the gospel because many have become Christians, yet they do not know how they became Christians. Many Christians know that they have entered the gate, but they do not know how they entered the gate. The message tonight is for those who have entered the gate; it is to show them what the gospel is. Therefore, we are not standing at the entrance compelling or inviting people to come in. We are speaking only to those who have already entered the gate. We want to speak concerning how you have become a Christian. I will not be doing a gospel preaching work; rather, I will do a gospel teaching work. I will not persuade or encourage you to believe the gospel. I only want to tell you how you have obtained the gospel. Just like an instructor who shows his students a map, I will tell you the way that you have come to this point.

What is the gospel? The gospel concerns how God saved us, that is, how we entered the gate of God's salvation. Tonight we are not in any hurry. I would rather speak slowly so that you may know more about the truths of the gospel. By the grace of God, I want to speak to you concerning the subject of man, sinner, sin, and sins. Tomorrow evening perhaps we can speak about God's love, grace, righteousness, etc. What I am going to speak tonight may not be so pleasant for the ear because people dislike these four items.

MAN AND SINNER

In Genesis God made Adam, that is, man. Adam was the first man. However, his wife, Eve, was not the second man. Eve was just a part of Adam. Even in committing sins, Eve was still a part of Adam. The Bible does not say that Eve sinned independently. Only 1 Timothy 2:14 speaks of Eve's transgression. Other than that instance, the Bible says that Adam was the first man who sinned; only

the one man Adam sinned. Eve was taken out of Adam. Since Eve was taken out of Adam, she can be considered as a part of Adam. From God's viewpoint, there was no way for Eve to exist independently by herself. We know that we sin because we were born of Adam. According to God, we are all sinners. Unlike Adam who became a sinner because he sinned, we sin because we were born sinners. There is a big difference between Adam and all other men. Adam became a sinner because he sinned. But we sin because we first are a sinner. Man did not become a sinner because of his sins. Even if a man did not sin, he would still be a sinner. The moment a person is born, he is in Adam. Therefore, man is born a sinner.

When I was speaking in Kaifeng, someone asked me, "How can we be in Adam?" I said to him, "The Chinese say that they are the descendants of Hwang-ti. When Hwang-ti was fighting with Tzi-you, suppose that Hwang-ti had not killed Tzi-you, but that Tzi-you had shot Hwang-ti with an arrow. Where would you be today?" He said, "Definitely, I would not be here." I said, "What does Hwang-ti's death have to do with your existence?" He said, "If Hwang-ti died, all of his descendants would not have lived, because we all came out of him. Because there was a Hwang-ti, we are here. Without him, we would not be here." I said, "That is right. This is the same as man's existence in Adam." We came out of Adam. Because Adam was a sinner, those who are in Adam are also sinners.

Suppose you go to a plant nursery to buy a peach tree. Later, this peach tree bears many peaches. If you have bought a good peach tree, it will bear good peaches. If you have bought a bad peach tree, it will bear bad peaches. Sinners are just like trees. Sins committed by the sinners can be likened to the fruit of a tree. A certain kind of tree will bear a certain kind of fruit. The question is which kind are you. The fruit you bear will be according to the kind you are. You sin as a result of being a sinner. You do not become a sinner because you have sinned. This is the fundamental concept of God's salvation. What you are is far more important than what you do. Adam became a sinner because of his sin. But we sin because we are sinners.

There are two kinds of sinners in this world: One is the sinner who sins, and the other is the sinner who does not sin, or the moral sinner. Whether or not man sins, he is a sinner. For example, man has the ability to speak, but there are some—namely, those who are dumb—who cannot speak. However, just because a person cannot speak does not mean that he is not a human being. We can only say that he is a dumb person. Those who can speak are human

beings; those who cannot speak are also human beings. There are some sinners who sin, and there are some sinners who are moral. It does not matter who you are. You have always been a sinner. This is why all men need a Savior. Many compare themselves with others and congratulate themselves for not sinning. But in God's eyes, they are only sinners who have not committed a certain kind of sin. Some may think that since they have committed only a few sins, they do not need the Savior. But in God's eyes, they are still sinners; they are just sinners who have committed a few sins. Even if you think that you are moral and have high ethical standards, and that you are very humble and gentle, at most God would consider you to be a very humble sinner. You are still a sinner. You still need the Savior.

In the book of Romans, there are only two verses prior to 5:19 which use the word sinner. They are 3:7 and 5:8. Romans frequently mentions the many sins of man, but it does not say that man has become a sinner because of the many sins he has committed. There is only one place in the Bible that tells us how man became a sinner, or what constitutes man a sinner. Romans 5:19 says, "Through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners." The one man who disobeyed was Adam. Many were constituted sinners through his disobedience. Man's sins have not made him a sinner. All those who have been born of Adam are sinners. One time I was teaching a group of elementary students in a Sunday school class. I did not know what to say, and I first asked them what kind of people are sinners, that is, who are sinners. A little girl answered, "Those who sin are sinners." Many who are here tonight are much older than that little girl, but many may think the same thing. This is childish thinking. The Bible says that as long as one is a man he is a sinner. Adam became a sinner because of his sin. But we who came out of Adam are sinners whether or not we have sinned.

Ordinarily, a peach tree bears fruit. But there are exceptions. Perhaps among one or two million peach trees, there are a few which do not bear fruit. Although these trees do not bear fruit, they are still peach trees. Likewise, there may be one or two men among millions who do not sin. Although they do not sin, they are still sinners. In the seventeen years that I have been preaching, I have never said, "If you do not sin, God will be pleased with you." God abhors sin, and because every man is a sinner and has committed sin, God also abhors the sinners.

Romans 1 through 8 specifically speaks of how man is a sinner and how he receives salvation. Every Christian should come up to the standard of the book of Romans. If you do not understand the book of Romans, you cannot be a good Christian. Only those who understand the book of Romans can understand God's salvation. Romans 5 is a chapter that deals particularly with sins. The sin spoken of in Romans 5 is the result of man becoming a sinner, that is, man sins because he is already a sinner. Man first has the sinful life, and then he lives a sinful living.

SIN AND SINS

Now let us go on by asking how man sinned. The act of sin involves a process. The Bible, in particular the book of Romans, tells us that the act of sin involves a process of sin. First, sin dwells in man's flesh because he is a sinner. Second, the sin in man urges, tempts, and stirs up his lustful desire. Third, if man follows this urging, he commits a sin. The acts of sin that are committed outwardly can be counted. For example, one can say, "Yesterday I committed one or two sins more than before. Today I committed one or two sins less." Outward sins can be counted in number. The number of sins may not always be the same. However, within us there is another thing called the power of sin, which is always the same; it always induces us to sin. Hence, there is a distinction between sin and sins in the Bible. In English, one is singular and the other is plural. In the original text, the distinction is even clearer. Sins refer to the outward acts that can be counted item by item, while sin is something that cannot be counted. It refers to the sinful nature within man. The sin within man is a kind of power, a law, an inclination that continually pulls man downward and compels man to go down the path of sin. Pride, jealousy, and temper are all things within man which compel him to sin.

In order for one to sin, he must first have the inward power to commit the sin. Just as there must be an inward power to perform good before one can do good, there also has to be the inward power to sin before one can actually commit any sin. If there were no power within man, it would be difficult for him to sin. Man's indwelling power to sin is just sin itself, the singular sin. The outward sins committed by man are the acts of sins, the plural sins. Sins and sin are entirely different, and we must realize the difference between them. Romans is a book that deals particularly with sins. Chapters one through eight speak over and over again about sins and sin. Romans 1—5:11 speaks of sins, that is, the outward

sins. From 5:12 to the end of chapter eight, it speaks of sin, not sins. The dividing line is verse 12 in chapter five. Prior to 5:12, Romans deals with plural sins and covers such things as justification, forgiveness, etc. From verse 12 on, Romans deals with singular sin and covers such things as sanctification and freedom from sin. The two sections are totally different. Blessed are those who have the grace to realize that the former section refers to plural sins, and the latter section refers to singular sin.

How do we deal with sins and sin? First, let us look at how sins are committed. For example, temper is a sin. If someone says something about you which is not nice, you may take their words into your ears and heart. You may not feel happy, and you may lose your appetite. Something may rise up within you, and you may try to suppress it. If the person continues to say unfavorable things about you, you may try to suppress your feelings even more. However, the more he speaks, the more your temper rises up within you. Should a Christian lose his temper? Of course not! Temper is a damage to the glory of Christ. But there is also a kind of power within you that wants to be let out. If the temper within is not let out, you will not feel happy. Suppressing your temper may even give you a bleeding ulcer. In the end you may lose your temper so violently that even your face and ears turn red. Here we see two things in man. The first thing is the urge within that induces one to sin; this is the singular sin that is spoken of after Romans 5:11. The second thing is the angry face, red ears, inflamed eyes, raised fists, etc. These are the many sins spoken of prior to Romans 5:12. Sins are outward, and they are countable item by item. Sins can be temper one time, pride the next time, and filthy thoughts another time. There can be hundreds and thousands of different sinful acts. But these hundreds and thousands of sinful acts all come from the singular sin within.

Here we see that a sinner has two different kinds of sins before God. Consequently, there are two different kinds of salvation before God. The outward sins committed by the sinners, that is, the plural sins, require God's forgiveness. The many sins that separate us from God require forgiveness. When the conscience in us is at peace, we know that the sins separating us from God have been forgiven. However, even though the outward sins are forgiven, the power within still remains. Sometimes it compels a person to be proud or to lose his temper. Sometimes it compels him to become lustful or to have unclean thoughts. While the outward acts of sins have been forgiven through the blood of Christ, there is still something within pulling and dragging us to sin. Therefore, in

order for God to save us, He must not only forgive our outward sins but also save us from the inward power of sin.

Our outward sins need God's forgiveness, and our inward sin needs God's liberation. Forgiveness deals only with outward sins. Liberation deals with the inward sin. The plural sins refer to the various kinds of sins committed outwardly; the singular sin refers to the sin within that compels a person to sin. If we want to understand these two kinds of salvation, we must first understand that there are two different kinds of sin. One is inward and the other is outward. It is unfortunate that after many Christians are saved, they merely experience the forgiveness of outward sins without experiencing any release from the inward sin. We must realize the difference between sin and sins before we can obtain God's full salvation. Let me summarize the difference between sins and sin with the list below:

SINS

1. Plural
2. Outward
3. Conduct
4. Acts
5. What we do
6. Require forgiveness
before God
7. Conscience is not at
peace
if not forgiven before
God
8. Conscience
9. Living

SIN

1. Singular
2. Inward
3. Flesh
4. Inward power
5. What we are
6. Requires liberation
within man
7. Heart is not sanctified
if man is not
released
8. Heart
9. Life

Once we are clear concerning the scriptural distinction between sins and sin, and once we are clear concerning their difference in our living, we will see the way that God delivers us from our sinful living and sinful life. We will know how God forgives our sins and how He gives us the power to be free from our sin.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN
GOD'S LOVE, MERCY, GRACE,
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Time: Spring 1937

Place: Canton

Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:16; John 3:16; Rom. 3:24; 4:4; 5:8; 11:6; Eph. 2:4, 8-9; Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 13:14

Last night we saw that man was born a sinner. We also saw that man has two kinds of sins: One is a power within which causes man to commit sins; the other is the outward acts of sins. The power of sin within causes man to sin; the outward acts of sins bring man into judgment. The sin within is the cause of man's perdition, while the sins without are the cause of God's righteous judgment. Because man has committed sins outwardly, he needs to be saved, and because he possesses the inward sin, he needs to overcome. Because of the many sins without, man needs to be justified before God, and because of the inward sin which compels him to sin, man needs to be sanctified within. These two kinds of sins are different in operation. God wants to save man. But in order for Him to accomplish a full salvation, He needs to deal with the sin that is within as well as the sins that are without. If God only dealt with the outward sins, man's salvation would be incomplete. The outward sins of Christians have been forgiven by the blood of Christ. Yet the inward power of sin still remains. If you ask such a Christian, "Have your sins been forgiven?" He will answer, "Yes, my sins have all been forgiven." But every day he will continue to sin. After he sins, he will come back to ask for forgiveness. This is because he has only received a half salvation. He has not yet obtained a full salvation.

If a man is ignorant of himself and does not know who he is, he will look at himself and say, "I am not a sinner. I have no need of the Savior or salvation." But once he realizes that he is a sinner, what will he do? Suppose I am in a hospital, sick and about to die. Am I the one who is desperate, or is the hospital administrator the desperate one? Unless I am crazy with a high fever, surely I will be desperate. The hospital administrator cannot worry about me. He cannot worry about all the patients in Canton. If he did, the hospital would have to render treatment to him as well. However, many sinners are not concerned about their sickness. Before the birth of the Lord Jesus, no one was prepared for the coming of the Savior. When Christ was born, no one had invited Him or made any preparations for Him. God Himself made the preparations for Him. Man was not

concerned about his own sins, but God was. He wanted to save us; therefore, He prepared a Savior for us. Since man is a sinner, is it not fitting that he should die and perish? Why did God need to be concerned? Why did God need to think of a way to save us? This leads to another question: What has motivated God's salvation?

THE MOTIVATION FOR GOD'S SALVATION—HIS LOVE

Man fell through sin and deserves death and perdition. But he has no intention to seek salvation. Salvation belongs to Jehovah. It is God who wants to save us; man has no intention of saving himself. According to God's Word, the motivation for God's salvation is His love. Those who become sinners do not love themselves. Yet God loves man. Even though man himself is not concerned or anxious, God is concerned. Man has no intention of saving himself, but God can find a way to save man. The greatest and most precious fact in the Bible is that God's thought towards man is love. In the Bible God's love has three aspects: (1) God is love (1 John 4:16); His very nature is love; (2) God loves the world (John 3:16); God's feeling toward man is love; and (3) God's love is manifested through the cross (Rom. 5:8); this is the work of God's love.

God Being Love

The first aspect of God's love is that God is love. What is the meaning of these words? Christians are very familiar with 1 John 4:16, which says that God is love. This means that love is God's nature. Hence, God is love. For example, I have a little brother who loves to ask questions. He likes to ask questions about wild flowers, chalk, puppies, kittens, etc. Every time I see him, I am apprehensive. I may answer two or three or even ten of his questions, but I cannot answer his countless other questions. When I see him, I address him as Mr. Question and give him some money to go away. Asking questions is part of his nature. This is why I call him Mr. Question. In other words, he embodies the essence of a question. Likewise, love is God's nature. Therefore, God is love. Thank God that He is love. Love is His nature. We must realize that the greatest revelation in the Bible is that God is love.

God Loving the World

Second, God loves the world, that is, God loves man. Today many do not believe that God loves them and will save them freely. They think that they must go through many sufferings before they can be saved. Martin Luther was like this before he was enlightened. He knelt on the stairs of the cathedral, fasted,

prayed, and afflicted his own body. He thought that this might cause God to forgive him of his sins. This is the concept and practice of many Catholics. They think that they must beg and implore before God will change His heart and mind to forgive them. This is man's biggest misunderstanding. The Bible says that there is no need for us to beg God to change His mind. His love is not affected by what we have done; He loves the world to the uttermost. God's nature is love; love is even God Himself. God's feeling toward man is just love. The biggest misunderstanding man has toward God is to think that God hates man or that He wants to punish man.

One time I came across 1 John 4:16 and John 3:16 and became almost ecstatic with joy. I put down the Bible in the house and ran out to the streets of Shanghai. I said to the first person I saw, "Do you know that God loves you?" Then I said the same thing to the second person I saw.

I know of a young man in America whose parents were very poor. The family's whole livelihood depended on the little work that the aging father did. One day the young man said to his father, "I am going to leave home." His father asked, "Why are you leaving home?" He said, "Because this family is too poor; there is not enough money for food and clothing." When the father heard this, tears came down his face. The next morning the father got up and prepared some food for the son. Handing a parcel to the son, he asked when the son would be leaving. The son said that he was leaving that very day. The father put the package in the son's hand and accompanied him for a little while. They walked on the village road without saying a word. When the son was about to bid farewell, the father said, "In my whole life, I have never wanted to be rich. But last night I hated myself for not being rich. It is because we are poor that you are leaving. I feel very sad. I am giving you all that I can give you. I have put the best items in here." They continued walking together for another two or three miles. Finally, the father gave a silver coin to his son, saying, "Perhaps you will need some money. For the last four or five years, you have not seen any silver coins, only copper coins. Here is a silver coin today; it is passed on to you from your mother. Good-bye, my son. May God bless you." At this point the young man saw something. He realized how much his father loved him. Even though his family was very poor, he felt that he had no choice but to accept the parcel. Then he left his father and went to a big city. He worked as a chief editor for a newspaper and earned a great deal of money. Soon he forgot his poor family. Later, the newspaper business closed, his money ran out, and he became sick. One day he took the

parcel that his father had given him and went to an inn. As he was lying in the inn, he began to realize that his condition was worse than when he was at home. He did not know whether he could return home. He thought, "I cannot go home, because I did not treat my father well. Perhaps my father hates me. I did not send any money home when I was making all the money in the city. I did not correspond with anyone in the family. I wonder if I still have my father's love."

Later, he became so sick that he thought he should go home to see his father before his death. He gathered his luggage and returned home. When he got to the house, he did not go in immediately. He took a peek from the outside of the house and saw his father, who had aged even more. The furniture inside the house was as old and worn as it was before. He saw his aging father eating alone and looking very devastated. Then his father picked up his Bible and began to pray, saying, "May You be gracious to save and bless my son. May he not suffer because of the poverty at home. May he find happiness and no longer suffer so much hardship." When the son heard his father's prayer from the outside, he knew his father still loved him very much. He opened the door and entered the house, weeping and saying to his father, "From now on, even if I become the richest person in the whole world, I am not going to leave."

This is a picture of man today. He thinks that God does not love him. We have to realize that it is we who fail to love God rather than God who fails to love us. We are the ones who reject God; God has never rejected us. The Lord said to Jerusalem, "How often I desired to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matt. 23:37). The Lord is willing, but we are not willing. God never fails to love us; it is we who fail to love God. Human beings have no love; it is impossible for us to love God. However, God is love; it is impossible for God not to love. As far as God's love is concerned, the second greatest revelation in the Bible is that God loves man. God's feeling toward man is forever love.

God's Love Being Manifested through the Cross

Third, we need to see how God's love is manifested. We need to see the work of His love. God is love, and He loves man. But how does He love man? Does He show His love by simply patting us on the shoulder and saying, "I love you"? What would be the use of this kind of love? We have already seen that man is a sinner and that he needs to be saved. But man has no way to save himself. Since man has no way, God provides the way. We have no way, but God's love

provides the way. Romans 5:8 says, "God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God's love was expressed by Christ coming to this world to die on man's behalf and solve the problem of perdition. Man is a sinner and cannot afford to pay the high price that is required to save himself. How does God save man? He put man's sins upon Christ; Christ received God's judgment on our behalf. When we see Christ's vicarious death on the cross, we know that God's love has been manifested. This is the third revelation in the Bible concerning God's love. There are three great revelations concerning God's love in the Bible: (1) God is love, (2) God loves man, and (3) God's love is manifested through the cross. These three great revelations give us an assessment of God's love.

The word love results in many things. Because God loves us, He does many things for us. If God did not love us, there would be nothing for Him to do. Suppose a person does not love anyone; his life will be very ordinary. However, the minute he loves someone, trouble comes. He wants to do many things for the one he loves. Because God loves man, He does many things for man. God's salvation is based on His love for man; there is no other explanation for God's salvation. He has saved us because He loves us, not because He owes us some debt or has some moral responsibility to do so. God does not have any responsibility to save us. The salvation that is spoken of in the Bible is based upon love. Love is the only reason, the only motivation, of God's salvation. If God did nothing, no one could say that He was wrong. But because God loves us, He is willing to do a great deal, even having Christ die on the cross for us.

MERCY AND GRACE

Now let us consider how God's love is manifested. The Bible shows us that God's love is manifested in two aspects: One is grace, which is positive; the other is mercy, which is negative. There are several verses in the New Testament that put mercy and grace together. Mercy is God's perception of man's present condition; grace is God's saving of man from his present condition. Mercy is God coming to us, whereas grace is God bringing us to Himself. Mercy is God coming down, whereas grace is God lifting man. Mercy is God looking upon man's suffering, whereas grace is God granting man salvation.

Suppose a brother has ragged clothes, ill health, and a poor family. If you have compassion on him, you will have concern for his ragged clothes, ill health, and poverty. This is mercy. This is not grace, because you did not do anything for him. If you treat him nicely, provide him with clothes, food, dwelling, and some

money, this is grace. Grace is your favor toward him, whereas mercy is your concern toward him. It is not enough to have just mercy. Mercy cannot solve man's problems. Grace must come in before one can receive the help.

Mercy is God coming into our midst, whereas grace is God bringing us into His midst. In His incarnation as a man, God apprehended man's sufferings and bondage to sin, pain, and Satan. This is His mercy. When Christ came to the earth, He spoke mostly of mercy and not much of grace. The four Gospels rarely mention "grace." Grace came in only after He died on the cross, when God put man's sins upon Christ and Christ took our sins away. The Epistles frequently speak of grace because God's salvation has been accomplished. God loves us; His heart is filled with mercy toward our condition. Therefore, He accomplished something for us to save us. God's heart is full of mercy for us—this is the best factual basis for asking God to do something for us. When we pray that God would forgive our sins, what is God's basis for answering our prayer? We can say, "O God, I am evil. I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I cannot even come to You for salvation. But the Bible says that You love mercy and not sacrifice. O God, please have mercy on me; forgive me." Both the New Testament and the Old Testament say that God desires "mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9:13; Hosea 6:6). Mercy is God giving something to man, whereas sacrifice is man giving something to God. But God says, "I like to give something to you, but I do not like you to give anything to Me." We cannot perform any good. Even if there is some goodness in us, it is not perfect. We have nothing to depend on; we have nothing to rely upon. We can only depend on God's mercy. We can count on God's mercy and say, "God, unless You have become a merciless God, I am delighted and happy to seek Your mercy. I want to be a person on whom You have mercy." Grace, however, requires some kind of work. Love is in the heart, mercy is in the feelings, but grace is in the actions. If there is love within but no grace without, nothing much can be accomplished. Love is something hidden within, and grace is accomplished without. When grace is received, it becomes love. When love is manifested, it becomes grace. What is within is love, and what is acted out is grace. Grace has two special characteristics. First, it is generous, and second, it is God doing something for man. In the Bible there is God's grace and Christ's grace. God's grace mainly refers to His generosity, whereas Christ's grace mainly refers to His work for us. One verse which we are all familiar with and which is often used by pastors in the denominations for their benedictions is 2

Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Why does this verse speak of the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? Can we change it to "the grace of God," "the love of the Lord Jesus Christ," and "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"? No, because the characteristic of God is love. God is love. God in heaven is the source of all love. He is the source of love. Then Christ came to the earth to actually accomplish God's work of love. He died on the cross; He was crucified by men for the redemption of man. This is the work of God's love for man, which is grace. Therefore, God's characteristic is love and Christ's characteristic is grace. The fellowship of the Spirit is the flowing into us of all that Christ has accomplished for us. The source is God. Following God's love is Christ's work which is His grace. God is love and Christ came to manifest this love. But if it merely stops there, it is still of no benefit to us. Christ died on Calvary. He died on the cross to accomplish the work of redemption for us. This is good. But the accomplishment of Christ can only be applied to man through the Spirit. God's love is the source, Christ's grace is the operation of God's love, and the Spirit's fellowship channels this work of Christ to man. The Spirit changes the objective things of Christ into subjective experiences of Christ. He wroughts that which is outside of man into man. This is why 2 Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

An illustration of this can be found in the hospital where a doctor gives a prescription, a pharmacist dispenses the medicine, and the nurse ultimately delivers the medicine to the patient. If you only know the kind of medicine you need without having anyone deliver it to you, the medicine cannot get into your body. You need to have all three before the medicine can take effect. Hence, 2 Corinthians 13:14 speaks of the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit.

Grace is what Christ does. If it is something we do, it is not grace. If you earn money for your living, it is not grace. Suppose I am a beggar, and others give me something to eat—this is grace. Since grace is Christ's work, it is generous. In the Bible grace has three qualities. We can describe them in business terms. The first quality of grace is that it is not a purchase; it is not even a fair exchange. It is not something that is worth a few dollars and that is bought for a few dollars. Second, grace is not cheap; it is not like an item that is worth two dollars but is

sold for one dollar. Third, grace is not loaned; it is not something which you receive that must be repaid later.

Grace cannot be purchased. If we have to do something before we can come before God to be saved, this salvation is not based on grace. Grace does not use our good work as the basis for our redemption. Grace is given to us freely. Therefore, the Bible says we are saved by grace, not by works (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace is freely given to us by God.

Grace is not cheap. Grace is not something that we can bargain for at a low price. It is not that we work a little and Christ supplements the rest, as if Christ were some kind of collateral. If we had to do something first and then trust in the Lord for what we could not do, our salvation would be nothing more than shopping for a bargain, because we would be paying a certain amount first and then relying on Christ to pay the rest. No, grace is absolutely not a bargain purchase. None of us can afford to pay even the slightest amount of the price. Grace is entirely the work of Christ.

Third, grace is not a loan. Many people say that grace is necessary for salvation, but that Christ will reclaim His salvation if we do not produce good deeds after salvation. This is like saying that grace has been loaned to us, and that it needs to be repaid. This is absolutely wrong. Grace is forever the work of Christ. It is totally and freely given. There is no need for us to ever repay anything.

Now let us read some more verses. If this is God's word, you have to believe it; if it is my word, you can ignore it. Please read Romans 3:23-27. This is the most difficult passage in the Bible. Man has a big problem: He is a sinner. If God did not love us, nothing would happen even though man is a sinner. Since man sins, God could let man perish, and there would be nothing that God would have to do. But God has two big problems. First, man has sins, and second, God loves man. Satisfying the demands of these two items requires God's work. In order for God to satisfy His love toward man, He must first solve the problem of man's sins. Because man has sinned and because God loves man, there is the need of grace. The initiation or motivation of grace is God's love for man, while the necessity of grace is due to man's sins.

GOD'S LOVE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

There is another problem that, if left unresolved, would prevent God from saving man even if He wanted to. This is the problem of satisfying His righteousness. If the righteousness of God was left unresolved, untouched, and unsettled, that is,

if God's righteous requirements were not met, He could not save man. Romans is a most important book. Those who have not read this book do not know of these two seemingly insurmountable obstacles. These two obstacles are: (1) God has to satisfy His love for man, and (2) God has to satisfy His own righteous requirements.

What is God's righteousness? God's righteousness is the principle by which God works. When God works, He must operate according to righteousness. Everything that God accomplishes is accomplished according to righteousness. The Bible shows us that there are three items specially related to God: glory, holiness, and righteousness. God's glory is God Himself; God's holiness is God's nature; and God's righteousness is the method, the way, in which God works. Every time we read about God's glory in the Bible, we should realize that it refers to God Himself. Every time we read about God's holiness, we should realize that it refers to God's nature. Every time we read about God's righteousness, we should realize that it refers to the method or the way in which God works. God is righteous, and the procedure by which He works also has to be righteous. Hence, God's salvation of man must also be righteous. God can save man in many ways, but no matter which way He takes, He has to do it according to righteousness. This is the most difficult problem in God's salvation of man. If God were not strict, He could resort to any kind of method. But it is a challenge for God to do things without conflicting with His righteousness. A sinner only cares to be saved; he does not care about the method which is used. But God cannot be unrighteous in saving man. Righteousness is the foundation of God's throne (Psa. 89:14). God cannot do something that is unrighteous. God wants to save man, but He also wants to maintain His own righteousness. Hence, God has a problem. He must find a way to save man that is righteous, a procedure that is compatible with His righteousness, which also will enable Him to save man?

Two years ago the father of one of our co-workers was imprisoned for violating the law of the country. He had indeed violated the written regulation. But the sin he committed was forgivable because he was forced by others to do it and did not commit the crime intentionally. The law he violated carried a very severe punishment. I felt that, under the circumstance, the offense he committed should be pardoned. Moreover, he was advanced in age and was the father of one of my co-workers. He was quite close to several co-workers, and we all treated him as our own father. Because of my family connections, I knew some prominent persons in the government, and I promised to try my best to help him. We went

to a prominent one in the Nanking government, and said to him, "Our friend is an upright person. We can guarantee that he did not commit the crime. We only need a statement to be issued in order for him to be released." But he replied, "I believe what you said. In my heart I also want to release him. In the last ten days, I have solicited the help of some influential people, but I still do not have a way. This is not just a matter of personal influence. I could release a statement immediately, but I must have the proper basis before I can issue the statement. I cannot transgress against the state through my act. I will try to think of a way to release him, but I have to use a method that is legal and proper. I cannot incriminate myself by releasing him." Do you see this? God was faced with a similar situation in order to save us. He wants to save us, but He must find a way that is righteous and that will also save at the same time. God's righteousness is manifested in the fact that when He saves man, He does so by not making Himself unrighteous.

Here we see the problem that God has in saving man. On the one hand, He must satisfy His love, and on the other hand, He must satisfy His righteousness. He cannot sacrifice love for the sake of fulfilling His righteousness. He also cannot become unrighteous for the sake of love. Neither of the two can be sacrificed. The Bible says that unrighteousness is a sin (1 John 5:17). God cannot do anything that is not according to righteousness. God wants man to know that he is saved through righteousness; it is a salvation that is lawful, proper, and procedurally righteous. This is why God has to be careful in how He deals with the sins of the world. Now we have three facts: Man is a sinner, God is full of love, mercy and grace, and God is righteous. Romans 3:25 says, "God set forth [Jesus] as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness." Verse 26 continues, "With a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus." This means that in reckoning those who believe in Jesus to be righteous, God demonstrates to man that He is righteous. Through His act of saving man, God wants man to know that He is righteous. God cannot violate the law. He cannot make Himself unlawful just because He wants to save man.

Romans 3:21 says that God's righteousness has been manifested apart from the law. If God's righteousness was manifested according to the law, we would have to die because the law says that all who sin must die. Therefore, if God's righteousness was according to the law, all sinners would have to die, and there

would be no gospel to preach. God's righteousness is apart from the law; therefore, man can be saved, and God is still righteous.

How does God preserve His righteousness and save us at the same time? This was accomplished by the cross of Christ and the precious blood of Christ. Friends, I do not know whether or not it has ever occurred to you that without God's righteousness, there would be no need for Christ to die. Why was the cross needed? It was so troublesome. Jesus had to go from Bethlehem to Calvary to be crucified on the cross. Why did God go to such lengths? He could have declared to the world that everyone was forgiven and could go away free. This would only involve God's forgiveness. Would this not be the simplest thing to do and the most efficient way to take? However, if He took such a simple and efficient way, His righteousness would be sacrificed. This is why God cannot be so free. He needed the Lord Jesus to come as a man and put on a body of flesh and blood. One day He was crucified on the cross and shed His precious blood so that all those who believe in Him could have their sins forgiven. This is how God fulfilled His righteousness and accomplished His goal of saving man. In God's righteous salvation, He sent the Lord Jesus to die on the cross and to accomplish the work of redemption on our behalf. This satisfied the love that God has toward man and also fulfilled His own righteous requirements. Hallelujah for God's wonderful love, mercy, grace, and righteousness! Praise Him!

SECTION SEVEN

FELLOWSHIP WITH CO-WORKERS

IN SHANGHAI, JUNE 1937

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

THE EXPRESSION AND PRACTICE

OF THE TESTIMONY

OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Date: June 20, 1937, Lord's Day, 9:30 a.m.

Place: Shanghai

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; 18:17

Tonight I am going to talk a little about the expression and practice of the local church and also the relationship between the workers and the church. For those who have been attending our meetings regularly, we would like to explain the reason for having meetings like ours. In other words, I am going to speak about the outward expression and practice of the church, not about its content.

THE EXPRESSION OF THE PROPER TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH

What kind of expression should the testimony of the church have in order for it to be scriptural? Suppose we have the best kind of tea, but we have no cup. Without a cup this wonderful tea could not get into us. Christ is the living water. He can forever quench man's thirst. But without a "cup," man cannot receive anything. If we have a cup that is dirty, we still have a problem. If we drink from the cup, we take in all sorts of things other than the water, and the taste of the living water will be gone. Consider the famine in Szechuan province; there is a shortage of rice and grain. It would be very unkind for a person to sell bowls there. However, if there is rice, there is the need for the proper supply of bowls. Christ is the "rice" and the church is the "bowl." Man receives Christ through the church. The problem today is not with the rice but with the bowl. Christ is not the problem; the problem is with the church.

Along with its outward expression, we must also pay attention to the practice of the church. The work of the cross deals with the flesh. But man's ways often activate the flesh in the work of God. We may think that mistakes in our living offend the Lord, but we may never realize that applying the flesh to the work is also an offense to God (Ezek. 44:17-18). Man assumes that he has the power and wisdom to complement God's work. Today a few men gather together, pray a little, and then start a meeting or an organization. This kind of beginning can never be of the Spirit. There is no doubt that the Spirit wants to accomplish something today, but the Spirit does not work independently. Rather, He works through man. If a man is fleshly, the Spirit cannot work in him. Without the Spirit, everything is dead, even if it is scriptural. God's work is a matter of man cooperating and coordinating with the Spirit; it is neither a case of the Spirit working alone nor of man working alone.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

The church of Christ has two aspects. The first aspect, the universal aspect, is spoken of in Matthew 16. The universal church includes all the believers both past and present. There is only one such church, and we cannot add another to it. The universal church is unique. The second aspect, the local aspect, is spoken of in Matthew 18. The local church includes all the local believers at a certain time and in a certain place. It is limited to time and place. It can be counted. This is why we see expressions in the Bible such as the "church" (Acts 9:31), the "seven churches" (Rev. 1:4), and the "churches" (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33).

There is no difference in content between the universal church and the local church, except that the local church is a miniature of the universal church. Paul said that the Corinthian believers were the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). This means that the local church represents the Body of Christ. The local church should represent the universal church. The universal church does not have any problems, and it will never have any problems. The universal church is above all failure. No one can ever cause the universal church to have spots or wrinkles. Even the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. However, the local church is in the hands of man, and there is the possibility of failure. Throughout the two thousand years of the history of the local churches, there have been numerous mistakes and failures.

THE SPHERE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

God only establishes local churches in various localities. We cannot see any unit that is bigger or smaller than the local church. The local church is the biggest as well as the smallest unit. The local church is the one and only institution of Christ. In the Bible all the churches were local. There were the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus, the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, and the church in Philippi. All these churches were named after localities. Although there might have been many meeting places in Jerusalem, there was only one church. Although the meetings might have been held in various places, there was one and only one fellowship. Although there were many divisions in Corinth, they met only in one place. The sphere of the church is based on the boundary of the locality. All the Christians in a locality are in the church in that locality. Therefore, all the believers in Shanghai form the church in Shanghai. God takes the city, the town, or the village as the unit for the church. We can only read of "the church in Ephesus"; we cannot read of "such and such church in Ephesus," because "such and such church" is not qualified to be the church of God in Ephesus.

THE FORMATION OF DENOMINATIONS AND SECTS

The church includes all the believers in a locality. However, on the earth today there are many so-called churches that are not based on locality as the unit. They cannot be called the church, because they are not qualified to be considered as a unit of the church. There are at least three thousand such units in the world. In China alone, there are over one hundred such units, and over seventy such units in Shanghai alone. Because they cannot form a unit for the

church, they are not qualified to be called the church. Therefore, they are called sects or denominations.

If I tear my Bible into five parts and give one part to you, can you say that it is the New Testament? No, you can only say that it is a part of the Bible because it cannot represent the entire Bible. If a person's work in a particular locality is not big enough in its representation, it is not big enough to represent the church. The unit of the church is based on the locality. One problem is that man makes the unit of the church smaller than it should be. Another problem is that man makes the unit of the church bigger than it should be. Revelation 2 and 3 speak of seven local churches. The local church is the largest entity in God's eyes. He does not combine several local churches together; they are all separate. Revelation speaks of the seven lampstands which represent the seven churches. There is not one lamp with seven branches, but seven lampstands. The local churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea were no bigger than their respective localities. A local church cannot be subdivided into smaller units, nor can it be united to form bigger units. There were seven churches on the earth, and there were seven lampstands in heaven. In other words the number of local churches on the earth was represented by an equal number in heaven. Every locality has its own administration. The failure of one church cannot be blamed on another church.

The local church is the unique unit for the church. Having a local church in smaller units is the same as having divisions (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-12); combining several local churches together is the same as forming a denomination or a council. Divisions and denominations are produced because man will not work according to the practice of the Scriptures.

Some people try to be our spokesmen, saying that our testimony is "anti-denominational." If this is our only objective, we have betrayed the truth. We are here because we want to do what the apostles did—establish local churches, not because we are against the denominations. Too many believers today have not seen the work of the apostles. They have not seen that the apostles did not establish their own meetings; rather, they set up local churches in various localities. Once they established a local church, they left the locality. The local churches were not under their hands, nor did the local churches belong to them. Today many are sent by mission boards of certain denominations. After they establish a meeting in a locality, the meeting belongs to that denomination. This is like flying a kite; a string is attached, and the kite moves by a pull of the string.

Last summer I read the biography of Hudson Taylor once again. This is the third time I have read his biography. I received much help from him. The China Inland Mission was a mission, yet the result of its work was China Inland Mission churches. This is not right. In order to avoid offending anyone, I will not mention the name of a brother I once met from the China Inland Mission. In the course of our conversation, I said, "Mr. So-and-so, you are an Englishman. You and your wife have suffered a great deal and have gained quite a few Miao natives. Are you setting up the church in Dali, or are you establishing the China Inland Mission in Dali? Today I do not oppose the China Inland Mission to which you belong. Although I cannot join, I do not oppose it. What I do oppose is the China Inland Mission church which you established. I would not comment on you as an individual. But the work produced by your mission is wrong." He said, "Mr. Nee, I understand what you mean."

The apostle Paul was sent from Antioch. Suppose he came to Ephesus and set up the Antioch Church in Ephesus. Suppose Peter, who also traveled much, came to Ephesus and saved fifty or one hundred people. Suppose he said, "I will not put my people in Paul's Antioch Church. That church is not related to me. I am from Jerusalem, and I will call my church the Jerusalem Church in Ephesus." Suppose Barnabas and Philip also arrived, did their own work, and established their own churches. In this way different kinds of work would result in many divisions among the people. God cannot tolerate this kind of situation. Brothers! I can work together with you, but I have to ask you one thing. It is not a matter of cooperation among co-workers but a matter of the result of our work. Where can we place those who are saved?

We are servants of all but masters of none. The relationship I have with the assembly in Shanghai is the same as the relationship you have with Shanghai. The local assembly exercises complete authority over itself and is absolutely not related to the workers. The Bible only teaches the establishing of local churches; it does not teach the establishing of churches that are based on an organization to which one belongs.

THE MINISTERS AND THE CHURCH

God raises up special ministers in every age. Church history during the past several centuries shows that the church was built up by special gifts of God. I love all those brothers. I love Luther. I love Wesley. I love Darby, etc. All of these spiritual giants were greatly used by God at the beginning, but gradually the only

thing that was left was a denomination. This is really pitiful. I cannot reject the truth released through these persons, but I cannot accept the churches they have formed. Because they did not see the local church, they set up churches according to their ministries and controlled these churches. In the Scriptures, one never finds a minister of the gospel controlling a certain church or several churches. In other words, no minister is greater than the local church; rather, the local church is greater than the ministers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:21-23). If this principle is not upheld, sects will be produced immediately. Once an assembly comes under a certain minister or a certain commission, it becomes a sect. Baptism is a truth which we preach and practice. We should immerse people into the water so that they can become disciples of the Lord. But making a commission the basis for setting up a church and putting the church under the commission of a truth is forming a sect.

In a department store there are apparel, shoe, watch, handkerchief, and souvenir departments. All of the departments work together. If we do this, there will be no possibility of having a denomination. Praise God, He has commissioned me with a ministry. I confess that I am not worthy. However, since God has been gracious to me, I have become bold. Should I then preach myself? No, I should not. But should I be unfaithful? No, I cannot be unfaithful either. When I go to a certain place, I will establish an assembly there; I will save sinners and also have my ministry there. But after I finish my work, I will leave and be satisfied. I should not expect the entire city of Shanghai to be handkerchief stores and force others to use handkerchiefs for everything—eating with handkerchiefs and drinking with handkerchiefs. Furthermore, I should not demand that all other shops be closed. What relationship should a worker hold with the assembly? In the assembly a worker is the same as other brothers who are holding other jobs. Whether the brothers who hold other jobs make money or lose money has nothing to do with the church. For example, George Müller set up an orphanage. This work had nothing to do with the church. Likewise, the condition of a worker has nothing to do with the church.

For the students at Cheloo University to have their own table is unscriptural. Only the church in Tsinan is qualified to represent Tsinan. Cheloo University cannot be a unit upon which a table is set. If one stands on the ground of the church in Tsinan, he can break bread. In God's ordination, every church is directly related to that locality alone. The purpose of this is to maintain the oneness. Is the

church that every Christian attends a church in the locality, or is it a church that is smaller than the locality?

I am a brother in Shanghai, but my work is in Jen-Ru. Many people want to replace the church with the work, but the work can never replace the church. I should not expect God's children to belong to me. If this is not the case, may the Lord forgive me. I am a brother in Shanghai. If tomorrow I go to Nanking, I will immediately become a brother in Nanking and not a brother in Shanghai.

I hope you will not demand believers in Shanghai to leave this and that organization in a negative sense. You have to talk positively about the local church. Whoever has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and has been regenerated by the Spirit is in the church in Shanghai. There should be no discrimination of any kind. Our heart needs to be enlarged to include all the believers in Shanghai. May all the workers be clear about the nature of our testimony and the practice of the local church.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

A TALK WITH BROTHER NEE

AT HIS FAREWELL DINNER

PRIOR TO HIS TRIP OVERSEAS

Date: June 24, 1937, 9:00 p.m.

Place: Shanghai

(The dinner was attended by saints at three tables, including the elders and some co-workers. The food was prepared by nine sisters.)

THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE WORK

During the past month or two, there has been a thought continually within me concerning three aspects of our work: first, the gospel among the poor; second, the need of a large meeting hall for the work; and third, the work in Jen-Ru.

The Gospel among the Poor

Let us first talk about the gospel among the poor. The poor include thieves, rickshaw drivers, pick-pockets, etc. There are many of these kinds of people in Shanghai. The church should consider preaching to the poor as a part of its regular church life. It is a noble matter. These people have never heard the gospel. For them, coming to the gospel meeting would mean losing a few dollars. They already do not have enough for their living. Therefore, we cannot expect them to come to our gospel meeting. Rather, we have to go to where they are. In Shanghai there are eight hundred thousand such people, accounting for a

quarter of the total population of Shanghai. This number is higher than the total population of Foochow. It is higher than the combined population of the provinces of Tsinghai and Sinkiang and Mongolia. If one out of ten were saved in a year, we would have eighty thousand who were saved. Even if one out of a thousand were saved, we would still have eight thousand people. If we do this, others will not say that we are stealing sheep, because the sheep we have will have been born and not stolen. Of course, this is not the only reason for our work, but if we do this, we will avoid some criticism.

A Large Meeting Hall for the Work

We hope that in the future the Lord will provide us with a central place, a meeting hall which can accommodate seven to eight thousand people. It will be used for the work, not for the church. The large meeting hall will be used for the annual Overcomer Conferences as well as special conferences for the release of perfecting messages. Perhaps monthly or bimonthly, the whole church can have the Lord's table together there. The rest of the time, the Lord's table would still be held in various homes. If our place is not big enough, we will rent a place. We are not like the church in Corinth where the number was small. We are like the church in Jerusalem where the number was big. In the future we may even have to rent a place to set up our own tents for meeting.

The Work in Jen-Ru

The third aspect is the work in Jen-Ru. I think it is appropriate for me to say something here concerning the nature of the work in Jen-Ru. Jen-Ru is for two groups of people. The first group is the responsible ones in each locality. This place is prepared to render them some spiritual help. During the summer months or the holidays, they can come to study the Bible. This would enable them to better serve in their responsibilities later. The second group is the young co-workers who are clear that they have been called by the Lord to serve Him. They can come here to study the Bible for a while before setting out for their work. Jen-Ru will not take those who still need to be dealt with; it is for those who have been dealt with already and who are ready to serve. It is not for the lazy ones, but for those who want to serve the Lord diligently. I am not afraid of those who have committed sins, but I am afraid of the lazy ones. You have to drag a lazy one along before he will move. If you do not drag him along, he will not move. Or he may move a little if you shout in his ears. But if you do not shout, he will not move. Jen-Ru is also not for the flippant ones to come to receive some dealings. It is for those who have received the basic dealings already and who need to be

perfected more deeply. Moreover, Jen-Ru is a personal work under the responsibility of Brother Luan and I. Jen-Ru is not a hostel, a rehabilitation hospital, or a seminary. It is established specifically for the young co-workers and the responsible brothers.

I dare not say with certainty that these three things are the desire of the Lord, but personally I have this kind of burden within me, which I am presenting before you and asking you to communicate to the saints.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORK AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Everyone who is called to the work is on his own; no other person is responsible for him. It is God who bears all of his responsibilities, and no one should come to me later and say, "Mr. Nee, I resign." If he wants to resign, he has to hand in his resignation to God. By the way, once a person offers his money, the one who has received the money has the full right to direct its use. Your offering is to God, and whether or not the person is faithful, he will have to settle his account before the judgment seat. If he squanders all the money that was offered, it is his business. You give to him because you trust him. If you do not trust him, there is no need for you to give. Therefore, personal money that has been given to the work cannot and should not be disclosed to outsiders. The Lord set a very good example: He allowed Judas to take charge of the money. The Lord knew that Judas would steal the money, but He let him steal; He did not mind. As the treasurer, Judas was close to the Lord, yet the Lord did not deal with him. This is a matter that should be left for the judgment day. It is not your business or mine.

Therefore, the financial losses of the Gospel Book Room cannot be blamed on the church or the brothers. Consider again the work in Jen-Ru. Presently, this is my work. But in two years' time I may decide to sell the building, and it is entirely my business to do so. If I decide to keep it for another two hundred years, this is also entirely my own business. The work at the Rehabilitation Center has been going well. Several of the responsible ones there came to ask my opinion. I said, "Your work is not bad. It is good and right, but you have no church." They said, "The ones there have been breaking bread, praying, and preaching the gospel." I said, "You only have the meetings of the Rehabilitation Center; you do not have the church in Shanghai. In other words, you are still not qualified to be a unit for the church. Your bread can only include the Rehabilitation Center; it cannot

represent all the believers in Shanghai, much less all the believers at all times and places."

The work is entirely personal. It belongs to an individual or to several individuals; it has nothing to do with the church. The church is not responsible for the work. The church is local. It includes such things as the Lord's table, baptism, fellowship, Bible studies, prayers, and meetings. The work cannot control the administration and various activities of the church.

One brother wrote me to ask for my opinion concerning a certain personal work of his. I will say that it is not necessary to reply to him because this work is entirely personal. Whether he succeeds or fails, he has to bear the responsibility before God. It is unrelated to the church or to any other person. If the Gospel Book Room is the work of the four of us (myself, Lee, Cheng, and Ho) and if it is losing money badly, we cannot blame the church or the saints for not helping us. If you trust the Book Room and if you want to help by giving money to it, we will accept it. But as to how the money is spent, the Book Room does not need to report such matters to the ones who offered the money. This is our responsibility before the Lord. Only the few of us need to be informed of the internal affairs; others do not need to know about them. If those who give are worried, we would urge them not to give.

As an illustration, Brother Yu wants to set up a hospital specializing in ophthalmology. This is his burden before God, and it is something he negotiates with God. He cannot ask the church to get involved in it. If some brothers and sisters feel that this is a good work, they can render him some help. However, if the hospital makes some money, they cannot expect to collect dividends at year-end. George Müller's orphanages were his own personal work. Whether he made a fortune out of it or went broke because of it was entirely his own business.

Regarding the matter of a gospel van, it is not a bad idea. But the driver for the vehicle is salaried. In the future if a certain brother picks up the responsibility and has the burden to provide transportation, perhaps he should ask God for a vehicle. It would be all right for the brothers and sisters or the church to help him a little. But the church cannot buy a vehicle for him or have him return the vehicle when he quits. If he starts his own business and wants to quit, he has to quit before God. Suppose someone wants to work in a village and some doctors and nurses have a burden to help him. It is a personal work. However, all the fruit must go to the local church. You cannot claim them for yourself; otherwise, you will form a sect.

WORKERS AND MONEY

I always check with every new worker to see if he can clearly separate his own personal money from the money of the work. If a person is not clean in the matter of money, he is not qualified to participate in the Lord's work.

SECTION EIGHT

CONFERENCE IN SINGAPORE, AUGUST 1937

CHAPTER SEVENTY

FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION

Date: August 3, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Heb. 9:22; Rom. 3:25-26; 4:25

GOD'S GOAL

What is God's goal? God's goal is to have many sons (Heb. 2:10). We all know that a son is begotten rather than adopted. Your son should have your life. Only the ones we beget can be considered as our sons; the ones who are begotten through someone else's life are not our sons. God wants to have many sons. This means He must give us His life. God gave us His life so that we could become His many sons. This is what God has shown us in His Word. This is God's goal.

FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION BEING REMEDIAL

However, God's goal suffered a great setback. Even though God wanted man to have His life, man not only failed to receive it, but he also sinned and fell. This complicated God's work. In the beginning God created Adam so that Adam's life would be like His. If God had accomplished this one thing, He would have reached His goal. But Adam sinned and fell, and he could not receive God's life. As a consequence, God must solve the problem of sin before He can dispense life to man. God has to eliminate the hindering sins before He can give life to man. Now God's work involves more. In addition to achieving His goal of having many sons with His life, He has to make up for Adam's failure.

This is why the Bible shows us the matter of forgiveness and justification. These things make up for Adam's failure. We should not think that once man's sins are forgiven, God's goal has been accomplished. After man has been washed of his sins, he has only returned to the original Adamic state in the garden of Eden. Since Adam did not obtain the life of God at that time, God's purpose was still not fulfilled. We must realize that forgiveness and justification are remedial actions

that deal with the negative aspect of man's fall. We are ready to realize God's goal and His work only after these negative things have been dealt with.

Now let us look at the first step the Lord Jesus took in saving us. We have already seen that God has to first deal with the sins that man has committed. He has to remove the things that are hindering man before He can give man other things. If you want to come into a house when the door is shut, you must first open the door. Entering the house is the goal; opening the door is not the goal. But if the door is not opened, there is no way for one to enter in. If we want to be sons of God, we must first be forgiven of our sins. But this is not God's goal. This is only the removal of obstacles for the purpose of receiving God's life. Tonight we will consider the matters of forgiveness and justification on the negative side. Perhaps all of us here are saved and are very familiar with these matters already. But regardless of how familiar we may be with them, we still need a review.

**SINS BEING BEFORE GOD—
NOT BEING BASED ON THE FEELING
OF THE CONSCIENCE**

Please remember that in the Bible, man's sins refer to sins he has committed before God. They do not refer to the sins that one has in his own eyes. It is not a matter of feeling our sins or of our conscience condemning us of sins. The Bible says that sins are before God. What are sins? Sins are those which appear before God. David said, "Against You and You alone have I sinned,/And I have done what is evil in Your sight" (Psa. 51:4). He had not sinned against men. He had not sinned against Uriah or his wife. The One he had sinned against was God. It is very interesting that the only sins mentioned in the Scriptures are the sins before God. Most of us think that murder, arson, fornication, adultery, and many other evil things are sins. But God says that only the things He considers as sinful are sins. Regardless of whether they are clean or filthy, humble or proud, they are all sins. It is not a matter of what you say; it is a matter of what God considers to be sins.

Last month a new regulation came into effect in Shanghai: All cars must be parked on the left side of the road. If a car is parked on the right or any other place, there will be a five- dollar fine. I have a friend who has a shop on the right side of the road. If he parks his car on the left, it is inconvenient for him to get into the car when he leaves his shop because he has to make a big turn. He found it very troublesome to keep the new law. Therefore, he continued to park his car in front of his shop. Soon his license plate number was marked; the next day he

received a ticket, and the third day he was summoned to court. The judge ordered him to pay the five dollars as required by the law. He said, "My shop is on the right side. It is logical for me to park on the right because I am parking my car in front of my own door. Is it wrong to leave things in front of your own door?" The judge said, "You may think that you are most logical, and you see nothing wrong in what you have done. But it does not matter whether or not you see anything wrong. In my eyes you are wrong, and my word says that you are wrong. If you still insist that you are right and continue to leave your car there, I will have to fine you again." Likewise, all sins in the Bible are sins before God. He determines whether or not you have sinned; it is not up to you to say whether or not you have sinned.

Many people are not clear about this. They always say that if their conscience does not feel any sins, they have no sin. The question is not how the conscience feels but what God sees. Even if you had a hundred consciences, you could still be wrong. Hence, sin is something before God; it is not related to the conscience. The conscience comes into play only after God has judged something as sinful. When we know we have sinned in the eyes of God, our conscience becomes bothered. It was very convenient for my friend to park his car in front of his door. But the judge said that he was wrong, and he was fined five dollars. After this incident, will he be at peace when he parks his car in front of his shop again? I can assure you that if he does it again, as soon as he gets into his shop, he will ask, "Are the police outside?" This is because once his eyes are opened to the law, his conscience will begin to bother him. When we do not see God, we do not feel any sins. When God opens our eyes, we will see what God sees. Once we are enlightened, our heart is not at peace when we do the same thing again.

In order for God to save us, He must take away the sins we have committed before Him. Only after He has done this can He dispense His life into us. We must first deal with the sins that hinder us from receiving God's life before we can actually receive His life.

GOD'S FORGIVENESS BEING BASED ON RIGHTEOUSNESS

What is God's way of removing man's sins before Him? His way is through the blood of the Lord Jesus. He sent the Lord to the earth, who put on the human body, died on the cross, and shed His blood for the redemption of our sins before

God. Through the blood our sins before God are taken away, and our conscience is at peace (Heb. 9:14).

Once I went with a friend to Kiukiang for some business. We met a Moslem missionary on the way. My friend asked him what hope his faith afforded him. He said, "If a person is sorry for his sins, Allah in heaven (i.e., God) will forgive him, and he will go to heaven one day." My friend asked, "What will happen if a person sins again after repenting? After he repents, what happens to his sins?" The man could only respond, "God is not that strict. Once He sees that I have truly repented, He will consider the matter closed." My friend said to him, "Is your God so loose? My God is not that loose."

Repentance is one thing, and sin is another thing. Suppose I beat up Mr. Tang and suppose he has bruises all over his body. I may regret it later and feel guilty about beating him up, but his body will still be swollen from my beating. The fact will remain; it will not have gone away. Suppose you borrow a thousand dollars from someone and afterward regret it. Does this mean that the matter is over? No. Having regret is one thing, but your debt will still exist no matter how much regret you have. Likewise, God cannot forgive us by brushing aside our sins casually. God must punish the sins. After the sins have been punished, then they can be forgiven. Let me give you another illustration. Suppose someone was arrested by the governor, and suppose the governor sympathized with the person because that person had an eighty-year-old mother and a three-year-old child at home, and therefore decided to let him go. If the governor sympathizes with others in this way, he eventually will not be the governor, because the whole city will be full of robbers. If a person has violated the law, he should come under the verdict of the law. Even the governor has to submit to the law. Although he has the power to release you, it would make him unlawful to do so.

God wants to forgive our sins, but He has to maintain His righteousness. I have a friend whose father was the magistrate of a county for many years. In that county there were many bandits, and he used some of the public funds from the county to clean up the bandits. He spent three hundred thousand dollars of public funds. He did not take this money home. He only redirected the money from one place to another. Soon after, the government issued a warrant to arrest him, and he was going to be executed. Any civil servant who commits a fraud involving ten thousand dollars or more will be executed. Since my friend's father had taken so much more, he surely would be executed. He was actually the father of one of my co-workers. The co-worker was very anxious because her father was about to

die. Since I knew several officials in the government, I felt that I needed to help. I wrote several letters to his superior and followed up personally with eight or nine visits to the government office. I gave the officials the guarantee that the co-worker's father did not take any money home and that he had not spent it for his own personal use. But they said to me, "Mr. Nee, we know the situation very well. We also want to help, but we cannot. We could let him go; we have the authority to do so. But it would not be proper procedure if we released him like that. We have to think of a way which is procedurally proper before we can let him go. Only in this way will we not violate the law ourselves." God wants to forgive our sins. However, He cannot get Himself into trouble for forgiving us. God charges us to observe the law, so He should also observe the law. He said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). After Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God would have become a liar if He had told them that they did not need to die. We are sinners, and we may care very little about which method God uses to save us as long as we are saved. We think that He can forgive our sins or He can just let us go; we think that any method is sufficient. We are not concerned with righteousness or with the law, but God cannot be like this. In order for God to forgive our sins and save us, He must find a way that does not come into conflict with His nature, His righteousness, or His law. God cannot just let us go. This would make Him unrighteous. God cannot create a problem for Himself in the process of saving us.

A year ago there was a sister in Shanghai who was a head nurse at a hospital. She controlled all the drugs and medicine in the hospital. One day another sister came and talked to me about this sister. When I commented on how good she was, the other sister replied, "I do not think so. She is only an ordinary sister." I said, "But she loves the Lord, and she also bears a very good testimony in the hospital." She said, "Yes, but she does not know anything about righteousness. Two days ago my child was sick, and I did not have enough money to take him to the doctor. I brought the child to see this sister. She was very eager to give us all the help she could. She applied medicine on my child's wound and bandaged the wound carefully. I asked her how much I had to pay for the medicine. She would not take my money. Instead, she told me that the hospital had a great deal of drugs. She insisted on not taking my money. Eventually, I gave up and went home. Although she helped me, I still feel uneasy because the bandages and

supplies belonged to the hospital. She cannot steal things from the hospital just because she wants to help me."

Likewise, if God were loose in the way He saved us, we would say to ourselves, "Even though You have saved man, You have violated the law." If a policeman catches someone who has violated the law, he cannot let him go on the way to the police station. Once we sin, we need to be punished and judged. If God does not punish us, He will become unrighteous.

What then should we do? Suppose Mr. Tang is a rich man, and I borrow ten thousand dollars from him, agreeing to repay him in twenty years. After twenty years suppose I go to Mr. Tang, saying, "I am now very poor; I cannot repay the debt. Please have mercy on me. Please forgive my debt and return the contract to me." He will say, "Twenty years ago we made an agreement that you would repay the loan. This is our contract, and it was signed by both of us. Twenty years have passed. If you do not repay the loan, I can only resolve the matter legally." I may say, "Please be merciful to me because I cannot afford to pay. Please give me back the contract!" Brothers and sisters, would this be right? Please remember that my failure to repay the loan has breached the agreement. It would also be a breach of the agreement if he did not ask for the money. If the debt is not resolved according to the proper procedure, both the debtor and the loaner have violated the law. The only difference is that one has violated the law in a bad way, while the other has violated the law in a more noble way.

THE LORD JESUS SHEDDING HIS BLOOD TO REPAY OUR DEBT OF SIN

We have sinned. If God forgives our sins in a loose way, He will violate the law. How can God save us and at the same time not get into trouble Himself? It is not difficult to forgive sins, but it is not easy to have a forgiveness in a way that is righteous and lawful. What can God do? Let me use the earlier illustration. Mr. Tang is a rich man. Not only does he loan me ten thousand dollars, but he also has a great deal of cash. One day he comes to my house. At first he speaks very severely to me, saying, "The contract is definite, and it cannot be changed. You have to repay the money." After he says this, he whispers in my ear, "I also have another ten thousand dollars that I am going to give to you. The money you borrowed was bound by a contract, but this money is yours for free!" Then he leaves without a further word. The next morning I can bring the ten thousand dollars that he gave me and walk into his house with boldness and confidence,

saying, "Did I owe you this much?" He will say, "Yes." If I then give the money to him, he will give the contract note back to me.

This is the way God's law works. God says, "If you observe the law, you will live; otherwise, you will die." If we disobey the law, God cannot treat it lightly. We have to die. God gave us the law. Of course, He cannot disobey His own law. What can God do? God gave us His Son. But this is not the law; rather, it is apart from the law. God's love constrained Him to give us His only begotten Son to shed His blood for us to repay our debt of sin. We can come to God by His blood. This is how God saves us. Now everyone who is in Christ Jesus has his sins forgiven. God cannot seek repayment from us. Our sins were not removed in a light manner; they were judged. We have the proof that Christ Jesus has obtained the forgiveness of sins for us. When I give the money back to Mr. Tang, he will be unrighteous if he does not return the contract note to me. Our Lord has already paid the debt of our sins. Today we can come boldly and confidently before God. By the blood of Christ, God is obligated to save us because this salvation fully satisfies the righteous requirements of God's law. Please remember that the proof of Christ's forgiveness of our sins is God's righteousness (1 John 1:9).

Brothers and sisters, our sins are not forgiven freely. Because the price of redemption has been paid, our sins can now be forgiven. Please remember that we are cleansed by the Lord's blood (1 John 1:7). When we come before God, we can come boldly and without fear in our conscience because the Lord has paid the debt once for all. God can no longer go after the debt. From now on we can praise God instead.

Finally, I would like to tell you a story. It is my favorite story. In 1925 I went to speak at a girls' school in Nanking. One day I spoke to the students about God's righteousness, but they could not understand what I was speaking about. After I spoke for a long time, they still had dazed looks on their faces. By chance I spotted a vase on the podium. I asked the principal who was sitting next to me, "What would happen if one of your students broke the vase?" The principal said, "She would have to pay for it." Then I asked, "What if she did not have the money?" He said, "This is a rule of the school. If anyone breaks something, she must pay for it. It matters not whether she has money." I asked again, "Suppose she was your favorite student, the youngest and poorest, who simply could not pay. What would you do?" He said, "Then that would be a different story." How could he forgive her? If he did, I am afraid that there would not be one single

vase left in the school within a few days. What could he do? He said, "The only way would be for me to pay for it."

This is what God has done. God loves us, and this love is very "troublesome." We have sinned and cannot meet all the righteous requirements of God's law. Because God loves us, He has to meet His requirements. God gave His only begotten Son to us to fully pay our sin-debts. In this way the problem is settled. When I spoke this way, all those students understood what I was talking about. The next day was my last meeting with them. When I went in, I noticed that the vase was not there. I asked the principal, "What happened?" He said, "It was broken." I said, "Did you ask her to pay for it?" He said, "Certainly." I said, "Your words carry the aura of Mount Sinai!" God has said that our sins are forgiven by the Lord's blood. Suppose I commit a crime and am arrested by the police, and suppose the judge sentences me to five years in jail. If, after I am released, I encounter the same policeman who arrested me previously, he cannot arrest me again. Even if I mock him, he cannot arrest me again, because the crime has already been punished and the case has been settled. Thank God! In Christ all the debts of sins are repaid. This is God's righteous way to forgive our sins.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

(1)

Date: August 4, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Rom. 4:25; Heb. 9:22; Lev. 17:11; Exo. 12:13; Acts 17:31

THE TWO ASPECTS OF GOD'S WORK

We have already seen the purpose of God's work. God's original goal is for man to have His life. However, man fell and complicated God's work. Today God not only needs to give life to man, but He also must deal with the things that prevent Him from reaching His goal.

Therefore, God's work in us has two aspects: The first aspect remedies man's shortcomings, whereas the second aspect fulfills His goal. The remedial aspect deals with sins, which hinder man, whereas the fulfilling aspect dispenses God's life into man. In reading through the Bible, we can see that God's work has two aspects and that they are both accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. The Lord Jesus said that no sign or miracle would be given except the

sign of Jonah (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). The sign of Jonah points to death and resurrection. What is a miracle? A miracle is something that God alone can perform. Aside from death and resurrection, there is no other sign. God's work is altogether centered around death and resurrection. The death and resurrection of Christ have four aspects—two are negative, and two are positive. The two negative aspects of death and resurrection are for dealing with sins; the two positive aspects of death and resurrection are for dispensing God's life to man. These four aspects of death and resurrection enable us to reach God's goal. In this conference, we hope to see the relationship between these four aspects of death and resurrection. Tonight, for the sake of clarity, we will only touch these four aspects in a brief way. This will give us a clear picture as we consider each one in detail later.

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The death and resurrection of Christ have four aspects: First, the substituting death and resurrection; second, the identifying death and resurrection; third, the releasing death and resurrection; fourth, the denying death and resurrection, that is, the self-denying death and resurrection. In the Bible these four aspects of death and resurrection are distinct and different. If we are not clear concerning these four aspects of death and resurrection, our work will only produce confusion.

The substituting and identifying death and resurrection are for dealing with sins. The releasing and self-denying death and resurrection are for the fulfillment of God's purpose. We can consider Christ's death in these four aspects: substituting, identifying, releasing, and denying. In the future we also will look at resurrection in these four aspects. These four aspects of death and resurrection are my subject in this conference. Brothers and sisters, do not think that these four aspects of death and resurrection are too difficult to comprehend. If you consider them carefully, you will see that the first two aspects are for dealing with sins and the last two aspects are for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

In the Bible the first aspect of death is denoted by the blood, the second by crucifixion, the third by the flesh, and the fourth by the bearing of the cross. The Bible shows us the blood, the crucifixion, the flesh, and the bearing of the cross. These four things are the various aspects of the work of Christ.

THE BLOOD BEING FOR THE REMOVAL OF MAN'S SIN BEFORE GOD

Tonight let us first consider the blood and resurrection, that is, the substituting death and resurrection. Before we study the substituting death and resurrection, let us first understand our relationship with sins. We already know that sins are before God. In the Chinese language, the word *gu* means "guilt." If I sin, I am guilty before God. I have committed sins, and because I have sinned, I am a guilty man before God. How should God deal with this? In order for God to forgive sins, He must first judge them. When sins are judged, they can be removed. For example, if I commit a crime on the street and a policeman arrests me and brings me before a judge, the judge will not let me walk away. I must either pay the penalty or be imprisoned before he will let me go.

We have sinned, and God cannot let us go. He must judge the sins according to His righteousness. But if God judged us, we could not bear it because we could not satisfy God's righteous requirements. Because God loves us, however, He paid the debt that we should have paid. Originally, man had to pay the debt, but God paid the debt instead. Therefore, redemption is God taking our place in suffering judgment and in the payment of debts. Redemption is the result of God's love, and it is accomplished by the blood of Christ. What is the purpose of the blood of Christ? The blood has nothing to do with man; it accomplishes redemption before God and satisfies God's righteous requirements.

THE BLOOD CLEANSING THE CONSCIENCE RATHER THAN THE HEART

Many Christians have a wrong concept that the blood of the Lord is for cleansing the heart. The blood is referred to over four hundred times in the Old and New Testaments, yet the Bible never once says that the blood is for cleansing the heart. It is strange that Christians would say this when the Bible never speaks of this. One brother asked, "Doesn't Hebrews 9:14 speak of the blood of Christ cleansing our hearts?" In the original text this verse does not say anything about cleansing the heart; it only speaks of cleansing the conscience. In the Bible the blood of Christ is for cleansing our conscience, not for cleansing our heart, because our heart embodies the self, the real I. The real I came from Adam and is by nature unclean. It can never be cleansed no matter how much it is washed. The Bible calls this heart the stony heart (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). The stony heart cannot become a heart of flesh no matter how much it is washed. What can we do? God says that the stony heart must be replaced with a heart of flesh. Hence,

regeneration does not mean cleansing the old man, but doing away with the old man. One can never wash a statue of mud. The more we wash it, the dirtier it will become. The same is true with respect to our old man. This is why the Bible never speaks of the blood cleansing the heart; it only says that the blood cleanses the conscience.

The conscience gives us a feeling of peace or unrest. The heart is man's self, his real I. What does it mean for the Lord's blood to cleanse the conscience? It means that the blood has taken away our sins before God and that the punishment we deserved before God has been removed. Because of His blood, our sins are forgiven. When we believe in the Lord, we are assured that our sins have been forgiven. The Lord's blood has taken away our sins before God, and our conscience is at peace. Initially, the conscience found fault; the very thought of our sins and the coming judgment took away any peace in our conscience. But as soon as we realize that the Lord's blood has accomplished a vicarious redemption for us, our conscience is at peace immediately. Therefore, the Lord's blood washes away the guilt in the conscience. This is how the conscience is at peace. When the conscience is cleansed, it no longer has consciousness of sins. This is something entirely objective; it is a matter before God and has nothing to do with man. Man does not need the blood. The blood is something required by God; it is the righteous requirement of God. Exodus 12:13 says that when God sees the blood, He will pass over us. It is not man who sees the blood. It is God who sees the blood.

Brothers and sisters, please remember that the blood has nothing to do with man. The blood is for bearing the righteous judgment of God. If sin is not removed, God's purpose cannot be fulfilled. Man has sinned and unless God comes in to save, the sins cannot be passed over. The blood is altogether objective; it is on God's side. The only thing man cares about is peace in his conscience. The blood takes away man's record of sin; it removes man's sins before God. The work of the cross deals with the negative things on man's side. Therefore, whenever the Bible speaks of the blood, it refers to something on the Lord's side.

THE LORD'S BLOOD ALONE BEING DRINKABLE

When I was in the Philippines, a sister asked me, "At the time of the flood, man could not take blood. In the dispensation of the law, man could not take blood. In the New Testament time of the apostles, man still could not take blood. Why

was man not able to take blood during all three dispensations?" We know there are four dispensations in the Bible: The dispensation of the patriarchs and the dispensation of the law have passed, and the dispensation of the kingdom has not arrived. In the dispensation of the patriarchs, God charged Noah not to eat blood (Gen. 9:4). In the dispensation of the law, God also charged Moses not to eat blood (Lev. 17:10-12). When it comes to the dispensation of the apostles, God also forbade men to take blood (Acts 15:20). What is the reason for this? I asked her, "Do you take blood?" She replied, "The Bible says that we should not take it; therefore, I have never taken blood." I said, "Then next time I dare not break bread with you, because you have not yet been saved. You deserve to go to the lake of fire." She said, "Why? I have never taken blood." I said, "I have taken it." After I explained how I had taken "blood," she said, "In that case I have taken it as well!"

Brothers and sisters, the Bible says that we should not take blood. But Jesus stood up one day to announce that His blood was true drink (John 6:55). God's intention is for us to only take a certain kind of blood. In the entire universe there is only one kind of blood that we can take. This means that in the entire universe there is only one salvation and only one Savior. Only this blood can accomplish redemption before God. If we reject this blood, there will be no other sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:26). If we do not take this blood, there is no other blood we can take. This is the only Savior, and there is no other salvation under heaven or on earth (Acts 4:12). Praise God! We have all taken this blood. The Bible forbids the taking of other blood so that we would only take this blood. Please remember that whenever the Bible speaks of blood, it refers directly or indirectly to the righteous requirements of God. Only the blood of Jesus can accomplish redemption. Only His blood can bring about God's redemptive work. By the blood of Jesus, man's sins before God are taken away.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD BEING FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION

We know that the Father sent the Son to shed His blood for us. Through the shedding of blood, He could forgive us in a most righteous way. But how do we know that the blood of Jesus cleanses us of all sins? Two thousand years ago He bore our sins and died on the cross. How do we know that God is satisfied with the blood? How do we know that it can redeem us from our sins? How do we know that it is trustworthy? Suppose God said that it was not adequate, what would we do? Suppose God said that one Savior is not enough, and that there

needs to be two. Suppose He said that one shedding of the blood is not enough, and that it needs to be shed again. What would we do then? We know that the blood is God's demand; God's righteous judgment required the Lord to shed His blood. But how do we know that this judgment is adequate? How do we know that it has satisfied God's righteous requirements? Praise God that He not only caused Christ to die, but He also raised Him from the dead. Resurrection is God's response to the blood of Christ. When the blood was offered to God, God responded with resurrection. The blood is something man sends to God, whereas resurrection is something God sends to man after He has accepted the blood.

The Lord said, "If I be lifted up..." (John 12:32). For whom was the Lord lifted up? He was lifted up to God for our sins. Once God was satisfied with His death, He resurrected Him from the dead as a proof for all to believe (Acts 17:31). The Bible does not ask us to believe in the death of Christ; rather, it asks us to believe in His resurrection. If we read our Bibles a few more times, we will be clear about this. Tonight I am sweeping away trash with a broom in my hand. When we tell others to believe in the Lord, we often tell them to believe in the Lord's death and to be saved by His blood. But where in the Bible does it say to believe in the Lord's death? Where does it tell us to believe that the Lord has shed His blood to be the Savior of man? Many people are preaching doctrines that are not found in the Bible. Of course, we should not spread the word that Mr. Nee is telling people not to believe in the Lord's death and not to believe that the Lord's blood is for redemption. What I mean is that the Bible tells us to believe in the Lord. It does not tell us to believe in the Lord's death but in His resurrection (Rom. 10:9). When we believe in the Lord's resurrection, we are justified. The Bible charges us to believe in the Lord. It does not charge us to believe in His death, but in His resurrection.

Perhaps my words seem confusing to you, but please remember that the blood is a matter before God. It is up to God to say whether the blood is sufficient for redemption; we do not need to worry about it. God considered the blood to be sufficient for redemption; therefore, He raised Christ from the dead. Once we see that the Lord has been resurrected, we know that the Lord's blood is trustworthy, that it is able to take away our sins, and that we can be justified. Romans 4:25 shows the relationship of the Lord's death and resurrection to us: Jesus was delivered for our offenses, and He was resurrected for our justification.

THE LORD'S RESURRECTION BEING A PROOF THAT OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

Now let me ask, "Which came first—Jesus' being delivered or our offenses?" I believe all of us would say that Jesus was delivered because there were offenses. If this is the case, we should apply the same principle to the phrase "raised for our justification." This means that He was resurrected because we were justified. The Lord's resurrection proves that we are justified before God. The proof of forgiveness is the Lord's blood; the proof of justification is the Lord's resurrection.

Suppose I owe Mr. Tang a sum of money, and he takes me to court. The judge sentences me to three months in jail, but neither I nor my good friend Mr. Yang has any way to repay the debt. So my good friend volunteers to go to jail on my behalf. As soon as Mr. Yang goes into jail, I am free. But even though I have the freedom in my body, my heart is still not free, because I do not have the assurance that his substitutional imprisonment will solve the problem. Therefore, my heart has no peace while he is still in jail. When will my heart be free? I have to wait until Mr. Yang is released from jail and my case is closed. Only then will my heart be free. The release of Mr. Yang is a proof that my case has been concluded. If it were not concluded, the judge would not have let him go.

The instant the Lord died, the problem of our sins was resolved. But if the Lord had only died and remained in death without resurrecting, we would be worried because we would not know whether or not His blood had satisfied God's righteous requirements. The Bible says that the Lord's death is for God and that the Lord's resurrection is for us. God is concerned that if man only believed in the Lord's death, his heart would not be at peace. Therefore, God not only caused the Lord to die, He also resurrected the Lord from the dead. When we see His resurrection, we are assured that our sinful case has been concluded. Otherwise, why would God release Him? God resurrected Christ from the dead as a proof that He is satisfied with His judgment on sins. This proves that the Lord's blood has satisfied God's demands.

God accepts the death of Christ, and we accept the resurrection of Christ. God does not ask man to believe in Christ's death but in His resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is a proof that His death is sufficient. With His resurrection, we are justified. Romans 4:25 shows us that Jesus died because we have sinned and that He resurrected because we have been justified. In order to prove that

we are justified, Jesus was resurrected. Jesus went as a man to God and paid the debts. He has already presented the blood to God.

Suppose I owe Brother Tang some money and cannot repay him at the present time. What should I do? I can save some money here and there—several hundred dollars in Shanghai currency and some currency from Canton, Swatow, Amoy, Foochow, England, the United States, Vietnam, the Philippines, and other countries. After awhile, I may think that there is enough money for the payment and take the money to him. However, I have no idea whether or not the money can be used and whether it is enough to cover my debt. I can give him the money and say, "I think this is roughly what I owe you. Here, the money is yours." Who do you think will do the detailed calculations? Will it be the one who returns the money or the one who receives the money? Surely it will be the one who receives the money. He must determine whether the money he has received is valid currency and whether or not the total amount is enough. I do not need to worry about anything. I can just wait for him to sign and issue me a receipt, and then I can leave.

Whether or not the blood of Jesus is able or sufficient to accomplish redemption is not our concern. It is God's business, and God takes care of it Himself. The Lord's blood has redeemed us before God and paid our sin-debts. Consequently, God has issued a receipt to man—the Lord's resurrection. Acts 17:31 shows us that resurrection is God's declaration that the Lord's blood is sufficient to redeem us. This is why He gave us resurrection as a receipt. Resurrection is the proof that our sins have been forgiven.

Friends, what do we believe when we believe in the Lord? We believe that God has resurrected Him from the dead. If we have any doubt about our salvation, we should look at the proof of acceptance. Even if God tells us that we are not justified, we can show Him resurrection as the proof of our acceptance. We can boldly and confidently say to God, "If I have not been justified, why have You issued the proof?" We know that the Lord has resurrected, and if we believe in His resurrection, we are saved. These are the two substitutionary aspects of the Lord's death and resurrection. These two aspects are objective because no changes are required on our part. They deal with the sins we have before God. Have we been forgiven? Are we justified? These matters are God's business; they are the objective facts. May God bless us.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO
THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION
OF CHRIST
(2)

Date: August 5, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:17, 20; 6:6, 11

Last night we saw that there are four aspects to the death of Christ. First, there is the blood. Christ died for us so that we could escape death; this is for our redemption. Second, there is crucifixion, which deals with the old man. Third, there is the flesh. He was crucified so that man could receive life; through death He released life. Fourth, there is the bearing of the cross. This is for dealing with the self.

The blood is for forgiveness; crucifixion is for dealing with sin; the flesh is for life; and bearing the cross is for dealing with the self. These aspects of the death of Christ secure a complete salvation for man. Last night we saw how the blood accomplished redemption before God. Tonight we will see how crucifixion deals with sin, that is, how it deals with the indwelling sin. This touches our flesh.

SINS BEFORE GOD AND SIN WITHIN MAN

The Scriptures show us two kinds of sin. One is before God, and the other is in us. The first is plural in the original Greek, while the second is singular. The many sins that are before God are the sins we have committed; they can be counted item by item. The indwelling sin is a kind of power that urges man to sin and to perform many sinful things. We must differentiate between the sins that are before God and the sin that is within man. David said, "Against You and You alone have I sinned" (Psa. 51:4). These are sins before God. However, Paul referred to the "sin that dwells in me" (Rom. 7:20). This sin is another matter. Since there are two aspects of sin in the Scriptures, there must also be two aspects of salvation. The sins before God are dealt with by the blood, while the sin in us is dealt with by another method.

Let us consider the difference between the sins before God and the sin within man. Suppose a little child does not want to go to bed early. Every night he wants to play until ten o'clock before going to bed. At first his parents do not say much. But as his health continues to deteriorate, his parents decide that he must go to bed at eight o'clock. When eight o'clock comes, he can no longer be outside or play because his parents have given him an order. However, once he

enters his bedroom and closes the door, he continues to play until ten o'clock before going to bed. Before his parents gave the order, he was not sinful in their eyes if he did not go to bed on time. But after his parents gave the order, in their eyes he is guilty of the sin of disobedience if he does not go to sleep. This sin issues from the fact that in his heart he does not like to go to sleep. This may continue for a period of time. Every evening the child goes to his room at eight o'clock and plays until ten o'clock. At first his parents are not aware of this. But after awhile, they notice that he is still very tired. So after he goes into his room, the parents watch outside the room and discover that he is still not in bed. The next morning his parents rebuke him, and the child confesses his wrongdoing. His parents forgive him and ask him to go to bed on time again. His sin before his parents is forgiven. But has the heart of the little child changed? Is he going to bed early? After eight o'clock the little child will still sigh and moan in bed because he still does not like to go to sleep.

Please remember that the forgiveness of sins does not make you a good or sinless person. A proud person may know that pride is sin and may ask God for forgiveness. But forgiveness alone will not necessarily make him humble. This is like a person who habitually borrows money. He keeps on borrowing until he owes millions of dollars. A good friend of his may come along and offer to pay off all the debts. But after his debts are paid off, will he stop borrowing? When the impulse rises up, he will borrow just as before. Although the outward sins are forgiven, the inward sin still remains.

Temper is a common malady among Christians today. When a Christian loses his temper, he knows he is wrong and he readily asks God for forgiveness. But will he become patient just because God has forgiven him for his temper? He may be patient once, twice, or three times, but eventually he will not be able to contain his temper. Outward sins are forgiven through the Lord's blood, but the inward sin is still a problem. It still requires deliverance, and it still needs to be dealt with. If it is not dealt with, we will end up no better than the worldly people. Even though we are saved and regenerated, we will lose our temper just like an unbeliever. An unbeliever has anxiety, and we also will have anxiety. An unbeliever has pride, and we also will have pride. There will no difference between us and the rest of the world.

SIN WITHIN MAN BEING A LAW

What do we know about the sin that lies within man? Paul says that this inward sin is a law in our members (Rom. 7:23). What is a law? A law is something that acts the same way all the time. For example, a nation may establish a law saying that whoever kills another man will lose his own life. It does not matter who you are; as long as you kill someone, you will lose your life. If you kill someone this year, you will lose your life; if you kill someone next year, you will still lose your life. A law, once passed, will never change. Consider the law of gravity. When you drop something, it falls immediately to the ground. Regardless of whether you are in Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai, England, or America, the minute you drop something, it will fall to the ground. This is a law. Every phenomenon that acts the same way all the time and never changes is a law. According to Paul the sin that is within us is a law.

Sin is a law because we follow a pattern or a track when we sin. Whenever someone rebukes us, we feel unhappy. If we are rebuked in the morning, we feel unhappy; if we are rebuked in the evening, we feel unhappy; if we are rebuked today, we feel unhappy; and if we are rebuked tomorrow or the day after, we also will feel unhappy. Every day of the year, we feel the same way. When others praise us, we feel happy, and the happiness that we feel is the same every day of the year. Our reaction is the same no matter what day of the year it is. Our sins behave the same way. All of our sins are very specific. In the world there are Ph.D.'s in many fields. But I have never met a Ph.D. in committing sins. A person can only commit one or two kinds of sin; he cannot commit every kind of sin. This may sound strange to you, but one must realize that it is not easy to invent new sins. The same one or two sins always come back to us; they always bother and control us. We have become specialized in one or two sins. A stubborn person is stubborn in whatever he does. He will not give in at all. A proud person is always proud; a hot-tempered person always has his temper. Sin is a law in us. It controls us all the time and causes us to commit the same kind of sins over and over again. It is very rare for a person to commit one kind of sin today, another kind tomorrow, and yet another kind the day after.

Brothers and sisters, you are very familiar with at least one sin. If you are twenty years old, perhaps this sin has followed you for twenty years. If you are fifty years old, this sin may have followed you for fifty years. If you are not saved, this sin will follow you for the rest of your life. This is what Paul referred to as the "sin which is in my members." This sin cannot be taken away simply by forgiveness,

because after a sinful act is forgiven, the law of sin is still present. We can be saved, but after we are saved, sins may still follow us.

Paul also had a sin which followed him. Even after he had made up his mind not to sin, he continued to sin. Even though he rejected this sin, he could not be free from it. Later, he exclaimed, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). The words "body of this death" had a special connotation to the Romans. The Romans had a form of punishment in which a murderer was tied to a dead corpse, face against face, feet against feet, and legs against legs. When the murderer sat down, the corpse would also sit down with him. When he walked, the corpse would walk with him. The corpse would follow him wherever he went, and he would never be freed from the corpse. Paul said that his sin was like a dead corpse that tenaciously followed him, pursued him, and attached itself to his body. Brothers and sisters, have you seen that there is a kind of sin that is like a dead corpse which follows you all the time? It will not let you go. If you have not realized this, you will not be delivered. God wants to point out how evil the sin within you is. It is as repugnant and detestable as a dead corpse. There is no alternative other than getting it out of the way. Only then will you be rescued. Some people know that they need forgiveness through the blood when they sin. But they do not know that there is a sin within them, urging and forcing them to do many things against their will.

THE CROSS DEALING WITH THE SIN WITHIN MAN

In the Bible there are two different ways of dealing with sin: The sins before God are taken away by the blood, but the sin in the flesh must be dealt with by the work of the cross. The effect of the blood and the effect of the cross are entirely different. The blood is for God. It is outward and objective. The cross is for man. It is inward and subjective. The Bible only speaks of man being crucified with Christ; it does not speak of man shedding blood with Christ. Only Christ can deal with outward sins. Man cannot do this. However, in order to deal with inward sin, the old man has to be annulled by the power of the cross (Rom. 6:6). The old man is the old "I."

Romans 6:6 speaks of three things: the old man, the body of sin, that is, the body that belongs to sin, and sin itself. First, there is sin, then there is the old man, and finally there is the body. What does it mean for a person to no longer be a slave to sin? Sin is the lord and master, the one who has the power over man. In the original Greek, as well as in English translations, the word "sin" is singular in this verse. This is the inward sin, the motivating power that urges and compels us to

sin. Some have been serving this sin for decades, and they are still not free from it. Sometimes they resist a little, but they are always defeated. Even though sin is powerful, we cannot blame it for our acts of sins. The one to blame is our old man. The old man is the one that has descended from Adam's fall.

Brothers and sisters, what happens when we sin? When we are about to sin, something in us tells us that it is wrong to sin. However, a power within compels us and causes us to sin. Suppose someone says something that is not very nice about us. Something within urges us to argue with him. The thing that is urging us to commit a sin is the inward sin. We are Christians, and we know that it is wrong to argue with others, but if we do not argue, we feel unhappy. After we argue, we feel better because we have vented our anger. It seems as if a company director is giving us all kinds of instructions, while a company executive is ratifying all his instructions. The result is the actual carrying out of the sinful actions.

Sin is a power that induces us to sin. It is our old man that determines to sin because it likes to sin. One brother told me that if he tried to be patient, he would get an ulcer. Can you see how powerful the inward temptation is? Sin gives the suggestion, and the old man gives the consent. One does the persuading, and the other performs the actions. The body is merely the acting faculty. No sin can be carried out without the body. The body is like a puppet. When you tell it to sin, it sins. When you tell it to act, it acts. The Bible calls it the body of sin. All evil things come from the body. The eyes behold evil things, the mind thinks evil things, the hands perform evil things, and the legs walk on evil paths. All the evil things are done by the body. According to the Bible, sin proposes, the old man consents, and the body acts. When these three work together, man sins.

THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE FROM SIN BEING THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE OLD MAN

How can we be delivered? The holiness group says that once a person has uprooted sin, he will never sin again. The Chinese say that since all the evil things come from the evil body, we should practice asceticism to buffet the body so that it will see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, and act no evil. In this way the body can be fully brought under control. But this is useless. Many people who are well-behaved outwardly are corrupt in their heart.

Once two Christians lived together. One was an aunt, and the other was the niece. One day someone rebuked the aunt for no apparent reason. She smiled

and did nothing. The niece who was watching admired the aunt's reaction. After the person left, she said to her aunt, "He was scolding you, not me, but I was burning." Her aunt said, "Do you think that I was not burning? I was burning, but the burning was inside." Many think that as long as they have not committed any sin outwardly, they have overcome. How wrong this is!

God does not deal with the body of sin, nor does He crucify the root of sin. God's work is not carried on outwardly, but inwardly; He deals with the old man. The old man likes to be a slave to sin, so God crucified him. Sin entices, tempts, and coerces, while the old man likes being a slave to sin. As a result, it urges the body to sin. Paul said, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6). The one being crucified is the old man. The word "crucified" in the original Greek is a verb in the past tense. It is something that has been accomplished forever. It does not say that the old man intends to be crucified with the Lord, nor that the old man will be crucified with the Lord, but that the old man has been crucified with the Lord. When Christ was crucified, our old man was also included in this crucifixion. When Christ died, the old man died as well.

Suppose a sinner wants to be saved tonight and prays, "O God, please have mercy on me! May the Lord shed His blood for me to redeem me." We will certainly tell him that it is wrong to pray this way. He should not ask the Lord to shed His blood again, because the Lord's blood was shed for him long ago. All he has to do is ask God to give him faith. Once he believes, he is saved. He should not ask the Lord to shed His blood for him or to redeem him from his sins before God. Instead, he should believe that Christ's blood has already been shed. Once he believes, he is justified. The same is true of our dealing with the old man. We do not have to ask God to crucify our old man. The Word says that the old man was crucified on the cross long ago. Just as forgiveness and redemption are facts of the past, the crucifixion of the old man is also a fact of the past.

Through faith we see forgiveness as a work that is entirely of the Lord. In the same way, through faith we see the accomplishment of the crucifixion of the old man. By faith we believe that the old man has been crucified with the Lord. If we look in the Greek text, we will see that the crucifixion of the old man is something that happened in the past. It is not enough to know this; we must believe it. By faith we see that the old man has died, and we should praise God, saying, "Praise God, I am already dead."

THE OLD MAN CRUCIFIED, THE FLESH UNEMPLOYED

Once the old man is crucified, the body of sin is annulled. The word annulled in the original Greek means "unemployed." Originally, the job of the body of sin is to sin. The mouth slanders, and the mind engages itself in filthy thoughts. But when the old man dies, the mouth no longer slanders and the mind no longer wanders. In this way, the mouth and the mind become unemployed. Even though sin continues to urge us to sin, the old man is gone. The new life of the Lord within does not sin. It does not like to sin, and as a result, the body becomes unemployed.

There was a person in Tientsin who loved to play mahjong. His two hands were almost made for mahjong. But after he believed in the Lord, his two hands became unemployed. Paul said that once the old man within is crucified, the body outside becomes unemployed. The result is that one no longer sins and is no longer a slave to sin. Even though the sin within continues to tempt us and even though temptations continue, the old man is dead and no longer has any feeling or response. This is the work of the cross as revealed in the Scriptures.

The work of the cross and the work of the blood are completely different. The Lord's blood was shed by Him alone to remove our sins before God; we have no part in this work. But our crucifixion with Christ is different. Crucifixion is not for dealing with sins but for eliminating the old man. First John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." The Bible says that the blood of Christ washes us of our sins; it does not say that the blood washes away the old man, the self, or the flesh. These can only be dealt with by the cross (Gal. 2:20). These are not washed away by the blood; they are crucified. "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (5:24). The flesh cannot be washed away by the blood; there is no way to wash it away. The filth on the outside can be washed away by the blood, but the flesh and the old man cannot be washed away; they can only be crucified by the cross (6:14).

Every time the Bible speaks of crucifixion, it is in reference to the self and the old man, not to sins. Sins must be washed away by the blood; the old man must be dealt with by the cross. Brothers and sisters, do you see the full salvation? In China opium is forbidden. Even the sale of opium is illegal. Opium is a product of the opium factory. Our old man is like the opium factory which produces goods daily. One can eliminate the opium, but as soon as it is eliminated more goods will come out of the factory. Our outward sins are washed away by the precious blood. But after they are washed away, the old man can produce more sins. This is why, in addition to the blood dealing with the sins that have been committed,

there is a need for the cross to eliminate the old man that sins. It is not enough to eliminate the opium that is produced daily; one has to destroy the opium factory. Once the factory is destroyed, no opium will be produced. Once the cross eliminates the old man, we will no longer sin.

What is the meaning of the cross? When the Jews rejected the Lord, the crowd cried, "Crucify! Crucify!" (John 19:6). Then they said, "Take Him away!" (v. 15). The cross is a big taking away. The Jews took away the Lord by the cross. Today the Lord is taking away our old man by the cross. The blood is for redeeming us; the cross is for taking away the old man. After the old man is taken away, there is complete salvation. The blood is objective; it redeems us from the sins that are before God. The cross is subjective; it takes away the old man so that we can be released from sin.

Everything hinges on faith. Everything has been accomplished by God. We are already crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). Perhaps we do not have the faith; perhaps there is doubt in our heart that there is such a thing: "I am still I. I do not feel like I am crucified." The sins of a sinner are washed away by the blood of the Lord as soon as he believes. Do you remember the story of how you were saved? If you believe now, you will praise God in a similar way, saying, "Thank the Lord! My old man is dead!"

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

RECKONING

Date: August 6, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:11

RECKONING OURSELVES TO BE DEAD IN CHRIST

Last night we saw the fact concerning God crucifying our old man. What should we do now that the old man has been crucified? Romans 6:11 says, "So also you, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus." We should reckon ourselves to be dead in Christ, and also reckon ourselves to be resurrected in Christ. We should reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and living to God in Christ.

What does reckoning mean? We know that men often are not that accurate in the way they speak or write. No one can guarantee that what is recorded as history or in documentaries is one hundred percent accurate. The most that one can say is that the records are very close to the facts. The most accurate human

knowledge is mathematics. Mathematics is the only exact knowledge. Two plus two equals four. It is very precise. You cannot discount a little by saying that two plus two equals three, or inflate a little by saying that two plus two equals five. All the kindergartners and university students on the earth alike will say that two plus two equals four. You cannot say that two plus two equals five just because you have a doctorate degree. On this earth nothing is more precise than mathematics.

God wants us to reckon ourselves to be dead because we are truly dead. Four means four. If it is not four, we cannot say it is four. Whatever we have, we can only say what we have. We can reckon ourselves to be dead because we are actually dead. Suppose you are the bookkeeper of a business. If your accounting shows a loss of twenty thousand dollars, you have to report it as such. You cannot change the twenty-thousand-dollar loss into a twenty-thousand-dollar profit. The accounting book must match the income and loss of the business precisely. If God tells us to reckon ourselves to be dead, it means that we are truly dead. Only genuine death can be considered as death. If you have not died, you cannot reckon yourself to be dead.

The reckoning in the Bible is an act of faith. How do we reckon? We reckon by faith. We know that when the Lord was crucified, He took our old man along. The one who was without hope, the one who was full of sins and filth, was crucified on the cross of the Lord. Perhaps you still consider yourself to be alive and not dead. This means that you do not have faith.

FAITH IN GOD'S WORD, NOT IN ONE'S FEELINGS

I have always felt that the thing which is most lacking among believers today is faith. There is the knowledge of the truth, but the real experience often does not match the knowledge. Because of the lack of living faith (Heb. 4:2), there is always a gap between what one knows and what he experiences. If one has a living faith, everything will be reality to him. But if he does not have faith, the truth will remain the truth. He will remain separate from the truth, and the two will never be joined together. If we have genuine faith, all the truth will become reality to us. God says that we are dead in Christ. If we believe, we will find that we are truly dead.

Two years ago a Western missionary who had several children came to me, saying, "Mr. Nee, I do not know how I can make it. If one of my children cries, I can bear it. But if another one cries, I lose my patience. My patience can only endure one child, not two. If two of them cry at the same time, I lose my temper.

Mr. Nee, what can I do? I see that I am still alive; I am not dead at all. This is the reason for my failure. If I were truly dead, everything would be just fine." I smiled at her and said, "When has God ever said that you are dead in yourself? God has never said this. God has said that you are dead in Christ. If your eyes are upon yourself, you will always be very much alive. If you look at Christ, you will find that you are truly dead. Many people know the truth of crucifixion with Christ, but when they look at themselves, they find that they are not yet dead. God has never told us that we can look at ourselves and find ourselves dead simply by listening to a message. This is to live according to feeling, not according to faith. Faith is looking at Christ, not at ourselves. Faith sees ourselves in Christ, not in ourselves. As believers we should never look at ourselves. We should only consider ourselves in Christ."

We can only believe in the facts in Christ. We cannot believe in ourselves. Satan will continue to tempt us. He will tell us that we are alive. We find that we are still alive when we are in ourselves. Satan will cause us to look at ourselves. He will deceive us, saying, "God may say that you are dead, but you are not dead!" If we look at ourselves, we will see that we are not dead indeed. However, should we believe God's word or our feeling? God says that we are dead in Christ, but Satan says that we are not dead. When we look at ourselves, it may seem as if we are not dead. Should we believe God's word, or should we believe our own feelings? This is the difference between having and not having a living faith. We know that God says that we are dead. Should we believe God or should we believe our own feeling? Is God's word true or is our own experience true? We should believe God's word. This is faith. If we have a living faith, even if it seems that we are alive, we can say, "Even though I feel this way, I do not believe that I am alive. I do not believe my own feelings. I believe God's word. God says that I am dead, and I am dead." What is a living faith? It is laying hold of God's word. Only God's word is real. Our feeling and experience will always change. But I believe that all the works of God have been accomplished in Christ already.

Our problem today is that we only see that we are alive. When we only see that we are alive, we have let go of God's word. When our senses are filled with our own feelings, we have put aside God's word. We may feel that we are alive, but these feelings are contrary to God's word; therefore, we should not believe our feelings. Rather, we should only believe God's word. If we do this, we will find deliverance. Tens and thousands of people have heard this truth, but most of

them just know the truth; they do not have a living faith, and everything is vain for them.

Our mind cannot render us any help. When temptation comes, our mind wonders what we should do to act dead. But such endeavors only prove that we do not have any faith at all. It is not a matter of whether or not we can believe that we are dead in Christ. We do not have to die; we are dead already. We do not have to do anything; everything is done already. We do not have to inwardly resist temptation; we only need to believe God's word. If a business has gained some profit, the account will surely reflect a profit. God says that I am dead. What should I do? I should reckon myself to be dead. Many people think that once they die, everything will be settled. Actually they died long ago. Everything has been accomplished in Christ. There is no need for me to die, because I am already dead.

If I am not genuinely dead, how can God reckon me to be dead? If the business is losing money, how can the owner ask me to record a profit? Only when I am truly dead can God reckon me to be dead. God would not ask me to cheat in the accounting. Thank God! In Christ I am truly dead. Whether or not I experience it, my old man is dead already. Temptation will not add anything to the work of Christ. The work of Christ is fully accomplished, whether or not we have the experience. We only need to reckon ourselves to be dead. Where there is faith, there is the experience. Without faith there cannot be the real experience. Suppose temptation comes and you are stirred up within. At such times do you believe in the stirring within or do you believe in God's word? You will be tested immediately as to whether you believe in God or in your own feelings.

Believing God does not mean believing in evidence. Faith does not require evidence. Anything real does not need the proof of evidence. Those who are trustworthy have no need of evidence. If I lent money to the president, there would be no need for him to give me a guarantee. If I lent money to a taxi driver, I would require someone to guarantee the loan because the loan might not be repaid. God's word has no need of a guarantee. What He speaks stands because He is the great and most high God. He is real. What He speaks stands forever (Heb. 6:13). Our feelings will tell us that we are not dead and that we are still sinning. When this happens, what will we believe? Will we believe that we are dead in Christ or that we are still alive in our feelings? All those who believe that they are dead in Christ are blessed; all the problems will be resolved.

A living faith believes in God's word rather than in the doctrine. If you only know the doctrine, it will stay in your mind and not have any effect on you. You must believe God's word. You must reject everything that belongs to the self and believe that God has accomplished everything. When temptation comes, you may be stirred up because you realize that you are proud, unclean, anxious, unhappy, and jealous. What should you do? Those who have faith will praise God and say, "Although I cannot rejoice, I am still dead. Although I lose my temper, I am still dead. Although my feelings are contrary to God's word, I will still praise God. God has accomplished everything in Christ." If you believe that you are in Christ and that you are truly joined to Him, you will jump up and shout, "Praise God, I am dead!"

The difficulty today is that we only see "truths"; we do not see God's work. We only see the truth without seeing the real thing behind the truth. This is like studying geography without ever visiting the places. You must have revelation, and God's light must enlighten you before you will see your position in Christ. You do not see it now, and that is why you cannot believe. Suppose I go and hide in a room. You will believe that I am in the room because you saw me go in. Today you cannot see yourself as dead. On the contrary, you see that you have not died at all. Regardless of how you look at yourself, the old man is still alive. But thank God, although you cannot see it, you can believe it because you know that you are one with Him. When He died, you died with Him also. You cannot say that He is dead but you are still alive. Suppose I throw a soft-drink bottle into the sea. Wherever the bottle is, there is the drink within the bottle. You cannot say that the bottle is in the sea yet the drink in the bottle is at the YMCA or at Brother Wong's house. Where the bottle is, there also is the drink. God has put you into Christ. Since Christ has died, you have died also.

OF GOD ARE WE IN CHRIST

First Corinthians 1:30 says, "Of Him you are in Christ Jesus." In other words, you are in Christ because of God's work. I am not capable at all and cannot lift anything heavy, but I can put this bottle in the sea. God can put me into Christ with as much ease as I put the bottle in the sea. He is the almighty God who can do all things. In fact, it is a much easier task for Him to put me in Christ than for me to put the bottle in the sea. It is of God that we are in Christ. This is God's work. Therefore, when Christ died, we died.

Two years ago I held a conference in Kaifeng. Many of the attendants were officials from the government. When I spoke about being in Christ, one of them asked me, "How can I be in Christ? What does it mean that I died when Christ died? What does it mean that I live because Christ lives?" I said, "We can be in Christ because of God's work. God has put us in Christ. All the experiences of Christ have now become ours. All of God's work is in Christ, not in us. This is the difference between Christianity and all the other religions. All the other religions are concerned with works by man. Only Christianity is not concerned with works done by man. Everything about Christianity has to do with Christ. If we have a relationship with Christ, all of Christ's experiences and attainments will become ours. If we do not have a relationship with Christ, we will remain the same, and all that Christ has attained will have no impact on us."

Do you know how a light bulb emits light? When the bulb is connected with wire to the electricity in the power plant, there is light. The power of light is not from the light bulb but from the power plant. Whenever the bulb is joined to the source of electricity, it emits light. If you disconnect the bulb from the wire, nothing in the bulb will emit light. Electricity is generated in the power plant, not in the bulb. This is the way God works. God does not work in man apart from Christ. All that He does is through one person—Christ. Death is in Christ, and resurrection is also in Christ. Everything is accomplished in Christ. If you have a living faith to contact Christ, all of His work will take effect in you. Without a living faith, you will remain unchanged. It all has to do with faith. By faith you can have a relationship with Christ. All you have to do is believe in the things that God has accomplished in Christ.

If you read the Bible, you will see that God has no intention of changing you. God has never said that He will change you. That is why you are exactly the same as you were before. Suppose the light bulb says to itself, "I have been here for quite a while now, and light is still shining out from me. This must mean that there is light within me." If it turns around and looks at itself, it will not find any light. Whenever it detaches itself from the source of electricity, it will cease to shine. If you are not in contact with Christ all the time, you will remain the same as before. If you do not contact the Lord, you may be like one who studies geography but who has never been to the places that have been studied. This kind of studying does not count. You may know the doctrine of crucifixion with Christ, but the real crucifixion is another matter altogether. Without the enlightening of the Spirit, the doctrine will be dead and ineffectual.

Even though I gave the person in Kaifeng an answer, he still could not understand. Then I asked him, "From whom do the Chinese descend?" He said, "We are the descendants of Hwang-ti." I then asked him whether he remembered Hwang-ti's battle with Tzi-you. He said that he did. Then I asked, "What if Tzi-you had shot Hwang-ti instead of the other way around? Would we still be here?" He said, "If that had happened there would not have been any descendants of Hwang-ti." I said, "The death of Hwang-ti was his own business, and our living is our own business. How can you say that if Hwang-ti had died, we would not be here? All the descendants of Hwang-ti were in Hwang-ti. If Hwang-ti had died, all of his descendants would have died as well." Likewise, God has put us in Christ and joined us to Christ. Since Christ died, we have died. Since Christ lives, we also live. We cannot say that Christ was crucified on the cross but we remained alive. When we are in Christ, all the experiences of Christ become ours.

Brothers and sisters, it does not help to understand the doctrine in your mind. I hope that God will grant you light and revelation to see that you are one with Christ. When Christ died, you died. This is not merely a matter of understanding the doctrine of crucifixion; it is a matter of comprehending the reality and seeing that you have become one with Christ. It is a matter of seeing your position in Christ.

Today God's children pay much attention to the doctrine without seeing the very things contained in the doctrine. Let us not be content with hearing doctrines. We should confess that we are only beginners, and confess that we are still seeking the Spirit's enlightening concerning the inward reality. Those who believe find, and those who reckon obtain. When God says we have it, it means we have it. I hope that God will enlighten us to see that we are really in Christ.

BELIEVE AND PRAISE

Hudson Taylor was a very spiritual person in Christ. Once he wrote to his sister about his constant failure and inability to overcome. One cannot say that he did not know the truth. But the truth remained as truth only; he was not experientially related to it. He continued to seek before God with the hope that he could somehow be joined to the truth. Later, he wrote another letter to his sister saying that the scales had fallen from his eyes. He saw how he had sought to be in Christ, how he had exhausted all of his efforts to get into Him, but that no sooner was he "in" than he found himself "out" again. He could not find a way to be in Christ. But he thanked God now that he understood that he was in Christ. It is no longer a matter of getting in but a matter of remaining there, a matter of not

coming out again. The Lord said that He is the true vine and we are the branches (John 15:1, 5). We are in Him. He is in us and we are in Him. We do not need to struggle to become branches, because a branch is a branch by birth.

Suppose a person by the name of Tang Wen-tse prays earnestly on his knees, saying, "O God, please have mercy on me; give me the grace to be Tang Wen-tse." God will say, "What? Are you not Tang Wen-tse?" Suppose that a vase pleads to be a vase. Is this not ridiculous? But this is what we do. As long as we are branches, we do not have to do anything. What God says counts. We do not need to pray; we only need to praise. What is faith? Faith is believing that we are joined to Christ. Thank God that He has put us in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, you know that you are saved, and you have the assurance of it because you believe that the Lord has shed His blood to propitiate your sins. If you have trusted in Him, believed, and received Him, do you still need to plead for God to save you? (Perhaps some still do, but we know that these are the ones who do not believe or understand God's Word). God says that he who believes is saved. When we believe we know that we are saved. We can praise God spontaneously, saying, "I am saved!"

Our union with Christ is exactly the same way. There is no need for us to plead for God to join us to Christ. Those who belong to Christ are joined to Him already. We just need to believe that we are joined; there is no need to ask to be joined. If we believe that we are joined to Christ, we spontaneously will believe that the old man is dead and know that there is no need for the old man to die again. We only need to thank God. If we see that we are dead in Christ, we will see that sin no longer has any effect on us. When God says that we are dead, we are truly dead. We should never pray for God to put us to death, because God has accomplished everything already. Instead, we should say, "I will no longer try to do anything. I will only believe in what God has done. God says that I am dead, and I am dead."

May God open our eyes to see that all of His work has been accomplished. The blood has propitiated our sins, and the cross has crucified the old man. All of the work of remedying Adam's fall has been accomplished. We only have to believe. May God enlighten us to see that all is accomplished.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

A LIVING FAITH

Date: August 7, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:24

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

During the past few evenings we have seen four things concerning the death and resurrection of Christ. We have seen the blood, the flesh, the crucifixion, and the bearing of the cross. We have already seen the first two items in detail, concerning how Christ propitiated our sins with His blood and how He crucified the old man. The blood and the crucifixion are related to our being in Christ. The flesh and the bearing of the cross are related to Christ being in us. The work of Christ can be divided into two parts: we in Him and He in us. In John 15:4 the Lord said, "Abide in Me and I in you." The first two items of the work of Christ relate to "Abide in Me." The last two items relate to "I in you." The blood and the crucifixion relate to what we have obtained in Christ. The flesh and the bearing of the cross, which we will talk about, relate to what Christ will accomplish within us. In order for us to be in Christ, we must believe, and in order for Christ to be in us, we must obey. Believing and obeying are the two most important matters to a Christian.

Believing means believing that we are already in Christ and that we are already one with Him. All that He has is ours, and all of His experiences are our experiences. A living faith believes that all that Christ has is ours. However, Christ being in us requires not only faith but also obedience. We need to obey His leading. Sometimes He works in us by urging us and sometimes by stopping us. Sometimes when we remain still, He lets us know what we should do. Sometimes when we act by our flesh, He stops us inwardly and discourages us from doing what we should not do. The Lord is either urging or stopping us all the time from within. Believing and obeying mean that we are willing to go along with His urging and stopping. Very often we sense a voice that is not quite a voice, a feeling that is not quite a feeling; it is something that we cannot see, hear, or touch, yet something quite visible, audible, and touchable. This something within us tells us what we should or should not do. Often when we talk too much, this something within will stop us. Obedience means obeying this something. It is not just obeying the Scriptures but also obeying this inward leading. In order to live an overcoming life, one must know what faith and obedience are. If there is no

living faith or obedience, we will only have doctrines in our mind; there will be nothing in our spirit.

A Christian should receive all that is in Christ through faith and receive all that Christ is in us through obedience. The way of victory consists of two things—faith and obedience. The blood is related to faith rather than obedience because the blood is a work of Christ. Christ's work can only be obtained by faith, not by obedience. Similarly, the crucifixion of the old man is by faith, not by obedience. We must exercise our faith to believe that we are already in Christ.

**"BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED THEM,
AND YOU WILL HAVE THEM"**

Tonight let us consider the meaning of a living faith. Only after we know what a living faith is can we exercise this faith. How can we receive the riches of Christ? Everyone knows the word faith, but the faith of many people is not truly faith; their faith does not produce any effect on them. The Bible tells us that the old man is dead. Many people say that they believe this, but their faith is not effectual. They do not seem to have died at all. Let us look into the Scripture to find out what kind of faith is truly faith.

To many people, faith is merely a mental consent; it is not a genuine believing in the heart. In their mind they agree that something is good and logical. Brothers and sisters, never consider this as faith; this is merely a mental reckoning. After one hears a doctrine, he may appreciate its excellence and logic. But knowing a good doctrine does not mean that one has faith in the doctrine.

What is faith? Let us consider what the Lord said in Mark 11:24: "All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them." This is the only place in the entire Bible that tells us what faith is. We must understand what is being said in this verse before we can know what faith is. This is the only verse in the entire Bible that tells us the way to believe. "Believe that you have received them, and you will have them."

What is faith? Faith is believing that we have already received. It is not believing that we can receive, will receive, shall receive, or want to receive. Faith is believing that we have already received. Perhaps you do not realize how great a difference this makes. If a person believes he can receive, may receive, will receive, or wants to receive, his faith is not real. Only one kind of faith is real—living faith. Only one kind of faith can receive God's promise. Only one kind of faith secures the riches of Christ for us. It is the faith that believes that we have already received. The problem today is that many of God's children think that

they have faith and that they will receive. They do not realize, however, that even if they believe ten million times that way, they still will not receive. God does not consider this kind of believing as faith; He ignores it. Only one kind of faith is acceptable to God. The word "have" in Mark 11:24 is a very important word. If we believe that we have received something, we will have it. If we hope that we will receive it, whatever we have is not faith.

THE FAITH THAT SAVES

I will not explain this verse now even though I feel it would help you. Let me first tell you what it means to "believe that you have received them, and you will have them." Suppose there is a sinner and you preach the gospel to him. You tell him that he is a sinner and that Jesus Christ has accomplished the work of redemption for him. Then you try to find out whether he has believed. He tells you that he wants to believe, that he wants the Lord to forgive his sins, and that he wants to come to God through Christ. After you hear this, you may feel that your word has produced some result. You may be very delighted and ask him to pray for forgiveness of his sins. He may then pray, "O God, please forgive my sins. I am a sinner and I deserve to die. Thank You that You sent the Lord to die for me and shed His blood for me. Please forgive my sins through the Lord Jesus so that I can be a saved person." How would you feel about this kind of prayer? Is it not a very good prayer? A sinner who can pray like this should be qualified for salvation. This is indeed a model prayer. However, this cannot be farther from the truth. He is really saying that he believes that God will save him and that God will forgive his sins. How terrible this is! By saying that God will do this and God will do that, he is, in effect, pouring cold water all over you. He says, "I fully believe. I believe that God will save me. I believe that He will forgive my sins." Do you think this person is saved? Everyone knows that such a person is not saved, and none of his sins are forgiven. He only believes that he will be saved. He thinks that he fully believes. Actually, he does not have any faith at all. What is faith? It is saying, after one prays, "Thank God, my sins have all been forgiven by the Lord! Thank God, I am already saved!" Perhaps he will say this with tears in his eyes. This is faith. It is not believing that we will have something or we can have something, but that we already have it. It is not believing that our sins can be forgiven or will be forgiven, but believing that our sins are forgiven. This is the only faith spoken of in the Bible.

What is faith? Faith is not believing that we can have something or will have something. Real faith is believing that we already have it. It is not that we will have it, but that we already have it. How amazing! Many people are clear at the time of their salvation what faith is. They believe that they are already saved, not that they will be saved or forgiven. But when they hear the next step of the truth, they give up the faith that they had before. At the time they are saved, they believe that they have already received. But when it comes to the next step of the truth, they can only believe that they will receive. Friends, we have learned one lesson of faith already. Every saved person has learned one lesson of faith—they believe that they are already saved. But after they are saved, they have no faith concerning Christ's work in the other areas.

FREEDOM FROM SIN THROUGH FAITH

Let us now turn to the matter of deliverance from sins. Six years ago, a person attended our meetings in Shanghai. He was a board member of an independent church, and he was from a wealthy family. Ninety percent of the pastor's salary came from him. He was an important person in that church. He not only donated a great deal of money, but he was also very zealous. He often attended our Bible study meetings. One morning he came to my home. I had no sooner asked him how he was when I saw tears rolling from his eyes. I asked him what was bothering him, and he said, "Mr. Nee, you do not know me. You think I am a zealous person and that I love the Lord. You do not know what kind of person I really am. Although I am zealous and love the Lord, I have a sickness. I have a terrible temper. It only takes a very small thing to make me so angry that I smash anything that is in my way. Afterward, I realize that this was not proper Christian behavior, and I ask God to forgive me. But after I pray, I still get angry and smash things when my employees do something wrong again. I act the same way toward my family. I am a Christian, but I do not look like one. Although I confess my sins, I still lose my temper after my confession.

"I tell my employees that they have to 'work' on the Lord's Day. What I mean by 'working' on the Lord's Day is attending church services. But since I lose my temper at least once or twice a day, they do not believe in the Lord even though I have pleaded with them. When I preach to them, they talk behind my back, saying, 'He says he believes in God and that he is a Christian, but he is no better than anyone else. Why should we believe?' When I hear this, I am very saddened. If they perish in the future it will be because of me. I pray to God to forgive me. I have even resolved to not lose my temper anymore. But this has not

worked. My temper is getting worse. Last night the whole neighborhood could hear me. A very minor thing provoked me to throw around everything in the shop; even the glasses were broken. My financial loss is not that important. The most difficult thing for me to bear was when my employees said, 'How can a Christian behave in such a terrible way?'

"I know my sin. I cannot sleep all night. I do not want to be like this. Why does it keep coming back? Today is the Lord's Day, and it is my turn to give a message. I told myself that I have to behave today and not lose my temper. If I lose my temper, I will not be able to give my message. But in the morning my wife gave me a bowl of hot soup. She could stand the heat of the soup, but I could not. I was so angry that I threw the bowl at her and had a big argument with her. There is no way I can give a message today.

"I am a Christian, but my temper is like the devil. I really do not know what to do! This is why I came to you today. Mr. Nee, please think of a way to help me! No matter what it takes, you have to help me to get rid of this temper." He was very sad as he spoke, but as I was listening, I kept on laughing. He said, "Mr. Nee, you have to help me." He was crying as he was speaking. But the more he cried, the more I laughed. He said, "Mr. Nee, I am really miserable!" I said, "You are miserable, but I am very happy." He said, "I really do not know what to do." I said, "Nothing could be better." He said, "Mr. Nee, do not make fun of me." I said, "I am very happy because this is a sickness which only the Lord can heal. Some people can heal themselves, and some people can only be healed by others. The Lord can heal your sickness. He will surely heal you. Although you feel that you have a terrible temper, the Lord is mightier than your temper. A temper such as yours can be healed by the Lord in an instant." He said, "It is not so simple! You have never seen my temper. If you had seen it, you would know that it is not so easy." I said, "It would not matter even if it were ten times worse. The Lord is able to heal it."

I told him to read Romans 8:2 and then asked him, "What does God's Word say?" He said, "God says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." I asked, "Where does the Spirit free you from the law of sin and of death?" He said, "In Christ." I asked, "Are you in Christ?" He said, "Although I am bad, I must admit that I am still in Christ." I said, "What does the Bible say if you are in Christ? The Bible says that the Spirit has freed you in Christ from sins. What kind of sins is He freeing you from? From your temper. The Spirit has freed you in Christ from sins. Why are you still not

freed?" He said, "It is my hope that God will free me today." I then asked, "Does the Bible say that the Spirit will free you? No, God says that the Spirit has freed you in Christ. What does the word "has" mean? None of us say that we have taken our meal tomorrow; we only say that we have already taken our meals. The word "has" means that something is accomplished, that the things mentioned are accomplished facts."

I went on and said, "The Bible says that the Spirit has freed you in Christ from the law of sin and of death. Are you freed from your sins?" He said, "No, I am not." I said, "If you have not been freed, does that mean God's Word is not true? God says that in Christ you have been freed. Yet you say that you have not been freed. Is God's Word reliable or is your word reliable? Are you saying that God is a liar?" He said that he would never consider God's Word to be lies, and that he believed in all the Scriptures, but that honestly he had not been freed yet. I pointed at him and said, "God is not afraid of your temper. Even if your temper were ten times worse, God would not be afraid of it. But all the sins you have committed in all these years are not as serious as the one you have committed this morning. This morning you have committed the biggest sin—the sin of unbelief. No other sin is worse than the sin of unbelief. You have an evil heart of unbelief within. You must ask God to remove this evil heart of unbelief so that you can believe." Next I said, "I have to prepare myself because I have to give a message this morning. You should ask God to forgive your sin and to remove your evil heart of unbelief so that you can believe. I am going upstairs and will leave you in the sitting room. You should pray to the Lord here and ask Him to deliver you so that you can believe." Then I went upstairs. After half an hour, I came down and asked how he was doing. He said, "Mr. Nee, everything is fine! I am fully freed, and I am truly freed. Thank God!" Then he went home.

Brothers and sisters, the faith this person had was a living faith. No one could deal with his temper. But on that morning when he believed, his temper was gone. I did not see him for nearly two months after that. One day I met him on the tram. I asked him how things were going. He said, "Thank God, I am free." After six months, I saw him again and asked him how things were going. He said again, "Thank God, I am free." What is faith? It is not believing that God will work but that God has already worked. It is believing that we already have it. The phrase has already worked implies a fact that has been accomplished. Never change has already worked to will work. All we have to do is to thank God that He has freed all of us in Christ.

HEALING THROUGH FAITH

In 1929 I lived in a place about two hours away from the city of Foochow. At that time we had a sister who had a very serious eye disease. She went to Foochow to seek medical help. The doctor told her that her eye disease was very serious and that even if it was healed, she would need eyeglasses. The doctor prescribed a pair of glasses for her and gave her some treatments. One day she heard me speak on the truth concerning faith and she believed. She went to the Lord and said, "My eye disease is very serious. Every day I have to go to Foochow for treatment. Even if I am healed, I will still have to wear glasses for the rest of my life. It is time consuming as well as expensive." She asked God to heal her. After she prayed, she believed that God healed her eye disease, and that she had already been healed. She was full of joy and peace.

However, she remembered the appointment that she had already made with the doctor. What should she do since Christians should not break a promise? The glasses prescribed to her could not be resold to someone else. Therefore, she went to Foochow as scheduled. They gave her medicine for her eyes and the glasses. On the way home on the ferry, she thought to herself, "If I believe God's promise that He has healed my eyes, what am I going to do with this medicine and glasses?" Within her there was a desire to take these items home so that she could still use them in case her condition did not improve. However, another voice said, "Do you believe that God has already healed you? If you do, what is the use of these items?" Satan also began to talk to her: "You should not be too hasty in doing things. You have already spent so much money on these things." She knew that this speaking was from Satan, and she began to praise God. At the same time, she threw the drugs and eyeglasses into the river. Her heart became very joyous. She later testified that she had never been so happy in her whole life. A week later her eyesight was restored.

One day she stood up to give her testimony. A few days later I heard another story. Another brother who heard her testimony also had eye problems and was also treated by the same doctor. The doctor gave him medicine and also prescribed glasses for him. After he heard the sister's testimony, he went to Foochow. On his way back he said to himself, "If God can heal that sister, He can also heal me." He tried to believe in this way, and he threw the medicine and glasses into the river. When he came back, he told Brother Faithful Luk that surely God would heal him.

One day Brother Luk came to my place and told me that the brother had grown in faith and that he was not seeking treatment for his disease anymore. When I heard it I smiled coldly and said, "The eye disease of that sister was surely healed, but I guarantee that this brother will not get better." Brother Luk said, "How can that be?" I said, "Perhaps you should take him back to the doctor." Brother Luk said, "You are just too much." I said, "This brother does not have faith." He said, "How can you say that, when this brother threw away items worth twenty dollars? He has even stopped going to the doctor and discontinued the medicine. If this is not faith, what is it?" After four weeks, the eye disease of the brother had not improved; in fact, it deteriorated. He came to see me and asked why God had healed the sister but not him. I said, "You threw away your things too soon. You do not have faith." He said, "But I believe that God will surely heal me." He told me that God had called him to preach the gospel in Ku-Tien and that when he returned God would heal him. I said, "When you return, please come and see me." When he returned, he was not any better. From 1929 until now (1937), he has been wearing a pair of thick glasses and is still seeing the doctor because he did not have faith.

A LIVING FAITH TOWARD GOD'S WORD

A living faith is not one that believes that God will heal but one that believes that God has already healed. It is not believing that God will listen to prayer but believing that God has already answered prayer. Whenever we believe that God has already answered our prayer, we have received it. The brother believed that God would heal him from the very first day, but that kind of faith is useless. There is only one kind of faith in the Bible: "Believe that you have received them, and you will have them." The Bible does not say that we will receive at a later date. It is useless to believe that we can or will receive. Friends, will, can, and may are terrible words. A living faith has no use for these words. Words of faith are have and already; no other words should be used. Concerning our being in Christ, we have to realize that we overcome as soon as we believe, just as we were saved as soon as we believed. All of the riches of Christ, all of the heavenly blessings, the power of healing, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the power of the Spirit can be ours. Whenever we receive a word from the Lord and take hold of it, believing that it is ours, it is ours. Faith apart from God's word is not real faith; it is useless and ineffectual. We must have God's word before we can believe. Both Romans 8:2 and 6:6 are God's word. If we hold on to God's word and believe His word, we will receive! The Lord Jesus said, "All things that you pray and ask." How all-

inclusive is this word! Everything is included in this word. Believe and we will receive! All of God's promises, the rich promises and the accomplished facts, are ours when we believe. May God grant us the light to see what living faith is and what believing is—not a kind of false believing but a genuine believing. Once we have this kind of faith, our most difficult problems will be resolved immediately. This is the first lesson we have to learn. The blessing it brings is unlimited and sufficient for our whole lifetime. May God bless us!

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

THE REVELATION ON THE MOUNTAIN

Date: August 8, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Mark 9:1-8

THE REVELATION ON THE MOUNTAIN

UNVEILING THE TRUE IMAGE OF THE LORD

Brothers and sisters, we all know that revelation cannot be found on a plain. All revelation is found on the mountain. The Bible tells us that the mountain is the place where one draws near to God. If a man does not leave the plain and ascend to a higher place, he cannot draw near to God. We are all very familiar with these verses in Mark 9. But I wonder how many of us have truly seen the Lord's revelation of Himself. When the Lord was on the earth, He put on human flesh as a garment. He was first the Son of the living God, and then He became the Christ of God. What does this mean? As far as His person goes, He is the Son of God, and as far as His work goes, He is the Christ of God. The Son refers to His person, and the Christ refers to His work. Matthew 16:16 tells us that He is both the Son of God and the Christ of God. Actually, only the Son of God is qualified to be the Christ of God.

He was the Son of the living God with unmatched glory, position, and authority. Yet He put on the flesh and came to the earth "in disguise." Men did not recognize Him as the Son of God; they only recognized Him as the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon (Mark 6:3) and the cousin of John the Baptist. Men only saw His outward form; they did not recognize who He was within His flesh. They only knew Him as Jesus of Nazareth, and they criticized Him, saying, "Can anything good be from Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Unless a man receives revelation from the Holy Spirit, he cannot see the Lord.

Who is Christ? He is the Son of God in disguise. What is a disguise? It is putting on a form that is different from one's original form. The Word becoming flesh means that the Word put on a disguise. When the Word put on the flesh, He disguised Himself as flesh. Men only saw the disguise of the flesh; they did not realize that He was the Son of God. They could touch Him, hear Him, and see Him. They could be with Him in His preaching, eating, and casting out of demons. But they did not recognize Him as the Christ. Those who were more discerning, like the young man and Nicodemus, called Him Teacher, Rabbi (Matt. 19:16-20; John 3:1-2). They only knew that He had a relationship with God, but they did not know who He was. In Matthew 16:13 the Lord asked His disciples who men said that He was. They answered that some considered Him to be Elijah, while others considered Him to be Jeremiah. Why did men not consider Him to be Daniel or Zechariah? This is because no other prophet was as strong as Elijah; he condemned everything that was against God. He fought with the prophets of Baal and prevailed over them (1 Kings 18:18-40). Jeremiah was a very gentle person. He was so gentle that others called him the weeping prophet. When he was faced with a situation and could do nothing about it, he could only weep. He was not as strong as Elijah. Men said that the Lord Jesus was Elijah because He hated and condemned sin. They said that He was Jeremiah because He wept for the sinners, the poor, and Jerusalem. These ones knew Him a little, but they could only say that He was Elijah or Jeremiah. Men only saw His outward appearance; they only saw Jesus' relatives, dwellings, work, and character. They did not know the Lord Himself.

But one day the Lord brought Peter, James, and John up to the mountain, and He was transfigured before their eyes. His garments became as white as the light, and His face shined like the sun. The significance of the revelation on the mountain is that the Lord revealed His very own self to men. He was no longer wrapped in an outward shell and shrouded from men's knowledge. The Lord's transfiguration on the mountain did not change Him into something that He was not. Rather, He changed into what He was from the beginning. Through this He revealed to others the kind of person He is.

THE CHURCH BEING BUILT UPON THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE REVELATION OF CHRIST

The Bible tells us that the church is built upon the rock (Matt. 16:18). The Catholic Church considers the rock to be Peter. Actually, they are wrong,

because Peter means a little stone in the original language; he was not the rock. The Lord Jesus told Peter that he was a little stone and that He would build His church upon the rock. Have you seen this? The church is not built upon Peter, but upon the rock. What is the rock? When men know the Lord as Christ, as the Son of the living God, and when the person and work of Christ are revealed, we have the rock. In other words, the rock is the revealed Christ. The knowledge of the Lord as Christ and as the Son of the living God is something that is not revealed by men, but by the Father who is in the heavens (v. 17). The ones who have seen this revelation are taught by God.

All those who hear of the Lord through men and who know the things of the Lord only through men are not genuine Christians. Anything that is not built upon the rock is not the church. Today it is possible for everyone to receive revelation. Knowing Christ does not mean that we say what everyone else says about Him; we have to know Him personally. Many people study the Bible, but they do not know the Lord. They listen to messages, but the messages do not produce any effect on them. This proves that their efforts are the work of men, not the work of God. God's work is to reveal His Son. Every Christian has to receive revelation directly from the Lord. He has to know the kind of person that Christ is before he can believe in Him and receive Him with a living faith. When he believes and receives, he develops a direct relationship with God. Only those who know God and who know the Lord in this way can be considered as real Christians.

Brothers and sisters, we should not consider merely the outward appearance of the Lord and put Him in the same category as Elijah and Jeremiah. We should know the Lord from the deepest part of our being. Only then can we be considered as Christians. Everyone who has not been to the mountain of transfiguration does not know the Lord. The problem with believers today is that they are like the disciples in those days; they do not know the inward Christ. They only see His outward appearance. You may memorize the catechism, but you will still know nothing about Christ and the Bible; you merely know His outward appearance. None of these things will do you any good. Christ is inward, and only that which is living within counts. You have to pierce through His outward shell to recognize Him inwardly. Others may look at the outward appearance, but we know Him inwardly and are directly related to Him alone. This is what distinguishes a Christian from the rest of the world. Every Christian has to ascend to the mountain of transfiguration. Otherwise, he is nothing but a

Christian according to tradition and appearance, one who knows nothing about the inward Christ.

What does it mean to be a traditional and outward Christian? Suppose the son of a pastor reads the Bible every day and prays every evening. He is very familiar with the stories in the Bible. He attends church services every week, fifty-two weeks a year. He is well acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity and knows everything that you are talking about. Yet he is not saved. He knows nothing about Christ being his personal Savior. He is a Christian by tradition. He receives everything from men and not directly from God. He knows only the outward Christ. The knowledge of the inward Christ, however, is something entirely different. Suppose a man is a Christian. Through his influence, his son professes a Christian faith. This may go on for many years. But one day, thank God, the light of the Holy Spirit reaches the son. He touches Christ and has a direct relationship with the Lord. He knows Christ in a genuine way. This is the difference between an outward knowledge and an inward knowledge of Christ. Many Christians only see a disguised Christ; they do not see His true image. But once they receive revelation and see His true image, they will know Him in a real way.

Brothers and sisters, what is your knowledge of Christ? If you know Him in the depth of your being, you will have the experience of being crucified, resurrected, and victorious together with Christ; these things will be possible in you. Christ will no longer be abstract; He will be real in you. Let me say honestly that if a person has not received the revelation of Christ the Son of God, he is not a Christian. He has nothing to do with the rock, and he is a person apart from the rock.

The Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "But you, who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). We should have a Christ that we know through revelation, and we should believe and receive Him with a living faith. When this happens, the kingdom of God will come upon us. If a man is not born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Those who have seen the revelation on the mountain enter the kingdom of God, and those who have not received such a revelation are not yet regenerated; they have no part in the kingdom of God.

Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Everything is in the Spirit. If a man has not received the revelation from the Spirit to know Christ, he will know nothing about spiritual things. If you try to explain something spiritual to him, he will have a headache and not get anything out of it. He has not seen God. He has

not seen the Lord, and he does not know anything about the kingdom of God. He may think that he knows a great deal, but what he knows are merely outward things. The Lord is only an abstract Christ to him. The problem today is that the Christ known by God's children is not very real. One does not know Christ through pastors or teachers; he has to receive direct light and revelation from the Lord. This is the first item in Christianity.

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS BEING OVER

When we ascend to the mountain, to a higher place, we see Christ. Here we have God's revelation. At the time the Lord was transfigured on the mountain, He manifested Himself. On the mountain the disciples beheld the true image of the Lord. They also saw Him talking to Moses and Elijah. Peter was a talkative person. There are many descendants of Peter today. The church is full of men who are as addicted to talking as Peter was! They talk, but they do not realize what they have said. As usual, Peter was talkative on that day; he could not keep quiet. In this wonderful revelation, the true image of Christ Jesus was revealed. The disciples knew the Son of God, and they saw the most important figures in the Jewish religion. It was a great opportunity for them to express something. Peter asked whether the Lord wanted him to set up three tents, "one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Luke 9:33). In Peter's mind the Lord Jesus was the greatest, and the first place should go to Him. But after Him there were still a number two and a number three, who also deserved tents. But the Bible says that Peter did not know what he was saying (v. 33).

Moses represents the law, and Elijah represents the prophets. The two represent the law and the prophets. In Peter's knowledge Christ was the center, but there also was a place for the law and the prophets. But God could not tolerate such a thought. If this thought remained, the Christian faith would have been over. As a consequence, God immediately unveiled His will from heaven. God surrounded them with a bright cloud and took away Moses and Elijah. When the disciples lifted up their heads, they saw Jesus only. At the same time, they heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My Son, the Beloved. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7). God was telling them that it was not their time to speak, and that they should be quiet and listen. They should not have any say in anything. They should only listen to the Beloved Son.

Being a Christian has to do with knowing Christ in an inward way; it has nothing to do with the outward law and prophets. The law is the outward ordinances. It is

written on the tablets of stone, and it tells us what we should and should not do. The law gives us an outward standard of right and wrong; it tells us what is and is not correct in an outward sense. Many people do not know the inward leading of the Spirit, and they have never learned to obey the leading of the Spirit. They say what others say and deny what others deny. When the Bible says that such and such is right, they repeat it. But they have no inward revelation and have never learned to obey the leading of the Spirit.

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

WITH THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE

A brother once asked me, "I want to do a certain thing. What is the biblical teaching concerning it?" I said, "In the name of the Lord, let me ask you a question. If you do not have the teaching of the Bible, does this mean that you do not know God's will at all?" In the Old Testament age men were given the law. They knew only these few items of the law, and the standard of right and wrong was according to these items. In the Old Testament age there were ordinances; there was not the leading of the Holy Spirit. But the New Testament age is different. In the New Testament age the Spirit lives within men and leads them to obey God's will. In contrast to the Old Testament age, the Spirit is living, while the law is dead. It is very dangerous for a man to know only ordinances without knowing anything about the leading of the Spirit! In the Old Testament age there was only the Holy Bible; there was not the Holy Spirit in an inward way. But in the New Testament age the Holy Spirit is within man. He is here in addition to the Bible. He tells us what is right and what is wrong.

If a man only considers the teaching of the Bible without considering the Holy Spirit, he is living in the Old Testament age, not in the New Testament age. We do not despise the Bible. I am only saying that as precious as the Bible is, it cannot be compared with the indwelling Spirit. Brothers and sisters, if we agree that the New Testament age is better than the Old Testament age, we have to agree also that the Holy Spirit is better than the Holy Bible. Some Christians think that being free from the Ten Commandments means being free from the law. Little do they realize that the law is a principle. When they are under the law, they can have no confidence to do anything apart from the law. The law tells them what is right and what is wrong; other than what has been told to them, they know nothing. The Bible is a wonderful book. But even the Bible cannot be a substitute for the Spirit; it cannot be the standard of our walk or the yardstick of

right and wrong. The Bible is important, but we must have the leading of the Holy Spirit in addition to the truth of the Bible.

Once a brother who is in fellowship with us was talking to another brother in a denomination concerning the truth of baptism. Our brother was behaving very much like a member of the Baptist Church because he would not talk about anything other than baptism by immersion. The minute he opened his mouth, he would persuade others to believe in baptism by immersion. When he spoke to the brother in the denomination about baptism, the brother in the denomination was convinced by his speaking about baptism by immersion. He came and asked me to baptize him. I asked him why he wanted to be baptized, and he answered that the Bible says that a person should be immersed, not sprinkled. I asked him whether he had prayed about it or whether the Spirit had led him to do it, and he answered, "As long as the Bible says it, I am going to be baptized." I said, "Please go home. I will not baptize you, because you do not have the revelation." This person only had the law.

Brothers and sisters, our work today is not to help people obey the Bible; rather, it is to obey the biblical truth through the Holy Spirit. I am not despising the Bible. I am only saying that we should have the Bible plus the Spirit. Having the Bible without the Spirit is the same as being in the law. Today we do not need the law; we need the living Christ living within us. We have to follow His leading. The Bible is not a law. Many people have made the Bible a law. Some read the Bible and receive revelation and guidance through the Spirit, and they have life. But some have taken the Bible merely as an outward law, a kind of standard of right and wrong. This is a matter of life and death, the difference between Judaism and Christianity. If we are not clear about this, we cannot expect to see a great revival or any great work here in Southeast Asia.

There was a doctor in Tsinan, Shantung province, who had a maid servant. The maid servant visited Shanghai once and was saved. When she saw the sisters covering their heads in the meetings, she asked what it meant. Someone told her that they were obeying the teaching of the Bible. When she heard this, she also covered her head. After she returned home, her mistress asked why she was covering her head. She did not know what to say, and so she answered, "I cover my head because the Bible says so. Others are covering their heads, so I cover my head as well. I do not know why I should do this." When I was at their house, her mistress told me about the head covering. I asked that she be sent to me right away. When she came, I said, "On behalf of the church in Shanghai (I was a

brother in the church in Shanghai at that time), I forbid you to cover your head again, because we do not have head-covering sisters like you among us. Your head covering is a law."

We must be clear that if a person pays attention to outward ordinances and teachings, he can turn the spiritual Bible into a dead book of law. On that day God told Peter to hear His beloved Son and to forget about the law and the prophets. His word for Peter is for the whole church. Thank God that Christ is living not only in heaven but also within us. We should listen not to the law but to the living guidance of the Christ within.

The law is dead ordinances, while the prophets are living persons. The law cannot spell out the standard of right and wrong for every move we make. Should I have rice or porridge for dinner tonight? How should the meetings of the church in Singapore be conducted? Answers to such questions cannot be found in the law. The ordinances of the law are not complete. All laws are good, but they do not cover everything. This is why there were not only dead laws in the Old Testament but also living prophets. What one could not find in the law, he inquired of God through the prophets. The prophets fulfilled what was lacking in the law. One could not go to God directly; he had to seek counsel through the prophets. The prophets conveyed God's word.

Being freed from the Ten Commandments alone is not freedom from the law. The law includes all the other outward ordinances. Being according to the prophets means to walk according to what other men say. Failing to understand God's will by oneself and seeking counsel from others is walking according to the principle of the prophets. Thank God, not only does the law have to go, but the prophets also have to go. Moses must go, and Elijah must also go. Both the law and the prophets are over. The work of the prophets is to prophesy, preach, and inquire of God's will on behalf of others. But the prophets are gone, and we cannot depend on any men to inquire of God for us any longer.

EVERYONE KNOWING GOD DIRECTLY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AGE

What is the New Testament age? It is when "the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah,/As the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). You can go to God and inquire of Him directly; there is no need for your brothers to tell you anything. You can know God's will yourself, and there is no need to turn to other men to know Him. In other words, there is no need to have your neighbor be your

prophet. Everyone can know God's will directly. I receive countless letters every year asking me questions and requesting that I pray for them. They want to know whether God wants them to do this or that. They are saying, in effect, "Watchman Nee is the prophet. We no longer have to inquire of God. We can just ask Watchman Nee to do it for us." Brothers and sisters, this is the principle of the Old Testament. This is the principle of a prophet.

Does this then mean that we do not have to listen to our brothers? No. In the Old Testament age, men listened only to their brothers. In the New Testament age, Christians should listen to their brothers, but they also have to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. I am not saying that we should ignore our brothers or the Bible. I am saying that we must have the leading of the Holy Spirit in addition to these things. Thank God that Moses and Elijah are gone. There is no need for others to tell us what is God's will, for we know within. The Holy Spirit within us will tell us what we should or should not do. If we do not have the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can wait for the prophets to give us the word. What is a prophet? A prophet is a person who finds out God's will for us.

There was a time when I did not understand why Paul had to go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 10-14). Many people discouraged him, yet he still went. Why did he have to go? Now I know. Paul had to go because he had to preserve the New Testament principle. In the New Testament age, no one should be another person's prophet! It is true that all the brothers and sisters have the Holy Spirit and can prophesy through His inspiration. But no one needed to tell Paul what to do. Paul should have known in himself whether or not he should go. Those people did one thing more than was necessary—they became Paul's prophets. This is why Paul ignored their word and went according to his plan. Had Paul followed their word and turned back and had such a history been recorded in the Bible, we would have a terrible case on our hands. Paul was willing to sacrifice himself to maintain the principle of the New Testament. This shows us that today the law and the prophets are over.

In our faith there is only the Son of God. We cannot have the law and the prophets in addition to Him. The Lord within us tells us what we should and should not do. Many times when others ask me questions, I say, "Just ask yourself." Every saved person should understand God's will by himself. Perhaps our confused thoughts and feelings and our complicated mind have shut us off from the voice of the Lord and the leading of the Spirit. If our heart is pure we will see God. Those with a pure heart see God (Matt. 5:8). But whatever our

condition may be, we must always remember that a Christian is one who listens to Christ. We can only receive revelation directly from God. We cannot have the law or the prophets in addition to this revelation. May the Lord guide us to learn this lesson. We must first receive revelation from the Holy Spirit before we can understand God's will. Only then will we have a living testament and not a dead testament.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

GOD'S WAY OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSE

(1)

Date: August 6, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:21; 3:21; Luke 12:49-50; John 12:24; 20:17; 1 Cor. 12:12

EARNESTLY SEEKING AFTER THE RICHES IN CHRIST

In the past few days we have seen our position in Christ. In order to receive the riches in Christ, a person has to believe. But only those who are hungry can believe and receive. Please remember that being hungry does not mean being dissatisfied. Many people are dissatisfied with their life. They think that this is being hungry. Today there are many other people who are not satisfied with their life. They realize that they are not living in a proper way. But they do not have any hunger at all; they do not have a seeking heart before the Lord on the positive side. Being dissatisfied is something negative; being hungry is something positive. Dissatisfaction is merely a reaction toward one's present condition, whereas hunger is one's aspiration and pursuit for what is ahead. Hence, only those who are truly seeking can be considered as the hungry ones.

I must warn you that those who are not satisfied with their present living can only understand the doctrines of the Bible; they cannot have any spiritual experience. If you do not experience anything, you cannot blame anyone else; you are the one who is wrong. Those who are not hungry before God can only understand doctrines; they cannot experience the reality that is behind the doctrines. I must say emphatically that a person who is not seeking will leave here in the same condition in which he came. The truth has no effect on such a person. May the Lord grant us mercy to have a living faith through a seeking heart so that we can

be those who truly live in Christ and inherit all the promises that are prepared for us in Christ.

THE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

Today let us continue to consider the four aspects of the work of Christ. First, there is the blood from His death. The blood takes away our sins before God. This is something objective. Christ died for us and shed His blood for us. As a result, we receive life before God. Second, man sins because the old man lives in him. The old man is attracted to sin, and then the flesh performs acts of sin. In order to save us to the uttermost, God has to remove our old man. Hence, the Bible shows us the matter of crucifixion. Crucifixion removes the old man. After the old man is removed, a new man lives within. The Bible tells us that if we are conformed to Him in the likeness of His death, we will also be conformed to Christ in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5). If we die with Christ, we shall also be raised together with Christ.

Christ died and shed His blood. On the third day He rose as proof of the accomplishment of His redemption. We have the crucifixion and the resurrection. Crucifixion removes the old man; this is something on the negative side. On the positive side, we have the new man living within. The blood and crucifixion deal with Adam's fall on the negative side. If Adam had not fallen, Christ would not have needed to shed His blood, and there would not have been the need to crucify the old man. However, Christ had to die on the cross because Adam fell. We have seen the two negative aspects during the previous few evenings. Now let us go on to see how God accomplishes His purpose.

THE REDEMPTIVE AND NON-REDEMPTIVE ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH

Before man sinned, God had a goal and a plan. He wanted man to receive His life—His uncreated life—and become His sons. This is why He created man. After man was created, God placed him in front of the tree of life, implicitly indicating that man should eat of the tree of life, that is, man should receive God's uncreated life into him. Man did have life, but the life he had was only a created life. God is uncreated, and His intention is that the created man would receive His own uncreated life and be uplifted from the level of man to one that is before God. This does not mean that man would become God. It only means that man would share the life of God and live by God. This is God's original intention.

But Adam fell and failed God's purpose. God then sent His own Son to die for us on the cross. In this way all our sins are dealt with through the blood and the cross of Christ.

The Lord also shows us in His Word that there is another aspect to the death of His Son. This is the non-redemptive aspect of His death. We all know that His death is for redemption. But there is another aspect—a non-redemptive aspect to His death, which is spoken of quite a number of times in the Bible. One great mistake that men make today is in thinking that the cross of Christ was solely for the accomplishment of redemption. But the Bible shows us that there is another aspect to the work of the cross. Through the cross Christ released His life and dispensed it into men.

In Genesis 3:21 we see a type of the death of Christ. God killed a lamb and gave its skin to Adam for a covering. But in Genesis 2:21 there is another type of the death of Christ—Adam's sleep. Regarding Adam's sleep, the Bible does not speak of the shedding of blood. It only says that God took a rib from him and made Eve.

The killing of the lamb and the covering of Adam's body with the skin refer to the redemptive aspect of the death of Christ. After He accomplished the work of redemption, He clothed us with the garment of righteousness. We were naked before God, but the Lord died for us and put a garment of righteousness on us. All those who are in Christ and who have come to God are accepted by Him. They are accepted by Him in the same way that Christ is accepted. God receives all those who come to Him through putting on the skin of the Lamb. God receives them in the same way that He received the lamb. Today every saved person comes to God by trusting in the work of the Lord's redemption and by putting on the Lord as their righteousness.

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took a rib from him, and made Eve out of it. Adam's sleep is a type of the non-redemptive aspect of the death of Christ. Out of His death God took out something to build up the church. God took life out of Christ and gave this life to man, a life which is the same as God's, divine and uncreated.

We know from Genesis that God created many animals, and He created Adam. The animals are lower than man. When God wanted to prepare a mate for Adam, He did not look among the lower animals. Rather, He took a rib out from Adam and made Eve, whose life, like Adam's, was different from the lower forms of life. Similarly, man's life is on one level, while Christ's life is on a higher level. God

took the life of Christ and created us in a fresh way. In this way we received the life of Christ to fulfill God's goal. This is the church, which is built up with all the saved ones. The life of the church is the same as the life of Christ. The life which we received at the time of salvation and regeneration is higher than any other form of life. Originally, our life was fleshly and earthly. But God has given Christ's life to us. By this life we are built up as the church.

Adam's sleep in Genesis 2:21 is not a type of the redemptive death of Christ, because at that time man had not yet sinned. Without sin there was no need of redemption. The death of the lamb in Genesis 3:21 is a type of the redemptive death of Christ. The covering of skin became necessary after man fell. Without sin there was no need and use for the skin. The skin signifies the coming redemptive death of Christ; it is entirely different from the sleep in Genesis 2:21. Adam's sleep in Genesis 2:21 typifies another aspect of the death of Christ. It is not an ordinary sleep. It is a sleep that has nothing to do with death. It is the kind of sleep that a saved person goes through when he departs from this world. We no longer have to go through death, which comes as a result of sin. The Lord said that those who believe in Him will have eternal life and will not see death (John 6:47). The death of a Christian is a sleep and has nothing to do with death or sin.

If we want to understand the Bible and trace its outlines, we have to differentiate between the redemptive aspect and the non-redemptive aspect of the death of Christ. The non-redemptive aspect on the positive side brings forth Christians, who are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. They are a new man created with His life. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He spoke of the non-redemptive aspect of His death, which would give life to men and enable them to overcome the old creation to become the new creation. Salvation brings the forgiveness of sins. When a man is forgiven, he is like a criminal who is pardoned while on death row. This takes care of the negative need, and Christ has accomplished this for us. But there is the non-redemptive aspect of His death, in which He dispenses His life into us and through which we inherit a life we did not previously possess. The death of Christ delivers us from death on the negative side and dispenses life to us on the positive side. These two aspects are absolutely different.

THE LORD CASTING FIRE ON THE EARTH

Verses 49 and 50 of Luke 12 are two of the most precious verses in the Bible. They are also among the hardest verses to understand. If we were to nominate four or five of the most puzzling passages in the New Testament, these two verses would be among them. In verse 49 the Lord said, "I have come to cast fire on the earth." The Lord told His listeners that He came to the earth with a specific purpose—to cast fire on the earth. What is this fire? This is not a fire that is produced by ordinary matches, but a fire that is apart from the earth. For example, I may throw my hymnbook on the chair. This means that the hymnbook was not on the chair but was thrown onto it from elsewhere. The Lord said that He came to cast fire on the earth. Where did this fire come from? It came from heaven. What is this fire? The book of Hebrews tells us that our God is a consuming fire (12:29). In many instances in the Bible, fire signifies God's life. His life is righteous and holy, and it is like a fire.

The Lord Jesus said that His purpose for coming to the earth was to cast God's life on it and to give God's life to man. At the time He spoke such a word, man did not have His life. This is why He said, "How I wish that it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49). This means that He wished that man would receive His life that very day. Yet man did not receive it, because "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" (v. 50). The Lord told us that the fire was not kindled because He still had a baptism to be baptized with. This is puzzling. Was not Christ already baptized? Luke 3 clearly records that He was baptized. What does baptism in this verse mean? In reading Romans 6 and Colossians 2, we see that this baptism signifies death. For Christ to say that a baptism was still waiting to be accomplished meant that He had not yet died. Luke 12:50 does not say that He had not been baptized; rather, it says that there was a baptism which still needed to be accomplished. Why did such a baptism need to be accomplished? To accomplish something means that there is a goal. Suppose you want to do a certain work. After you have done the work, you have accomplished it. Christ's death was for the purpose of accomplishing one thing—God's purpose. Since He had not yet died, the fire was not yet kindled.

These two verses tell us that Christ came to cast God's life to the earth and to give man His life. Before Christ died, man had not received that life. After He died, man received this life. Without His death, this life could not have been released, and man could not have received it. Why did Christ have to die before man could have His life? The reason is provided in the following words: "How I am pressed." The word pressed in the original language means "squeezed,

constrained." Christ said that He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was pressed, or constrained, until it was accomplished. Why was He constrained? He was the divine life itself, and He was like the fire. This life filled the universe and was not bound or restricted by time and space. His life was omnipresent and omnipotent. It was everywhere and existed at all times. This life was like a fire. It kept on spreading; no one could lock it up, and no place was big enough to contain it.

Although Christ was equal with God, He became a man and confined this great life to the flesh. Such a tremendous life was contained in the flesh, which was limited by time and space. When He was in Caesarea Philippi, He could not be in Capernaum; He could not be everywhere at the same time. This flesh might have appeared in Galilee one day and in Judea the next, but it could not be in both places at the same time. God's life was restricted by time and space. This is why He felt pressed. His outward flesh had locked up His omnipresent and omnipotent life like a prisoner; it was no longer free. How pressed the omnipresent life was! What could the Lord do but be pressed? He was pressed because He had not died. After He died and resurrected, He was no longer pressed. Hence, there is a different aspect to the death of Christ, one in which He shed His body and released God's life. This is the baptism He was about to go through. This aspect of the Lord's death freed Him from the outward prison and released the fire, through which man received His life. This is the non-redemptive aspect of His death. It is different from the blood and the crucifixion. In the Bible this aspect of His death is signified by His flesh (John 6:54). Because of the limitation of time, I can only give a brief foundational word to show you the aspect of Christ's death which involves the release of His life.

ONE GRAIN FALLING TO PRODUCE MANY GRAINS

John 12:24 touches the mystery of the gospel. This is the highest and most crucial passage in the Bible because it touches God's goal. The Lord compared His death to a grain of wheat. The Bible never uses wheat as a type of redemption, because wheat has no blood. The death of the grain of wheat refers to the non-redemptive aspect of Christ's death. Christ is the one grain of wheat. On the outside of the grain, there is a glossy shell, which locks the life of the grain inside. In order for the life to be released, the grain must first be buried into the ground.

The Lord said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The Lord's life is like a grain of wheat. The life of this grain is bound by its outward shell, and unless the outward shell is removed by the grain passing through death, the wheat will never grow. When the grain is buried in the ground, the moisture and humidity of the earth act on the shell and break it. In a few days the grain sprouts, and after a few months, hundreds of grains are produced.

The Lord said that He was like a grain of wheat. Life was in Him, but unless He died, He would forever be the only One, because God had only one Son; He was the only Begotten of God. He was the only One who had life. When He became flesh and came to the earth, His life was bound by the flesh even though He was God's Son and had God's life. Men could not receive His life, and He could not bring forth many grains. Suppose one hundred grains are harvested from one grain. How many grains would there be? There would be one hundred and one. Because the one grain has died, one hundred grains are produced. Originally, there was only one unique grain, who is God's only begotten Son. But after death and resurrection, He brought forth many grains. What happened to the original one grain? It became the first grain. Originally, it was the unique one; now it has become the first of one hundred and one grains. Originally, He was God's only begotten Son. Now through death and resurrection, He has become God's firstborn Son. Before the Lord Jesus died, He was God's only begotten Son. After resurrection, He became God's firstborn Son.

THE CHURCH BEING CHRIST

My friends, please remember that death and resurrection have the same boundary line. Before the Lord's death, God had only one Son. After the Lord's resurrection, God has many children. The Lord became the first grain. God's only begotten Son has become the firstborn Son. Originally, there was only one grain. Now there are hundreds of grains. What is the difference between the hundreds of grains and the first grain? When a mustard seed is sown, mustard comes out. When a grain of wheat is sown, wheat comes out. When the Lord Jesus is planted, what comes out must be the Lord Jesus.

There was an elderly black woman in Africa who was a very spiritual sister. She did not have any education and was not eloquent at all. Yet many people went to her for the truth. One British pastor once went to her and asked, "What are Christians?" She answered, "They are fragments of Christ." This is indeed well said. I am afraid that many doctors of divinity cannot answer the question the

way she did. Every Christian has a little bit of Christ in him. The hundreds of grains are produced from the first grain. When the hundreds of grains are put together, you have the original grain. When Christ and all the Christians are added together, we have the Christ.

I have often been amazed by 1 Corinthians 12:12. I do not know whether others are equally amazed when they read this. This verse tells us that just as a body has many members and is still one body, so also is Christ. Brother Paul, have you made a mistake? Why did you not use the word church? You should have said, "So also is Christ and the church." But was Paul wrong? No! He did not speak of the church, because the church is Christ. He did not have to say Christ and the church, because the church is Christ!

In reading the Bible, we should make a distinction between two different aspects of Christ. In Greek, when the name Christ is used without a definite article, it refers to Christ Himself. When it is used with a definite article, it refers to the church of Christ. Most versions do not make this distinction clearly. Only Darby's translation brings out this distinction. There is a difference between Christ and the Christ. The former refers to the individual Christ, while the latter refers to the church. The Christ refers not only to one individual, but to the corporate man composed of all those who are in Christ. This corporate man becomes the Christ. The individual Christ refers to Jesus; He was not corporate. He is the Head, and all Christians combined together form His Body. The individual Christ becomes the Head of the corporate Christ, and the whole is called the Christ.

Through His death Christ becomes us. Within every saved person there is now a little bit of Christ. Everyone has a little bit of Him. This is why we break the bread. Originally, there was one bread, but God charges us to break it and each take a piece of it. There is only one bread before us, and when we put together all the pieces that each one has taken, we have the same one bread. Within each one of us there is a little bit of that bread. Within each one of us there is a little bit of Christ. This is God's goal. Our Lord was God's only begotten Son. After death and resurrection, He begot many sons, and He Himself became the firstborn Son.

In the physical world, how does one grain produce many grains? It was most suitable for the Lord to use this illustration. In the natural realm, one grain can be turned into many grains. In the same way, one Christ can be multiplied to become the corporate Christ. This is a fact. How does one grain become so many grains? We do not know, but we do know that this multiplication is a fact.

Christ is the seed of God. God has sown Christ into the earth, and many Christians have been produced. Through His death and resurrection, Christ released His life into us. After resurrection, He said to His disciples, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17). Originally, God was His Father. After the Lord's resurrection, God became our Father also, and Christ, who had been the only begotten Son, became the firstborn Son among many sons.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

GOD'S WAY OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSE

(2)

Date: August 9, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 5:16; John 14:16-20

CHRIST IN THE FLESH AND CHRIST IN THE SPIRIT

In the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus reveals that He is now in the Holy Spirit and that He is ready for us to receive Him. Paul knew of Christ according to the flesh, but in 2 Corinthians 5:16, he said that "now we know Him so no longer." Christ was God putting on the flesh. He was the Word incarnated on the earth to become a man. The flesh was like a garment to the Lord. In His incarnation, He put on the flesh. After His death and resurrection, He put on the Holy Spirit. He put on the flesh; then He put on the Holy Spirit. Before His death the Holy Spirit was in Him; after His resurrection He was in the Holy Spirit. When He was on the earth, the Holy Spirit was present with the disciples through Christ; after His resurrection, Christ was present with the believers through the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit came through Christ. Now Christ has come through the Holy Spirit. First, Christ was in the flesh. Now Christ is in the Holy Spirit. Paul knew of Christ according to the flesh. This means that he only knew of the Christ who had put on the flesh. But in 2 Corinthians, he no longer knew of Him in this way. This means that he knew the Christ who had put on the Holy Spirit.

There is a big difference between putting on the flesh and putting on the Holy Spirit. When Christ was living in the flesh, He was always limited by time and space. When He was in Galilee, He could not be in Bethsaida. If He was in one place, He could not be in another place at the same time. By putting on the flesh, Christ became a Savior outwardly. If He was by the sea, He could not be in an

inland region. The disciples were at times close to Him and at times far away from Him; they could not be with Him all the time. If Christ were in Judea and we were in Singapore, we could not follow Him every day. When He became Christ in the flesh, He became a Savior outwardly. If He had remained this way, what could we do? We could go to worship Him in Jerusalem three times a year. We could draw near to Him in this way, but once we left Jerusalem, we would be far away from Him again. When we were in the right place, we could be with Him, but when we were not in the right place, we could not be with Him. This is the Christ in the flesh.

But Christ is no longer in the flesh. Through His death He put off the flesh, and in resurrection He took on a spiritual body. After His resurrection, He put on another garment; He put on the Holy Spirit, and He is now in the Holy Spirit. His birth in Bethlehem was His first coming. During the first coming He put on the flesh. After His death and resurrection, He put on the Holy Spirit, and He is now living within us. The Holy Spirit is Christ. At one time the Holy Spirit lived in the earthly Christ; now the resurrected Christ lives in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not physical; He is omnipresent. Since Christ is in the Spirit, He can live in us. Since Christ resurrected for us, we can receive Him through faith and regeneration.

Brothers and sisters, have you seen this? The tree of life has now produced fruit. Originally, it was a tree; there was life, but no one could eat it. No one can take in the life of a tree. But once a tree bears fruit, the life of the tree gets into the fruit, and when one eats the fruit, he takes in the life of the tree. When the Lord was a man, we could not receive Him into our spirit. But now that He is in the Holy Spirit, we can receive Him into us as our life. Thank the Lord that Christ is no longer an outward, objective Savior; He is our life within. The descending of the Holy Spirit is crucial. Without the descending of the Holy Spirit, Christ could not be in the Spirit, and man could never be one with Him. Thank the Lord that today we are in Christ and that we are one spirit with Him. God's salvation is complete. He caused Christ to die and resurrect. Now Christ can live within us. This completes what He did not complete in Adam.

This is the meaning of "another Comforter" (John 14:16). What does the word another mean? It means that there is a second one. It implies that there is a first and a second. The Lord was the first Comforter, and the Holy Spirit is another Comforter. Christ has become our Comforter in the Holy Spirit. We no longer have to be orphans (vv. 17-18). He has given us the strength for our journey and has made us sons of God. Today every believer can be in Christ and receive

God's life into him. Not only have we been forgiven and not only has the old man been crucified, but God's life is now living within us. In the Bible this life is represented by the flesh.

THE BLOOD DEALING WITH SINS BEFORE GOD, AND THE FLESH DISPENSING LIFE INTO US

We have seen that there are four aspects to the death and resurrection of Christ. First, there is the blood; second, there is the crucifixion; third, there is the flesh; and fourth, there is the bearing of the cross. Two days ago we saw the difference between crucifixion and the blood. Today we will consider the difference between the flesh and the blood. You may recall that in Exodus 12, God ordered the Israelites to kill the lamb and to put the blood on the doorpost and the side posts. When He came to the house and saw the blood, He passed over that house, and those in the house were spared. Hence, the blood is absolutely for God. Immediately after the Passover, the Israelites went into the wilderness with their staff in their hand. Once the blood of redemption is applied, one should begin his journey onward. Once a person is saved, he should leave the world behind and run the race of the kingdom. As soon as the blood is applied, he should set out on his journey.

But how can we have the strength for our journey? How can we escape Egypt? Here we see God's second provision. The blood removes man's sins before God. God demands the blood because He condemns sin. The blood is absolutely for God. After the lamb is slain, however, there is not only blood but also flesh. God said that the flesh had to be cooked and eaten before the Israelites would have the strength to go into Canaan. The blood is for God, while the flesh is for us. The blood is presented to God, while the flesh is cooked for us. The blood satisfies God's righteous requirement, while the flesh becomes our strength for our walk and inward life. Suppose you took some meat last night. Today the meat has become your life. The meat of yesterday has become you today. The flesh becomes our strength, our energy, and our life; we live by the flesh. The blood is objective, while the flesh is subjective. The blood is for God objectively. Through the blood God has forgiven our sins. The flesh is for us to take subjectively. Through the flesh we have the strength for our journey onward.

The problem in the church today is that believers have only received forgiveness through the blood; they have not received the strength of the flesh to take them on the way. God has given us not only a redeeming Christ, but also an indwelling

Christ to be our life. This is signified by the flesh in the Bible. The blood is on the doorpost and the side posts. Eating the flesh is receiving Christ into us and having Him live for us. Many people have already experienced the forgiveness of their sins. But they continue to be weak and defeated; they are not yet on the way. The blood has been applied, but the flesh has not been eaten. This is why there is weakness. Hence, a man must not only receive forgiveness through trusting in the blood of Christ, but he must also eat His flesh. In the eyes of God, those who do not eat His flesh cannot satisfy God's heart. God's life is not a weak life.

Two years ago I asked a group of Christians in Kaifeng what kind of life is described in the Bible. One sister argued that no one could be free from the love of money, anxiety, temper, or criticism. She said that no one in the world could do this. That is right. No one in this world can do this. But God has not asked us to do it. God's intention is not for us to live a man's life; He wants us to live God's life. God has no intention to ask us to do what we cannot do. A man can only live a man's life and can only do what a man can do. However, God has given us His own life. We have God's life within, and this life can perform what we otherwise cannot perform. We can only ask whether or not we are allowing this life to live within us.

Many people have great assurance about their salvation, but in their experience they are very weak. They have trusted in the blood of Christ, but they have not eaten His flesh. They are as weak in this world as any worldly one. This is not God's purpose; He intends for man to have His holy, victorious, and sanctified life. God does not want us merely to be humans; He wants to put His life within us and accomplish everything that we cannot accomplish by ourselves. In other words, He wants us to accomplish God's work and live God's life. The whole matter rests in whether or not we have eaten the flesh.

AT THE TABLE, FIRST THE BREAD, THEN THE WINE

Why does the Bible call the Lord's supper the breaking of the bread and not the drinking of the cup? In calling it the breaking of the bread, the act of drinking is included. The bread symbolizes the life of Christ, while the cup symbolizes the redemption of Christ. The cup removes our sin before God; it takes care of Adam's fall. The bread signifies the Lord's life, that is, the life of God Himself. The fruit of the tree of life in Genesis 2 is God's goal. The bread is God's goal. God intends for the bread to become man's life. His goal is the bread, not the cup. Although God needs the cup, the goal is not the cup; it is merely a remedial step.

The bread brings us God's goal. This is why the supper is called the breaking of the bread. The cup signifies redemption, while the bread signifies the Lord's life. The cup signifies the first aspect of Christ's death, while the flesh signifies the second aspect of His death. We covered the second aspect of Christ's death yesterday. This death releases God's life. The Bible calls this release the breaking of the bread. We are sinners, and the blood of the Lord washes us of our sins. Why do we not drink the cup first at the Lord's supper? When we were saved, the first thing we did was drink the blood, but the Bible tells us that we should first eat the bread. This shows us that God's goal is for man to take in the Lord's life. The blood is secondary and remedial. This is why the breaking of the bread comes first. It represents an aspect of Christ's death which is much higher than that represented by the blood.

I hope that we can see God's goal. I feel that the greatest problem among God's children is that they pay too much attention to redemption and not enough attention to God's goal. Redemption merely deals with the sin problem; it is not God's original goal. Before God created man, He already had a plan and purpose. God did not create man and then leave him alone. After He created man, He wanted him to receive His life. This is why God puts the bread before the cup. This is the teaching of the Bible, and we should obey it. Today many church leaders do not understand redemption. This is very poor. But taking care of redemption alone is not sufficient, because redemption is not God's goal. As important as it is, the forgiveness of sins can never match the experience of receiving Christ's life into us as our life.

GOD'S GOAL BEING WITH THE FLESH

We must be clear about God's goal. God's goal is with the flesh because God's life is with the flesh. When we believe and are saved, we can come to God immediately because we are begotten by Him and share His life. Whether or not we will receive glory and reward depends on whether we allow God's life to live within us. Romans 3:23 tells us that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. When man sins, he cannot come to God. What is God's glory? It is God Himself, His dwelling and His manifestation. The God of glory dwells in glory. All men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. As a result they cannot dwell with God. Colossians 1:27 says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." A sinner cannot come to God. But when we have the Lord inside of us, we have the hope of glory.

Christ in us is God's goal. Hebrews 2:10 says, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory." God's goal is to bring many sons into glory. What do the words "through whom" and "for whom" mean? All things being through Him means that all things came out of Him, and all things being for Him means that all things belong to Him. All things came from God, and all things will return to God. The One for whom are all things and through whom are all things is God. What is God's goal? His goal is to bring many sons into glory. Hence, His goal is first to have many sons and second to bring these many sons into glory. It was fitting for the Author of their salvation to be made perfect through sufferings. This verse is easy to understand, and we need no further explanation.

Verse 11 speaks of the sanctifying One. Who can sanctify men? Christ can. Who are the sanctified ones? The Christians are. He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One. Both Christ and the church are all of One. This One is God. Christ came from God, so does the church. The church comes from God and receives its life from God. Hence, the church, which is sanctified through Christ and produced through the life of Christ, is from God and of God. This is why Christ is not ashamed to call the sanctified ones brothers. Christ can call us brothers because both Christ and we come from God. God's goal is for Christ to call men His brothers. God's goal is for Christ to have many brothers and for Him to have many sons.

We have to see the fullness of His salvation; man's sins are forgiven by His blood, and the old man has been crucified by the cross. Furthermore, God has put His flesh within man to be man's new life. Many people have this life within them, but it has not yet become their life. This is why they continue to be weak and defeated. The death of Christ accomplished the aspect of God's work related to the flesh; He has put His life into the flesh so that we can now receive God's life when we eat His flesh. The Lord's blood delivers us from death, while His flesh gives us life. These two things are entirely different. In the eyes of God, man should die, but the Lord shed His blood on our behalf. As a result man no longer needs to die. Hence, he is delivered from death through the blood. But man still does not have life. Eating the flesh brings life to man. The blood is on the negative side, and the flesh is on the positive side. All the works of Christ are ours when we exercise our living faith. If we have a living faith, Christ's life will become our life.

John 6:47-58 begins with, "He who believes has eternal life." In the original language, "eternal life" means a life of eternity. God's life is a life of eternity. Those who believe will have eternal life, that is, the life of God. The "eternal life" spoken of in the Gospel of John does not refer to the believers' living forever; it refers to the life of eternity. The Lord says that he who believes will have eternal life. This means that he who believes will have the life of God.

The Lord also said that if a man eats the bread that comes down out of heaven, he will live forever. The Lord's flesh is the bread out of heaven, and those who eat His flesh will have eternal life. This is the word of the Lord. His flesh is given for the life of the world. This word is not directed at sinners. A sinner should die; therefore, his need is deliverance from death. The world, that is, humankind, is composed of men created by God. Created men only have the created life; they do not have the life of God. The Lord gives created men the bread out of heaven, and those who eat this bread will have the life of God. This bread is the Lord's flesh. Hence, we have to pay as much attention to Christ's flesh as we do to His blood. I hope we will not be as we were before, paying too much attention to the blood while neglecting the flesh. The Lord Himself paid much attention to the flesh. He said that His flesh is given to be our life. The Jews did not understand this, and they asked, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (v. 52). The Lord said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within yourselves" (v. 53). In this verse the Lord spoke of the flesh first and the blood afterwards.

Hebrews 2:14 says, "Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same." In this verse, the blood is spoken of before the flesh. But in the original language, the flesh is spoken of before the blood. God cares very much about the order. The words in the Bible are not chosen at random. They show us that God pays a great deal of attention to the flesh.

The Lord said that unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, we have no life within ourselves (John 6:53). The flesh is related to life. A man receives life through eating the flesh. Of course, he cannot receive life unless his sins are first washed away. If the problem of sin is not settled, no one can have Christ living in him. In verse 53 the Lord spoke of the flesh first in order to show us that we cannot have His life without eating the flesh. He spoke of the blood second in order to show us that we cannot eat the flesh without the remedial redemption of the blood. In verses 51 and 52 only the flesh is spoken of. Then in

verse 53 the flesh is spoken of before the blood. This shows us that the significance of the flesh is primary, whereas the significance of the blood is secondary.

Why will believers resurrect at the Lord's coming but unbelievers only resurrect at the great white throne? This is because Christians have the life of Christ. Those who have life will enter into life when the Lord returns. As soon as Christians hear the Lord's cry, they will rise up. Those who have life will enter into God's glory, but those who do not believe will enter into eternal death (John 5:28-29). The believers who have died and are buried in the ground will rise up that day and be resurrected into life and glory. The dead ones in the world will not rise up, because they do not have life. We have the flesh in us, and we have the blood, and on that day we will rise up to be with our God.

The Lord said that His flesh is true bread. How can His flesh be our bread? His word cannot be wrong. When He says that His flesh is our true bread, it means that it is our true bread. In John 6 the Lord mentioned the flesh before the blood four times (vv. 53-56). In the two instances in which the flesh and the blood are not mentioned together, only the flesh is mentioned (vv. 51-52). These verses show that the flesh is more important than the blood. By the blood we are delivered from death, and by eating the flesh we receive life. Those who have life abide in Him and He in them. In this way we become one spirit with the Lord.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS LIFE

THROUGH A LIVING FAITH

Many people are in Christ. But they do not have any experience of Him, because they do not have a living faith. If we receive Him with a living faith, we will see that we are not only in Christ but that Christ is also in us as our power, life, and everything. The proper place for a light bulb is on the lampstand. It should be connected to the power plant through the power lines. It must be joined to the source of electricity and receive the current of electricity before it will shine. Only when we are in Christ, will His life, power, light, etc., flow into us.

While we say that we eat the flesh, we should not say that we eat the blood. We cannot eat the blood; we can only drink the blood. In verses 51 and 52 the Lord did not speak of drinking at all. This shows that His attention was on eating, not on drinking. Eating the Lord's flesh is eating the Lord. The flesh represents Him. If we eat His flesh, we will live forever; otherwise, we will die.

Christ presents Himself to us in these verses to show us that without receiving Him as life, we cannot satisfy God's demand and cannot reach God's goal.

Outwardly speaking, we are living on this earth. But actually we are like dead persons. May the Lord be gracious to us. May He open our eyes to see that we have not only the blood, the crucifixion, but also the flesh. These different aspects of the truth are not the same. May the Lord be merciful to us and grant us a clear revelation of these things.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

THE OVERCOMING LIFE

Date: August 10, 1937

Place: Singapore

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

MANY CHRISTIANS SEEKING VICTORY

WITHOUT OVERCOMING

Yesterday we saw that God's goal is to give us Christ to be our life. Today we want to see why God gives us Christ. Paul said, "Christ our life," and, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21a). But we have to admit that the way we live does not reflect the fact that Christ is our life. We fail, we are weak, and we glorify ourselves. We are short of love, and we make demands on others. We do not love the brothers, and we are not like Christ. We find it hard to speak like the Lamb. Our thoughts are filthy and unholy, and we are defeated by many sins. Christ has died for us and risen to be our life. But in our daily life we do not have the experience of Christ living within us. Although we have the life of Christ, we do not live it out. We are not very different from the worldly people, and we have not grown very much. When we look at ourselves, all of our sins are still with us. Many Christians are like this. They do not know how Christ can be their life. Some seek to control their temper, hoping that they can become patient, and some seek for victory. But in spite of their pursuits, their prayer before the Lord, their confession, their prayer for grace, and their aspirations for a holy life of humility, gentleness, and brotherly love, their stubbornness remains and their nature is unchanged. Although they pray much, it seems as if God has never heard their prayer. They do not know what they should do before the Lord. Therefore, we want to consider what it means for Christ to be our life.

THE NEED TO BE HUNGRY

IN ONE'S PURSUIT FOR VICTORY

I have mentioned previously that a dissatisfied person will not receive anything. Only a hungry person will receive something. Friends, do not confuse

dissatisfaction with hunger. Many people are not satisfied with their daily life, but they do not have a positive desire to pursue before the Lord. They have not had any dealings with the Lord and have never wrestled with the Lord. Hence, a dissatisfied person is not necessarily a hungry person. Let me say a strong word: Although you may be dissatisfied, you may not be experiencing the overcoming life at all. Only a hungry person can receive something. Those who are not hungry may understand what I am saying, but they will still not overcome. I have never seen a person who is not hungry overcome. A person may understand the doctrine of victory, but just being dissatisfied will not make one victorious.

Only seeking ones will experience Christ as their life. Those who think that they can pick up the overcoming life capriciously are cherishing a vain hope. You can pick up any item off the street, but victory is not something that can be picked up mindlessly. Victory does not come by chance. Only the hungry and seeking ones find it. If only three or five persons attending this conference find it, I will be very thankful to the Lord.

CHRIST OVERCOMING FOR US

The overcoming life is just Christ Himself. God has given us Christ so that we will not only live by Him but that He would also become our life and live within us on our behalf. God has given us Christ. His intention is not just for Him to live within us but for Him to live for us within. He has already died for us on the cross. Today He wants to live for us within us. This is not a matter of overcoming through trusting in Christ. Nor is it a matter of Christ empowering us to overcome. This is not even a matter of Him helping us to overcome. It is a matter of us stepping aside and Christ becoming our victory within us.

Let me repeat: This is not a matter of Christ empowering us to overcome, nor is it a matter of Christ upholding us to overcome. Rather, it is Christ overcoming on our behalf, just as He died on the cross on our behalf. Christ died on the cross for us; we did not do anything. He is living for us in the same way. We do not have to put forth any effort of our own. For God to give us Christ as our life means that He has put Christ within us and has caused Him to live for us. Our old man has died, and Christ is living for us within us. This is fully a matter of substitution. If it is not a substitution, it is not the gospel. Without the cross, there is no victory.

Today we are not asking the Lord to empower us to be patient. Rather, the Lord within us is becoming our patience. We may be stubborn, proud, critical of others, lacking in love, or filled with unclean thoughts. We should not ask the Lord to empower us to overcome these things. Rather, the Lord within us is

becoming our purity, meekness, and humility for us. Everything is in the principle of substitution. If we do not see the matter of substitution, there will never be any victory. A man can be conscious of his mistakes before God, but this does not mean that he will overcome. We may ask God to help us overcome, but we will never overcome. God does not help men overcome. He knows that we will only fail. He crucified our old man on the cross and gave Christ to us to be our true bread so that He would live for us within. This is the gospel, this is God's way of salvation, and this is victory.

Christ is our victory. Many people think that Christ helps them overcome or that Christ empowers them to overcome. But this is not the way. We are so weak that we cannot even stand up by ourselves. We are incurable. Overcoming is altogether a matter of Christ living for us within us. This is God's way of salvation.

REALIZING THAT WE ARE HOPELESS AND ACCEPTING CHRIST AS OUR VICTORY

During the past two years, I have seen two kinds of sickness among many believers. One is temper, and the other is anxiety. Many people only know that temper is a sin. They do not realize that anxiety is also a sin. Many people cannot deal with their temper. Neither reading the Bible nor praying will help them. They struggle for eight or ten years, yet still remain the same. They can do nothing about themselves, and they see no change in them at all. God knows that we do not have a way in ourselves. This is why He gave us another way. His way is to remove us and have the Lord Jesus be our life and victory within and to live instead of us. Many of us have not seen this. As a result we wonder what we should do.

When I was preaching in England, a friend of mine invited me to his home which was not far away. He had several sons. He and his wife could not overcome, and they were continually defeated. When one child cried, he became unhappy. When the second one cried, he became angry. When the third child cried, he could not hold back his temper. He often tried his best to suppress his temper, but no matter how hard he tried, he could not suppress it. He insisted that I come to his house to tell them how they could overcome.

When I went that evening, his wife said, "Mr. Nee, you know what victory means. Both of us want to overcome, but our children are very trying on us. We can overcome everything else, but our children are our real test. We can be patient when we are among our friends and in the church. But we fail completely with our

children." When I heard this, I laughed because I realized that here were two more persons whom Christ could deliver. Some people are too moral and too refined; they can never realize the meaning of victory. The Lord only has a way with those who cannot find their own way. This was why I laughed; I felt that they were ready for deliverance.

I asked the wife, "Why do you want to be patient?" She said, "Because I have a quick disposition. I have asked God to give me patience so that I will not lose my temper." I said, "You can do nothing about this, and you have asked God for patience, but He has not given it to you. Is that right?" She said, "That's right. I have prayed for eight or nine years, but God seems to have ignored my prayer; He has not given me any patience." I said, "You have asked God for patience, but He knows that you do not need it. He has not given you patience, because you are not lacking in patience." She said, "Mr. Nee, what do you mean? I have never heard of such a teaching. Don't you think that I lack patience? Are you saying that I do not need patience?" I said, "That is right. You lack only one thing—Christ. God has put Christ in us to be our life, righteousness, holiness, redemption, and patience. Everything that God wants to give us is in Christ. God has given us Christ so that Christ would overcome on our behalf."

Then she realized that the way to victory had nothing to do with her. It is not we who overcome; it is Christ who overcomes. This is the biblical secret to victory. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. It is not the power of Christ that lives in me, but Christ Himself who lives in me. I no longer live; it is altogether Christ who lives. This is victory. This was God's goal in the garden of Eden—that Christ would live for man within him. God's goal is for Christ to be life to man.

Once I was at a brother's house, and his wife said to me, "Mr. Nee, something has been wrong with me for the last few days. Everything with my family has been fine except for my few children, who have been very naughty. If I lock them up in the house, they become rowdy, and if I let them out of the house, they fight with other children. They cannot keep quiet in the house, and I worry about them when they leave the house. Many times I am driven to tears by anxiety over them. I cannot do anything about it. What should I do?" I smiled because when man does not have a way, the Lord will have a way. I said to her, "Is victory something of yourself or of Christ? If it is of you, you will not know what to do when there are three or four more children. But if it is of Christ, will three or four children fighting with each other be too much for Christ to overcome? Of course not! You are failing because you are bearing this burden. This is why you cannot

be patient. But if Christ lives for you and Christ disciplines your children for you, you will be patient."

THE OVERCOMING LIFE

BEING AN EXCHANGE, NOT A CHANGE

My friends, have you seen this? You cannot do anything about yourself. You can only fail. Victory is Christ. We cannot make it, but Christ can make it. The problem with us is that even though we cannot make it, we try to bear the burden ourselves and refuse to let Christ bear it for us. Many people are ignorant of the way of victory. They only know how to seek after power and holiness. Little do they realize that when they have Christ, they have everything. Victory is a matter of substitution by Christ. We do not overcome by ourselves.

Please be very assured before the Lord of this fact: Victory is not a change in ourselves; it is Christ overcoming for us. The overcoming life is an exchange, not a change. It is not a change from our own failures to our own victories. We have failed, and God has terminated the defeated "I" through the cross. He has put the victorious Christ within us to live for us. Our life has been exchanged. We were defeated, but God has put Christ within us and has replaced our "I" with "Christ" so that now we can overcome. The secret to victory is in the little word exchange. Many people hope to change, but no matter how hard they try, they are still themselves! Only when Christ lives for us within will we experience victory.

Two years ago I spoke about the subject of victory in Chefoo. I said that victory is not a matter of changing our lives. It is not a changed life, but an exchanged life. Man only wants to change himself. But in God's eyes, we are wicked beyond hope. We are thoroughly corrupted, and there is no way for us to be changed. Every kind of sin dwells within man. All the sins of the world dwell within us. We should not say that others can be robbers and prostitutes and that we cannot. We can commit any sin. We do not commit them because by God's mercy we are not faced with that environment and temptation. God has crucified our old man through the cross of the Lord, and Christ is living within us to be our victory. Our life is totally exchanged; it is not changed.

GOD'S SALVATION BEING

FOR CHRIST TO LIVE FOR US

Once, over ten years ago, I had six dollars in my pocket, and I bought a watch for myself, which cost five dollars and eighty cents. It was a watch with a famous American brand name. When I purchased it, I was given a certificate of warranty,

guaranteeing free service and maintenance on the watch for two years from the date of purchase. I took the watch home, and on the second day, it was off by two and a half hours. Other watches worked for twenty-four hours, but my watch only worked twenty-one and a half hours. I took it to the shop and asked them about it. The men said that they would fix it for me. After two days I took the watch home, but it was an hour off after only one day. I took the watch back for repair, and it was supposedly fixed. After I took it home again, it was in the same position after just one day; it had not moved at all. I again took the watch back and asked why it did not work. The men could only say, "Okay. Do not complain anymore. We will fix it for you." I took the watch home a week later, and the next day I noticed that it was three hours faster. I took it back and said, "I have had this watch for just twenty days. But fourteen of these days, it has been in your shop. I had it for only six days. Is this watch yours or is it mine? Since you cannot fix it, can I exchange it for another one?" The men insisted that there was no such guarantee; the warranty only guaranteed that they would fix it. If the watch broke down, I could bring it back to the shop as often as needed, and they would fix it until the two-year period expired.

My friends, do you see what I am talking about? Repair and exchange are two different things. Repairing something is fixing something that is broken. But exchanging something is turning in the old thing for something new. God's way of salvation is the way of exchange. Man wants God to give him the strength to do good, but a broken watch cannot be changed into a good one no matter how much one tries to fix it. The only way is to exchange it for a new one. God's way of salvation is not to help us overcome, but for Christ to overcome in our place. Have you seen what Galatians 2:20 is about? It is simply us not living; our living has nothing to do with us. It is no longer us, but Christ who lives in us. This is substitution. Victory has nothing to do with us. We have nothing to do with victory itself. Christ is living for us and living out of us. It is not a matter of living by Christ, through Christ, because of Christ, or by the power of Christ. It is a matter of not being us at all. We have absolutely no part; Christ is living on our behalf.

VICTORY AND PATIENCE BEING CHRIST

A man once said to me, "I want to overcome. I desire to overcome all the time. How can I overcome?" I answered coldly, "If a person like you could overcome, the whole world could overcome. A person like you could never overcome." He became angry and said, "Why can't I overcome?" I said, "You simply cannot

overcome." His face turned red, and he said, "Are you saying that I am too evil?" I said, "That is right, you are altogether evil. However, I am not the one who says this; God says this. According to Him, you are totally wicked and completely hopeless. This is why I can tell you that you can never overcome." He said, "But what if I want to overcome?" I said, "Even though you want to, you cannot." By then he had realized a little that he could not overcome by his own strength. I then told him, "God does not say that you have to be a certain kind of person before you can overcome. You are wicked beyond hope, and God knows that you will only fail and be defeated. This is why He has put you aside. No one in this whole world can overcome. Only One can overcome—Jesus Christ. Other than Christ, there is no one who can overcome." Then he understood that victory is simply Christ Himself.

Once a brother confided in me that he could not be patient. I have heard this kind of confession a countless number of times. Perhaps temper is a common problem all Christians have, and everyone loses his temper easily. I asked, "Do you lack patience?" He said, "Yes, and I have been praying for God to give me patience. Perhaps God has not answered me because I have not been earnest enough in my prayer." Then he turned to me and asked, "Mr. Nee, did I pray the right prayer?" I said, "No. God only engages in wholesale business; He is not interested in retail business." He asked, "What do you mean?" I said, "When you lack patience, you go to God for patience. When your patience runs out, you go to God for more. You may realize that you are proud, and you go to the Lord for humility. A few days later you may realize that you lack love and that you are critical of others, and you pray to the Lord for love. When you do this, aren't you treating God just like a retail grocery store? But this is not the way that God works. This is why He never answers your prayer." God is interested only in wholesale business. Whoever comes to Him will receive the whole Christ. A whole Christ is within you, and He is your meekness, humility, patience, and love. God does not dispense anything to us in a fragmentary way; whatever He gives to us is found in Christ. When we have Christ, we have everything. When we gain Christ, we gain all things. Christ is within us and living for us. No matter how hard and difficult a task may be, He is more than able to fulfill it. What is victory? Victory is simply Christ. We cannot overcome by ourselves. Victory is not a matter of us overcoming, but of Christ overcoming in our place. May the Lord be merciful to open our eyes so that we can see that we can never overcome in ourselves. We should not only be disappointed with ourselves but also lose all

hope in ourselves. We should cherish no hope whatsoever in ourselves. Overcoming is not a matter of change, but a matter of exchange. If it is a matter of change, we will still be the same after three or five years. But since it is a matter of exchange, it happens instantly. We do not attain anything through a gradual process; everything comes from God. If we are clear about God's salvation, we will overcome in an instant. But if it is up to us, we will be the same three, five, eight, or ten years from now; we will be the same thirty or fifty years from now. However, since it is an exchange, we overcome in an instant. Anything that issues from ourselves works slowly; it will not accomplish anything after even one hundred years. But anything that is from God happens quickly, even instantly. Victory is not man-made; it is a miracle.

May the Lord open our eyes to see that it is no longer us, and may we live a life that is full of miracles. When one sister died, the following words were inscribed on her tombstone: "She did what she otherwise could not have done." This means that her living was not one that issued from herself. She could not do anything by herself, but through Christ she could do all things. As a consequence, she did what she otherwise could not have done, and she said what she otherwise could not have said. Everything is of Christ, and we have no part in it. Hallelujah! Christ is victory! He lives within us, and He is living for us. All we have to do is abandon ourselves and allow Him to live out of us. Then victory will be ours spontaneously.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

THE WAY TO OVERCOME

Date: August 11, 1937

Place: Singapore

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:18-24; 19:1-10; 2 Cor. 12:9

VICTORY BEING CHRIST

During the past evenings, we have seen how the Lord Jesus gave His flesh to us as our true food, that is, how He gave His life to us to become our life. Our victory does not depend on Christ helping, empowering, or strengthening us. The victory revealed in the Bible is a victory that belongs to Christ. Victory is Christ in us, living for us and overcoming for us. The whole issue rests on whether it is us or Christ. Most people think that they have to depend on themselves to do good. But if it were up to us, the good-tempered ones would overcome easily while the ill-tempered ones would not overcome. However, victory has nothing to do with

our natural goodness or wickedness. Everything depends on Christ. A person who is gentle and a person who is bad-tempered equally need Christ. Victory has nothing to do with our natural disposition. The only issue is whether or not we have Christ. If we have Christ, we will overcome.

THE WAY TO OVERCOME—

BY CHRIST AND NOT BY OURSELVES

Today we want to consider the way to let Christ live in us and the way to let Him overcome for us. Let us read from Luke 18 and 19. In chapter eighteen there is a rich man, and in chapter nineteen there is another rich man. In chapter eighteen there is a ruler, and in chapter nineteen there is another ruler. Chapter eighteen speaks of a young man, while chapter nineteen speaks of an old man. The rich man in chapter eighteen came and sought the Lord, while the rich man in chapter nineteen tried to see the Lord. Both were interested in the Lord. If we put these two passages together, we will find out the way to overcome.

The first rich man came to the Lord in search of eternal life; he desired to be saved. He asked the Lord, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). Eternal life is the life of God, the uncreated life. How can we receive this life? The Lord said to him, "You know the commandments: `Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother'" (v. 20). The Lord showed him what he should do, and the young ruler boasted that he had kept these from his youth. Then the Lord said, "Still you lack one thing: all that you have, sell and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow Me" (vv. 21-22).

If there is anyone who is rich among us tonight, your heart may wince at this word. Selling all that one has, distributing it to the poor, and following the Lord seem to be impossible things to do. One may yield to other commands, but the command to give up one's own money is too much of a demand. However, the issue was not for the rich man to do certain things to inherit eternal life. Because the young man asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, the Lord told him not to commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness. The Lord was not saying that he had to do all these things before he could inherit eternal life. He was showing him that he could not keep the commandments. The Lord was not showing him how high the requirement for eternal life was and how far below God's standard the ruler's condition was. The Lord's goal was to expose his weakness and convince him that he could do nothing to save himself.

The young man did not realize this. He answered that he had done all these things from his youth. The Lord then told him that he still lacked one thing. The one thing that the young man lacked was to give up his riches. The Lord said that he still lacked one thing. Every person lacks one thing. We may think that we are patient, humble, loving, and holy, and that we have been this way since our youth, but the Lord always comes back with one thing. The thing that is lacking may be different in different persons. Perhaps we are stubborn, arrogant, or talkative. The "one thing" is not the same for everyone. Some are lacking this one thing, while others are lacking that one thing. Our experience tells us that everyone is different in his own failures and sins. No one can commit all the sins at the same time. Every person has a certain sin that he is not able to overcome. Victory and defeat are measured by that one sin.

Many people do not commit adultery or steal, but they cannot give their money to the poor. They can honor their parents and not bear false witness, but they still lack one thing. We may overcome many sins before God and think that we have overcome, but we should not be too quick. Have we really overcome? We still lack one thing. Everyone has one thing, one particular sin. This one thing determines a person's defeat. Defeat and victory are determined by the way we deal with that one sin, the sin that has been entangling us all our life. One or two sins have been following us all of our life. Whichever way we turn, we always come across them. Sooner or later we meet them again. They seem to have a fondness for us, and we seem to habitually commit these sins.

The problem with the young ruler was not adultery or stealing but the matter of giving to the poor. This was the one thing that the young ruler lacked. What we lack may be something else. We may think that we have overcome everything, but there is still one thing. At the beginning of his pursuit for victory, a Christian may find that he is able to overcome many sins. But in the end, he will find that there is a particular sin among many sins, the victory over which is the final test of victory. Without overcoming this one sin, he is still defeated.

Brothers and sisters, if you have not seen tonight that one entangling sin has been following you all the time, you have surely not overcome. If a man has not realized that there is one sin that entangles him, he has not taken the first step in the overcoming life. In fact, the thought of victory has not even crossed his mind. In the beginning man's sins are general, and all men are bound by the same common sins. But when a man begins to seek after victory, he can overcome

many of these general sins, but he is unable to do anything about one particular sin.

In Shanghai there was a brother who had overcome many sins. He had consecrated everything he had. But he could do nothing about his temper. In his pursuit he realized that he could not overcome this one sin; it had always been a frustration. If he could overcome this one sin, he would be victorious, and if he could not overcome this one sin, he would still be defeated. The whole issue of victory rested on this one last sin. We all think that we can make it by ourselves. But if we were able to make it by ourselves, we would have no need for the Lord's substitutionary work.

God puts this one last sin before us. He wants to see how we deal with it. We may have kept the Ten Commandments, but the Lord will say, "Still you lack one thing." There is still one thing which we are not able to do. God is trying to show us that we cannot make it. But we think that we can make it and that we are able. God has no choice but to show us this one last sin so that we will find out whether or not we really can make it by ourselves. When the young man heard the Lord's word, he was taken by surprise. He wondered what would happen to him if he gave all he had to the poor. He thought that if this was what he had to do, he could never make it, and he went away in sorrow (v. 23). He could not overcome. He could do many things, but he could not overcome his love for money.

In Luke 19 there is another rich man. He was also a ruler, yet not an ordinary ruler. He was a tax collector. He was older than the previous man. Brothers and sisters, who is more generous with money, a young man or an old man? A young man is usually more generous because he has not experienced the world as much as an old man and does not know the power of money as much as an old man. A young man is not as well acquainted with money as an old man is. An old man has lived longer in this world and has dealt with money all his life; he is more aware of the power of money. This is why many misers are older persons. We can safely conclude that Zaccheus should have been more covetous of money than the young man in chapter eighteen.

Zaccheus wanted to see the Lord. Because there were many people, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Him. When the Lord saw him, He said, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay in your house" (v. 5). Zaccheus came down and received Him, rejoicing. Others observing the Lord murmured, saying, "He has gone in to lodge with a sinful man" (v. 7). But Zaccheus stood up and

said, "Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much" (v. 8). Once this word came out of his mouth, his possessions were finished. Zaccheus had done what the young man could not do. The Lord told the young man to do this, but he could not do it. The Lord did not tell Zaccheus to do this; he did it of his own accord. Both were rich men, and both occupied a similar position. The young man thought that he could inherit eternal life, but in the end he could not have it. Zaccheus thought that he was not worthy, but in the end he received what he sought after.

Saul was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward (1 Sam. 10:23). Zaccheus was lower than any of the people. Zaccheus could not make it, yet he made it. What was the difference? The Lord said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9). Salvation is of Jehovah, and on that day God did something for that house. Zaccheus was able to give away the money he loved. The young man could not do it because he trusted in himself. Zaccheus was redeemed of the Lord because he was a son of Abraham. Those who believe in God and who are of faith are the sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7). The young man intended to do everything by himself. He asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. Zaccheus did not do anything. He came to the Lord only on the ground of being a son of Abraham, and he trusted only in God's salvation.

At first there was no difference between the two men. Both were rich, and both were rulers. The young man was good and Zaccheus was evil. However, good and evil according to one's natural disposition have no bearing on the subject. The young man did not commit adultery or murder; he did not steal. But in the end he found that he could not make it. Zaccheus was a wicked man, but in the end he made it. What was the reason for this? If a man had to give all that he had to the poor before he could have eternal life, no one would be saved. The young man thought that he could make it by himself, but he found that he could not, so he left in sorrow. The Lord said, "How difficult it is for those who have riches to go into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:24). He did not say that it was impossible; He only said that it was difficult. 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. The Lord was saying that there was no way for the young man to enter the kingdom of God. After the Lord said this, the disciples said, "Then who can be saved?" (v. 26). Everyone has some money in his own pocket. Who then can be

saved? The Lord answered, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God" (v. 27). We cannot make it, but God can make it. The young man could not make it when he trusted in himself. Zaccheus made it when he trusted in the Lord. One left without salvation, while the other saw salvation come to his house.

IMPOSSIBLE WITH MEN BUT POSSIBLE WITH GOD

Luke 18 shows the impossibility with men, while Luke 19 shows us the possibility with God. Man cannot make it; he cannot make it by himself. But with God nothing is impossible. Once God operates in man, man is saved. If we have a living faith in God, we will do what man cannot otherwise do. The whole world loves money. Even a child knows how to love money. When a Chinese person learns English, the first word he learns is money. At the end of a man's life, when he writes his will, all that he is concerned about is his money. All men love mammon. God is the opposite of mammon. Either we serve God, or we serve mammon (Matt. 6:24). Money is so powerful that it stands in opposition to God! In these two chapters the Lord shows us that He can save us from all sins because He can save us from the thing that we love the most. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

When the young man heard the Lord's word, he went away in sorrow because he felt that he could not do it. It is true that he could not make it, but this was precisely his problem. He thought that if he could not make it everything was finished. The minute he saw his own weakness he went away. It is right for man to know that he cannot make it. But it is a great mistake for him to think that God cannot make it. It is right to know that with men, many things are impossible. But thinking that everything is over is a great mistake. In chapter nineteen, we see God performing what man cannot do by himself. What was impossible with men was possible with God. The way to victory is realizing that we cannot make it and that God can make it. God can overcome for us through Christ. If our eyes are set on ourselves, we can never overcome. Even if we acknowledge that we are bound to failure, we will still not overcome. The way to victory is not merely realizing that we cannot make it, but realizing that God has given us Christ, who has overcome everything on our behalf. We cannot make it, but that is not the end. It is true that we cannot make it, but through Christ who lives in us, we can do all things.

Here I would like to mention one person. I would venture to say that if this person can overcome, everyone in the world can overcome. Last year a Western missionary working in a mission came to me and told me of a man who was sent by the mission board to work in a school. He had been in Shanghai for five or six years but was unable to get along with any of his colleagues or the students of the school because of his terrible temper. The school could do nothing about him, and the mission board could do nothing about him either. They intended to send him back to America in August. The missionary asked if I had time to speak with this man a little. I asked, "Why don't you bring him here?" He answered, "It would not be easy to bring him here. I think he is demon-possessed, or he could not behave the way he does."

I felt that this was a very strong word. Nevertheless, I realized that my friend could not be lying to me. I became curious and asked what kind of man he was. He said, "This man is very peculiar. He never smiles, and every time he sees someone, his face turns ugly. He is angry all the time, and if you are wrong in anything, he immediately picks on you. Everyone is afraid of him, and everyone stays away from him. He has been this way for six years, and no one in the school is able to get along with him. He changes his servants at home once every few days. He cannot get along with those he lives with, and he argues with all the rickshaw drivers in the streets. Wherever he goes he is always arguing with others. It seems as if he cannot go through a day without arguing with someone. I have been in this world for over fifty years, but I have never seen a person with a temper like his. I have been to England, America, and China, but I have never seen another person like him. I am afraid that he is really demon-possessed. We are very disappointed with him and intend to send him back to America in August. Mr. Nee, since you are familiar with the overcoming truth, can you do something for him? I want you to visit him before he returns home to see if he is indeed possessed. If he is, we may find a way to exorcise the demon."

When I heard this, I was happy within, because this was another impossible case. Once man can do nothing, God can do something. God takes up only terminal cases. I promised him that I would go and visit the man. He told me that it was impossible for me to go to his home, because he would not come out to see me. He suggested that we go to a third person's home and invite this terrible person along and meet him there. I agreed.

Two days later I went to the third person's home as arranged. The man came, and after we were introduced to each other, everyone else left the room. As I

looked into his face, I almost fainted. I must say that I have never in my life met another man like him. His eyes, nose, mouth, and every feature of his face seemed to be specially designed for his temper. His whole face spoke of anger itself. I realized that what I was told the day before was absolutely accurate. This man may not have smiled once in his whole lifetime. I could not figure out how I could put a smile on that kind of face. His face was made for anger, and its present distinctive features were the cumulative effect of years of temper. I have never met such a person in my entire life. When I saw him, I felt a chill go through my whole body. I was afraid that he was indeed possessed! But the minute he saw me, he broke into tears. Tears rolled down his face, and he began to say, "Nobody wants me any longer." Even his crying appeared to be an expression of anger, and his face looked even uglier. I was frozen with fear before him. I told myself that I would rather sit in a tomb for three years than sit before him for three minutes. When he was really angry, I am sure that he would look even more horrible!

I asked him, "How do you feel about yourself?" He said, "I always do the shopping for others. I often preach the gospel and pray for others. When others are sick, I pray for them and they get well. But I admit that I have a little temper." I asked, "Only a little?" He said, "To tell you the truth, I have a most terrible temper!" I then asked, "Did you have this when you were a boy, or did you develop it later?" I asked this to find out whether his temper was a natural characteristic or whether he was indeed possessed. He said, "If I remember right, I began to fight with my father when I was seven. When my temper flared up, I would throw things around the house. I can do nothing about it, even today. Not only am I bringing shame to the Lord, but I am sinning all the time by losing my temper. I feel that I am the most wretched man in the whole world because no one greets me or speaks with me. The whole world rejects me and considers me the most wicked man there is." While he was speaking, he was crying, but I began to laugh. He said, "Do not laugh at my temper." I said, "I am not laughing at your temper. I am laughing for joy. I am laughing because you cannot make it. God can make it." He said, "I am afraid that you have never seen me losing my temper. This is why you think that there is still hope." As he was speaking, it seemed as if he would lose his temper in front of me. His face looked very frightening.

I said, "I see no problem with your condition. It is not hard for you to overcome." He said, "What do you mean? I have been praying and fasting for a long time.

But up until now, I still cannot do anything about it. Do you think there is still any hope for me?" I said, "All it takes is an instant. It is not a matter of whether you can make it. It is a matter of whether or not God can do it. Would you say that God cannot save you because you are too evil? You cannot make it on your own, but God can make it. Victory is not in yourself. It is Christ in you overcoming for you. If it were up to us, those who are gentle would find it easy to overcome, while those who are ill-tempered would find it impossible to overcome. Victory has nothing to do with our temper. Victory does not depend on us but on Christ alone. Only Christ in us can overcome for us. Victory is found in Christ, not in us." He said, "Can I overcome?" I said, "You cannot overcome. There is no way for you to overcome. Do you acknowledge this? You cannot make it, yet Christ can make it. The question is not whether you can make it. The question is whether or not you see that you cannot do anything and that Christ can do everything."

He asked, "What should I do then to stop my temper?" I said, "Do nothing. You have been doing many things for many years, but you are still the same. Now move over and let Christ come in. Let Christ replace you within. Your eyes should not be set on yourself; they should be set on the Christ of God. He will overcome for you." After I said this, we knelt down and prayed together. I told him to open his mouth to pray and to confess to God in an honest way his own failures. He prayed, "I am truly deprived. I have lost hope in myself. I can do nothing. From now on, I will not trust in myself anymore. I cannot overcome. God, if You do not overcome for me, I will not be able to overcome. From now on, I will not take control. You must take all the responsibility!"

He prayed very sincerely. When he stood up, it was lunchtime. He asked me, "What should I do when I go home?" I said, "Do nothing." He said, "That is right. I have forgotten. Do nothing." He then smiled. That might have been the first time that he smiled. It was an unnatural smile. After he took a few steps, he turned around and said again, "I really should do nothing?" I said, "Yes. Everything will be fine if you do nothing. When Satan tempts you and tries to tell you to be patient, you should say, 'I cannot be patient. Christ, be my patience for me!'" He said, "Indeed, indeed." As he was going out he kept saying to himself, "Do nothing. If I am ever going to overcome my temper, it will be God's work, not my work."

I was worried whether he had the living faith and had truly abandoned his own effort. After a few days I called him on the telephone. The person on the other line answered, saying, "It is so strange! The whole school has never been so

quiet as in these last few days. For six years we have never enjoyed such quiet and tranquility. There has been no commotion at all. God has done a miracle and manifested His power in this man." Brothers and sisters, if this man could overcome, anyone can overcome. After a few days, this man came to our meetings, smiling as he walked in. Both his colleagues and the students testified that he had truly changed. He was originally scheduled to be sent back to his own country, but they now have decided to keep him.

NOT ACCEPTING SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS

Thank God, the things that are impossible with men are possible with God! Victory does not depend on us. Victory is Christ! Perhaps we are not as extreme a case as this man. Nevertheless, we should not look at ourselves but at Christ alone. Once we turn back to look at ourselves, we will fail. Satan tempts us not to sin but to do good. There is no virtue in our old man, and it can do nothing except sin and die. God has crucified us with Christ. This is His valuation of the old man. The old man deserves only to die. God's assessment of the old man is death. Other than death, the old man deserves nothing.

Our mistake lies in the fact that we think we are weak and that we will overcome our weakness if we ask the Lord to empower us. When temptation comes, we do our best to resist. When Satan provokes us to lose our temper, we try our best to endure. But as soon as we make a move and expose ourselves, we are lost. The interesting thing is that when Satan tempts us, his goal is not just for us to resist him but for us to expose ourselves. Once we expose ourselves, we sin. The only thing the devil does not want us to do is hide ourselves. When he comes to us, and we treat him as an object of attack, we have been defeated already. When temptation comes, we should never move, because we can never withstand Satan by ourselves. If we do not resist him, he will go away. Then we will wonder where the temptation has gone and why it has left us. The key to the whole matter lies not in ourselves, but in Christ's work.

A Western missionary once came to me in Chefoo concerning her temper. I think temper must be the most common sin among Christians today! She told me that as soon as her children argued, she would lose her temper. She could not be patient. I said to her, "Since you cannot be patient, there is no need to try to be patient." She said, "If I fail when I try my best to be patient, what will happen if I do not try?" I said, "It is because you try to be patient that you lose your temper. If you do not try to be patient, everything will be well. You fail because you try to

be patient. Since you cannot be patient, do not try to be patient any longer. As long as God is patient, everything will be well. What is impossible with men is possible with God." A man must know that he cannot make it, and he must know that God can make it. Most of us know that we cannot make it. But even though we realize that we cannot make it, we still try to make it. God can do nothing except let us do whatever we want to do. Victory has nothing to do with our ability. It has nothing to do with whether or not we can make it. If a man concedes that he cannot make it and stops trying, hoping, and insisting, and instead gives up, lets go, and stops trying to turn his inability into ability, God will do something.

Victory is a miracle. It is a miracle God performs in us. The secret to victory is conceding that we cannot make it and that God alone can make it. We cannot make it, we do not intend to make it, and there is no need to try to change our inability into ability. There is no need to take control. There is no need to plan. Everything has been done by God already. It is all a matter of substitution. Just as we were saved by faith, we should exercise faith and nothing else as we go on. After I was saved, I did not know the meaning of victory. But God opened my eyes to see that I could not make it and that He alone could make it. When I trusted in God with a living faith, He brought me through.

May the Lord open our eyes to see His saving way so that we will abandon ourselves and accept all of God's word by faith. May His word be fulfilled in us, and may He bless His own word.

SECTION NINE

CONFERENCE IN PENANG, APRIL 1938

CHAPTER EIGHTY

GOD IS LIGHT

Date: April 1, 1938

Place: Penang

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:5-7

First John 1:5-7 shows us two things. First, God is light, and second, God dwells in the light. If God were not light, man would not know sin. At the same time, because God dwells in the light, man can see God.

In Genesis God created the heavens and the earth. More accurately, God re-created the heavens and the earth. We see life on the third day, but there was light on the first day. We first find light and then life. This shows that light is more

important than life. In God's work He commanded light to appear, and then the rest followed.

WHAT IS LIGHT?

What is the meaning of light? The Old Testament does not tell us what light is. But in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:13 speaks of light. This is the only instance in the entire Bible that speaks of the function of light. This is why I treasure this verse. Light is that which makes manifest the hidden things. There is no need for a person to search for light. Once he comes into the light, he is enlightened by it, and the light searches him. Light functions by making the hidden things manifest. Light is that which exposes the hidden things. Being enlightened is having the hidden things exposed. When a man is under the light, it is not strange for him to realize his sins; rather, it is strange for him to sin and remain oblivious to it. As long as you are a regenerated person, God will surely speak to you and shine on you. You will not do anything that is contrary to human decency or the biblical standard of morality. God shines His light on those who are regenerated. But we must obey and take heed to God's commands, the enlightening of the Spirit, and the inner leading of the Lord.

GOD IS LIGHT

Those who boast that they are right are surely not in the light. In 1904 and 1905 the greatest known revival in church history occurred in Wales, England. Evan Roberts was instrumental in bringing in this revival. He once asked his congregation when was the last time they confessed their sins to others. Some said that it had been over five years, while others said that it had been over ten years ago. Then he told them that those who had not recently confessed were fallen, while those who had made a recent confession were living in the light. At that time Mr. Roberts was only twenty-eight years old, and some despised him for his age. The problem does not lie in our mistakes. The problem lies in the fact that when we make mistakes, we do not recognize them as mistakes. This proves that we lack God's light. The starting point of the Christian life is the enlightening of God. The more we draw near to God, the more we will see light, and the more we will be humbled and conscious of our sins.

For a Christian, the first step toward growth in the spiritual life is to see God. When a person sees God, he sees himself at the same time. No one who lives in the presence of the Lord is self-assured. The more a person sees light, the more he lives in fear and trembling. Paul's attitude was always one of fear and trembling. This should be the attitude of every Christian. A Christian should not

trust in himself. Only those who confess their sins are living in God's light; they are the ones who are not walking in darkness.

What is darkness? Darkness means the ignorance of sin. Those who are in darkness are oblivious to sin. The more a person sees light, the more he knows sin, and the more sensitive his feelings are toward sin. God is light, and He dwells in the light (1 John 1:5, 7). As soon as a man comes into the light, the light exposes all that he is. God is light, and light enables us to know ourselves.

GOD IS IN THE LIGHT

What does it mean for God to be in the light? In the Old Testament age God dwelt in the Holy of Holies. There was no natural or man-made light in the Holy of Holies; God was obscure. He was a riddle and a mystery to man. Man could only make conjectures about Him; he could not fathom who He was.

In the New Testament age God manifested Himself. This means that God has become a revealed God. Although He was a God who hid Himself, He reveals Himself and manifests Himself through the light of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:6). Now we know the kind of God He is, and we know the great things that He has done for us. Man is able to know himself because God is light. Man is able to know God because God dwells in the light. First, God is light. Second, God manifests Himself in the light of the gospel.

First John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light..." Once we receive God through the revelation of the light of the gospel, we no longer walk according to the law but according to grace. Light in the Bible is related to the light of holiness and the light of the gospel. The light in 1 John 1 is the light of the gospel. We know God through the light of the gospel, and we walk in this light. As a result, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin."

God is light, and this light exposes the true condition of man. God is in the light, and this light reveals Him as the God who is full of grace. Although our sins may be serious, we can come to Him boldly and allow the blood of Jesus His Son to cleanse us from all our sins. May the Lord show us these two different functions of light. Light enables us to see God and to receive Him as our Savior. Light also enables us to see ourselves and points out the need for the blood of the Lord, which washes away our sins. It also points out our need to walk in God's light.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

THE MIND OF CHRIST JESUS

(1)

Date: April 3, 1938

Place: Penang

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-11

EMPTYING HIMSELF

The Lord Jesus is God. He existed in the form of God and shared the same place and glory as God. Yet He emptied Himself. The Lord did not empty His Godhead. He emptied God's form, glory, and position. He did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped. Not considering something a treasure to be grasped means not insisting and letting go. He did not have to insist on His equality with God, because He was equal with God already. The Lord was equal with God, yet He emptied Himself of God's form, glory, and position. This is what Paul meant when he told us to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus. Having the mind which was in Christ Jesus means that this mind was once in Christ Jesus, but that today it should be in you and me. The mind of Christ Jesus is this: He was equal with God, yet He emptied Himself of God's form, glory, and position, and took a lower position. He did not insist on what He should have; rather, He took up what He should not have. This is the mind of Christ Jesus.

A Christian's walk has nothing to do with what he deserves or does not deserve. If a man says, "Others should treat me this and that way," he does not have the mind of Christ Jesus. The mind of Christ Jesus is one that readily and happily accepts all unjust treatment.

Christ was God, yet He gave up His deserving honor and position, and He became a man and our Savior. There is no such thing as contention in the divine Godhead.

WILLINGLY SUFFERING LOSS

God's children should walk according to the principle of mercy. God desires mercy and not sacrifice (Matt. 9:13). A Christian should not expect others to treat him fairly, righteously, or justly. When others take advantage of you, give you a hard time, inflict loss on you, or treat you unjustly, you have to check whether or not there is murmuring in your heart. If others treat you unfairly in attitude or in deed, you will grow in life if you can accept this treatment joyfully. You will understand what it means to bear the cross. Often others come to me and say, "So-and-so is such a person....Brother Nee, don't you know this?" I say, "Yes,

yes, I know. I fully know." What do I know? I know that their love is short-lived and dead. "Love suffers long. Love...endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4, 7). They have no love and no endurance!

God has not appointed us to be watchmen over our brothers' conduct. He has appointed us to be bearers of the cross. Whenever we do not receive what we deserve and whenever others deal with us unjustly, we will lose our chance of bearing the cross and glorifying God if we resist, murmur, or rebel in our heart. Many Christians are angry when they see others making mistakes. Others may be wrong in their attitude, but these are wrong in their heart as well. Others may be wrong first, but these are equally wrong and will not be approved of in the eyes of the Lord. What is the meaning of bearing the cross? It means not being affected by others' mistakes and making sure that one is not wrong. This is the meaning of bearing the cross.

HUMBLING HIMSELF

The Lord Jesus did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross (Phil. 2:6-8). God's children have to have this mind, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. Although there is no distinction of rank in the Godhead, Christ said, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Christ placed Himself in a smaller, lower, and humbler position. We must not be afraid to allow our brothers to become uplifted, exalted, and honored. We should be contented with being despised and forgotten persons. What is the mind of Christ Jesus? It is willingly losing our position and glory. The psalmist said to the Lord, "You have made men ride over our heads" (Psa. 66:12). This is a person free from jealousy and indignation. If we can rejoice in others' glory, it proves that we are free from jealousy. But if we cannot rejoice, it means that we are for ourselves. The issue is whether or not we can bear seeing our brothers exalted more than we, and whether or not we can stand seeing our brothers excelling over us. Do we dare to be placed in a lower position than our brothers? Those who dare to do this are not only familiar with the cross; they will see God exalting them soon, for he who humbles himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:14).

Romans 12:10 says, "Take the lead in showing honor one to another." J. N. Darby translated this as, "As to honour, each taking the lead in paying it to the other." Those who always try to tread others under their feet do not know the cross. They do not know the mind of Christ Jesus. We should learn before the

Lord to dare to allow others to receive honor and glory and to remain despised and forgotten persons ourselves. The greatest lack among us today is that we do not have the mind of Christ Jesus. Many can criticize every Christian in the world. In the end they feel that they are the only Christians who are up to the standard. These ones do not know the meaning of bearing the cross. They do not know what the mind of Christ Jesus is. May the Lord be merciful to us, and may we learn to take a humbler stand, allowing others to be higher than we are and to receive more adoration and exaltation.

BEARING THE CROSS

Let me mention one more thing. As long as we are righteous in ourselves, we should be contented; it should matter little whether or not others know about our righteousness. Those who are constantly trying to justify their attitude before others do not know the cross. As long as we are right in ourselves, that is good enough; it should matter little whether others say that we are right. As long as we are right in our attitude, that is good enough; it should matter little whether others say that we are good or bad. The principle and standard of the Christian life are not right and wrong. The standard of our living is the bearing of the cross. The bearing of the cross is the unique standard of our living. The whole issue rests on whether or not we are bearing the cross, not on right and wrong. Before the Lord, are we willing to empty ourselves to suffer loss?

The basic principle in managing the church is not in determining right and wrong for others. We should have only one standard: If there is the bearing of the cross, it is right; if there is not the bearing of the cross, it is wrong. Forget about whether or not others are right or wrong. Just ask whether or not they are bearing the cross. The cross is the greatest "wrong" in the whole universe; it is a terrible "wrong." Jesus Christ the Son of God had no sin, yet He was crucified on the cross. Our sins are too deep, yet we do not have to die. We do not have to shed our blood; we are freely forgiven and freely saved. Do we not realize that this is the greatest wrong? If it were a matter of right and wrong, then the most right thing to do would be for us to go to the cross. We have sinned and deserve to die. Hence, bearing the cross means accepting all the wrongs, not complaining, not reasoning, and being filled with joy all the time. The world can endure, but it endures by swallowing its grudges. There is no joy in such endurance. But we can accept unjust treatment with much rejoicing in our heart.

GIVING UP EVERYTHING

I would like to mention one more thing. The mind of Christ Jesus is one which gives up everything. Those who give up everything have the mind of Christ Jesus. May God be merciful and gracious to us, and may we be those who willingly give up all things, those who gladly suffer losses. A Christian should give ground to others; he should lay the tracks for others to go through. In speaking of the trespass offering, Leviticus 6:5 tells us that one should add one-fifth to what is owed when paying back that which is owed. We should learn to be those who suffer loss. We should put ourselves under the trampling of others. Christ Jesus did not need to be a slave. Yet He put off the form of God and took the form of a slave. He relinquished what He rightfully owned and received what He should not have received. In the days ahead may we learn more to be those who suffer persecution willingly and who remain joyful. If it pleases God to put us in a certain place, we will accept it with joy and gladness, because bearing the cross is more important than all the glory and position the world can afford. What does bearing the cross mean? It is described in the words: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (Mark 15:31). A true bearer of the cross does not save himself and his own glory. In particular, he does not save his own feelings. God will bless all those who are willing to go this way.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

THE MIND OF CHRIST JESUS

(2)

Date: April 4, 1938

Place: Penang

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-7

BECOMING IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN

Today we will continue to consider the mind of Christ Jesus. First, we want to consider His taking the form of a slave. Second, we want to consider His becoming in the likeness of men. In humbling Himself, the Lord Jesus gave up His form of God and took the form of a slave to become a slave. He took a position that He did not have to take and received what He should not have received.

BEING LIMITED, GIVING UP HIS FREEDOM

The Lord became in the likeness of men. What does this mean? He put on flesh and blood to become a man. Outwardly He was a man, but inwardly He was God. He was God from the beginning, omnipotent and omnipresent. He was

Spirit, and His Spirit filled the whole universe. But when He became a man, His Spirit became bound by His flesh. The omnipresent God was bound by the flesh. Where the flesh went, the Godhead within went. It was a great restriction for the Lord to become in the likeness of men. He was omnipotent, and His power was infinite. But when He walked on the earth as a man, He was placed under great restriction. Although He performed many miracles in His days, He performed them only to the extent that His flesh allowed Him. There were many other things that He was restricted from doing because of the limitations of His flesh.

He was limited by the weakness of the flesh. He could become tired and sleepy, and He could feel pain. He could not be as free as God was. As long as He lived in the flesh, He had to abide by the law of the flesh. Sleep is an enjoyment for us. However, the Lord was God, and He needed no sleep. Yet He slept the same way we sleep. His sleeping was a kind of restriction. This is not all. He had to live like every other ordinary human being, growing from infancy to adulthood. It is a wonder just imagining that the omniscient God needed to grow up! The Lord's being a slave meant that He gave up His glory, while the Lord's being a man meant that He gave up His freedom.

We all want to be like the Lord. We desire to have the mind of Christ Jesus. But are we willing to give up our glory and freedom? All limitation is for our benefit. When God stretches forth His restraining hand upon us, we should not resist. Rather, we should accept it with joy and rejoicing. But how many times do we yearn for freedom? We have to submit to the limitations that God has imposed upon us. We have to accept them with fortitude. God puts His restraining hand upon us and takes away our freedom. If we do not learn this lesson through the environment, God will not let us go. But if we are willing to submit and learn what God wants us to learn, He will liberate us. When the cross comes and we try to run away or give up, we will find that everything seems to turn us farther away from God.

This is the condition of many Christians today. They struggle with their environment and try to rid themselves of God's bondage. They want to be free. But the Christian life can only be manifested through the environment it passes through. A smooth environment often works against the manifestation of this life. If a person is put in an adverse environment, he may get angry, but if Christ is in him, he will gladly give up his freedom when he is restricted on all sides. The worst thing that can happen to a Christian is to rebel against God's arrangement in his environment. We must never resist any of God's arrangement in our

environment. Jesus Christ willingly put Himself under limitation. We should do the same today. A restricted environment reveals our true condition; it tells whether we are growing or failing. Blessed are those who do not complain but rather praise in the midst of their restrictions! Their hearts are in harmony with God.

When the cross comes to us, it not only strips us of our glory, but it also takes away our freedom. Yet most Christians today try to dodge the cross to avoid pain. As a result, we see very few marks of the cross in these ones. Their self is fat and big. It is true that they have avoided much pain, but it is also true that there are few marks of the cross in them. The whole issue rests on whether or not we are willing to allow ourselves to be afflicted for the accomplishment of God's will. Our natural life must be broken before there can be sustained and genuine growth. In our home, at work, and in the church, God has provided us with many limitations. These are opportunities from the Lord to smooth out our rough edges. God has placed some brothers and sisters in the church who can neither help us nor accomplish anything for us. All they can do is cause trouble. Why does God put all these people in the church? His goal is to make these ones our limitation. We should not struggle to be free. Freedom will not build us up. The building work comes when we are restricted in our environment.

David chose smooth stones (1 Sam. 17:40) because the weight of smooth stones is evenly distributed. The power came from David's hand, but only smooth stones could draw such power from David. In the same way, God wants to use smooth stones today. God has placed us in the church because we are sharp and pointed. Often the storm comes, and we are shaken, chipped, and rubbed against one another. But as we remain in this environment for three or five years, we are smoothed out. But how painful it is when we are being rubbed away! However, unless we are rubbed, we will never become smooth. Unfortunately, many people try to dodge. When the cross comes to them, they struggle to free themselves, and they cry for freedom. They may reduce their pain, but they miss the lessons that God has ordained for them. God has given us the cross so that we will yield to His sovereignty, become totally submissive, and never resist. He wants all of us to learn to become a limited person.

THOSE WHO ACCEPT GOD'S LIMITATIONS

Madam Guyon was born of a French noble family. She was attractive and dignified. Many people admired and adored her. But when God gained her, she learned all the lessons that God gave to her within a period of two years. When she was infected with smallpox, Louis XIV sent her some ointment to put on her

face so that she would not have a pock-marked face. Yet she prayed, "God, if having a pock-marked face pleases You, why should my face be smooth? If it is Your intention for me to be pock-marked, I would rather find an ointment that makes my face more pock-marked!" Consider this! The most admired beauty in the whole of Paris would readily relinquish her beauty for the sake of obedience to God! This is what it means to know God. This is what it means to know the cross. She said, "If God would chastise me with a rod or a whip, I would kiss the hand that is chastising." She was thoroughly acquainted with the cross and perfectly submissive under the mighty hand of God. What a pity that many people murmur against God for their handicaps; their hearts are full of bitter complaints. But there are also those who, though handicapped for life, willingly submit to the sovereign hand of God. When they conclude that it is God's pleasure that they be handicapped, they receive their lot from God gladly. We have to learn to be those who know God and the cross.

A few famous hymns in our hymnal were written by an able writer who lived over fifty years ago. She was bedridden for most of her life, from age seven until she was fifty or sixty years old. But she could write hymns and praise the Lord. Today men still love her hymns. Blessed are those who are limited, who accept God's limitations, who submit to His arrangement, and who yield to the mighty, sovereign hand of the Lord! Where there is submission, there is life and light.

I love the story of Job. He said, "Behold, if he slay me, yet would I trust in him" (Job 13:15, Darby). He also said, "He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass" (19:8). Thank God that there are walls. Although the walls have taken away our freedom, the same walls have kept Satan from crossing God's boundary to attack us further. We should learn to be those who live within the walls. We should not try to be free, and we should not struggle. We should learn to be limited and accept what we do not like. If we do this, we will learn the lesson of the cross.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

LEARNING THE LESSON OF THE CROSS

Date: April 5, 1938

Place: Penang

Scripture Reading: Jer. 48:11

THE WAY TO REMOVE THE LEES

BEING TO BE EMPTIED CONTINUOUSLY

In Jeremiah 48:11 God said, "Moab has been at ease from his youth;/And he is settled on his lees/And has not been emptied from vessel to vessel;.../Therefore his taste remains in him,/And his scent is not changed." Moab was like wine. His lees remained, his taste stayed the same, and his scent was not changed, because he was never emptied.

Today Christians are filled with lees. This is why God has to pour them from vessel to vessel. If you have never been emptied and if your taste still remains, you are not of much use in the hand of the Lord. In order to perfect us, God must continually empty us. Many times when a task is about to be finished, we find God forcing us to start everything all over again. We expect days of ease, and we want to keep God out of our territory. Day by day we pray for days of peace. But even while we are thinking this, something happens at home, in the church, or among the brothers and sisters. If we do not think about peace, we may have peace. But as soon as we think about it, trouble comes! God is emptying us to purify us. After we are purified once, He empties us again. After we are purified a second time, He empties us a third time. God will not allow us to remain settled on our lees. He continues to empty us.

If we do not humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and if there is no joy in us, the lees within us will never be purified. But if we submit and our hearts rejoice, we will find that all of God's dealings are necessary for us. If we accept what God has measured to us, we will be purified from the lees through our willingness to accept, submit, and be poured out. God has placed many undesirable things in our pathway. If we submit to His arrangement, we will be purified again and again. However, if we do not submit and instead react inwardly to His arrangement, then lees will remain within us, and our taste and scent will remain un- changed.

God allows us to experience shame, pain, and mishaps in the church, at work, and in our homes. These are the crosses that God has given us. They are there for us to learn the lesson of bearing the cross, denying the self, and submitting to God. When we are faced with these things, we should say to the Lord, "Since it pleases You to give me days of affliction, I am happy to pass my days in affliction. If it pleases You that I suffer, I will never ask for ease." We have to learn to satisfy God's heart. We are not only those who believe in the Lord but also those who love Him. The only question we need to ask about anything is whether or not God is pleased with it. Are we living for God? If we are, what more can we say if a thing pleases the Lord? John Bunyan said, "God, if it pleases You

that I go to hell, I will jump into it this very moment!" We do not live for ourselves but for God.

A RAW CHRISTIAN AND A MATURE CHRISTIAN

There are two kinds of Christians: raw Christians and mature Christians. Most Christians who are saved have not yet experienced God's dealings. They speak and walk as freely as before. When they argue with others, they want to return an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Before they were saved, they lost their temper when they were unhappy. Now that they are saved, they still lose their temper when they are angry. These are raw Christians. They have not learned the proper lessons before the Lord. Their will has never been broken, and they have never been humbled under the mighty hand of God; they have never been disciplined by the Lord.

After a Christian has passed through God's dealings, he will spontaneously accept God's discipline in the environment. When God directs his pathway with the chastening whip, he will go along with all the lessons that God gives to him. This is a mature Christian. The Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey's colt which no man had yet sat upon (Mark 11:2). A donkey is very difficult to ride on, more difficult than an elephant, horse, or camel. If the little animal has a fit of temperament, no one can push or pull it. A donkey is an animal with a terrible and stubborn temperament. A donkey's colt that has never been disciplined and trained is an absolutely wild animal. It was born free and has never carried anyone on its back. It walks and eats according to its own way; it is not tame. A tame donkey's colt is one that has been disciplined and chastised. Someone has been running, subduing, pulling, and directing the way it should take. This is the difference between being raw and being tamed. The Lord has to work on most Christians like working on a donkey's colt before He can use them. But we like to choose our own way. Those who choose their own way are raw Christians. However, no matter how raw we are, when the Lord wants to use us, He can ride on us. If we have never been disciplined and chastised, we will never be useful.

GOD'S DISCIPLINE FOR OUR PARTAKING OF HIS HOLINESS

In order for us to partake of His holiness and glory, and in order for us to learn to express the life of Christ, God chastises us and disciplines us all the time (Heb. 12:7, 10). He loves us and desires that we become useful vessels fit for His use.

In our eyes, some people are quite useless, yet God has put them among us. What is His purpose for doing this? These ones serve a very important purpose. When they are around, there is the cross. Without them, we have no cross. God is removing our "rawness" through the cross so that we can be mature.

We should learn submission through our environment and should never be rebellious in our hearts. If we are rebellious, we may not say it with our mouth, but there will be complaints and anger within. Once we rebel and struggle, we will lose the cross that the Lord has measured to us. The Lord puts all these things before us so that we will learn to be mature Christians. In order for a diamond to shine and become a precious treasure, there is the need for little grains of sand to rub against it. God has begotten many Christians who, in our eyes, are good at nothing except reviling and criticizing. Thank God that He is using these little stones to polish us! We are gems, but we are embedded in rocks and cannot shine. God is polishing us with little stones so that we can become a shining and radiant treasure.

There are some people who are naturally good and patient. But their goodness has never been dealt with by the cross. This goodness is not the result of lessons learned from God. A person may not resist once, twice, or even many times; outwardly he may appear to be very meek. But when he finally loses his temper, no one will be able to control it because his patience was raw; it did not issue from a mature life.

If a man is born with a very bad temper, yet learns to bear the cross, and through the cross develops patience before the Lord, his patience is far more precious than any natural patience. May the Lord grant us the grace to be those who learn to bear the cross. No matter how hard our circumstances may be and no matter how much burden, shame, and pain we bear, we should accept them gladly if we know that this is God's desire. We should weep before the Lord rather than run away or avoid the cross that the Lord has given us. Once we run away, our pain may go away, but so will the carving work that perfects us into a vessel of the Lord.

May the Lord carve us, and may we accept His carving and polishing work through the environment He has given us. May we learn to bear the cross and be dealt with by Him. If we do this, God will perform a great miracle in us, and our disposition and character will receive great perfecting through the operation of the cross.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR

FIVE KINDS OF FORGIVENESS

Date: April 6, 1938

Place: Penang

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:9; James 5:15; Eph. 4:32; Luke 24:47; John 20:22-23; Matt. 18:21-35; 6:14-15

All the passages we have read today speak of forgiveness, but the forgiveness that is spoken of in each place is different. Ephesians 4:32 speaks of a forgiveness that comes from Christ. John 20:22-23 speaks of a forgiveness that is related to the authority of the church; the church has authority to forgive men. This forgiveness is different from the forgiveness of Christ. First John 1:9 shows us that when a man confesses his sin before the Lord, he is forgiven. James 5:15, however, speaks of a special kind of forgiveness in which a sick brother should ask the elders to anoint him with oil. His sickness will then be healed, and his sins will be forgiven. Finally, Matthew 6:14-15 says that if we forgive others' offenses, our Father will also forgive our offenses, and if we do not forgive others' offenses, our Father will also not forgive our offenses.

In the Bible, there is more than one kind of forgiveness. In fact, there are at least five kinds of forgiveness. These five kinds of forgiveness are: (1) eternal forgiveness—this relates to the matter of life; (2) instrumental forgiveness—this relates to the church; (3) restorative forgiveness—this relates to fellowship; (4) governmental forgiveness—this relates to discipline; and (5) kingdom forgiveness—this relates to administration. I have made up these five expressions for ease of reference.

ETERNAL FORGIVENESS

Eternal forgiveness refers to God forgiving our sins through Christ. Once we are forgiven, we are forgiven forever. We receive eternal life forever, and we are justified forever. All of our sins before God are forgiven. In order to receive this forgiveness, we have to believe in the Lord. Once we believe in Him, we are immediately forgiven. This does not come about through man's work but through the work of the Lord's cross. The Lord's blood, which was shed on the cross, has dealt with all our sins. Exodus 12 tells us that the Israelites slaughtered the lamb at the Passover and put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost and side posts. When God saw the blood, He passed over the house immediately. The blood of Christ guarantees that we will not perish, because His blood has satisfied God's righteous requirement according to the law. The blood speaks of the price of sin.

Once sin encounters the blood, we find forgiveness, and our sins before God are washed away. When a man's sins are judged, his sins before God are thoroughly removed.

INSTRUMENTAL FORGIVENESS

On the night of the Lord's resurrection, He breathed into the disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. After the Lord resurrected, He gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples and told them that they had the authority to forgive or to retain others' sins (John 20:22-23). Only after a man has received the Holy Spirit will he have the authority to forgive or retain others' sins. Why did the Lord say that the disciples and the church have authority to forgive men's sins? This forgiveness is an indirect forgiveness. God forgives men directly, and He also forgives men indirectly through other men. Our forgiveness before God is based on Christ. But here is an institution on earth—the church, the house of God. A person's sins may be forgiven, but he must still go through the judgment of the church. If his sins are considered as forgiven, he can be baptized. But if they are not considered as forgiven, then he cannot be baptized. When the church comes together to break bread and someone walks in, he may be a saved person, but the worker or the church must judge whether he is partaking of the flesh and blood in the Lord's name. If such a one is not a Christian according to our opinion, we should not receive him, because he is not one of us and has nothing to do with the Body of Christ.

If a church is short of the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, it surely will run into errors. But if a church has the leading, the power, and the authority of the Holy Spirit, it can forgive men's sins, and God will honor such forgiveness. If the church retains men's sins, God will also honor such retaining. This is God forgiving through men's forgiving. But only those who have the power of the Holy Spirit can have the authority to forgive. God wants man to declare His forgiveness on earth. The church, the workers of God, and the apostles are the representatives of God on earth today. God declares man's forgiveness through such people. This is not to say that a man has any authority in himself. The church cannot forgive men. But the church can ascertain whether or not a man's sins are forgiven through the power of the Holy Spirit. God forgives through the hand of man. Eternal forgiveness has to do with life. As soon as a person is forgiven, he is regenerated. But instrumental forgiveness is related to a corporate entity, the church. It is the church that determines whether or not a man is qualified to be a part of it.

RESTORATIVE FORGIVENESS

Most of us have experienced the two kinds of forgiveness spoken of above. We have obtained God's forgiveness, and His children have testified that our sins are forgiven. These are past accomplished facts.

The other three kinds of forgiveness are not accomplished facts. They are things that we experience today. Once our previous sins—those we committed before we were saved—are forgiven, they are forever settled before God. When God forgives, His forgiveness is eternal. After we are saved, however, we can still sin. We cannot say that we have become perfect, but we should not say that we are altogether evil either. Whatever we are, it is hard for us to avoid falling into sin after our salvation. When we sin our conscience condemns us, and our fellowship with God is interrupted.

Restorative forgiveness has to do with our fellowship with God. Once the issue of life is settled, it will never change. God has regenerated us, and there is no way for Him to deny our justification. There is no way for Him to deny us as sons. On the one hand, God has begotten us. On the other hand, we have received eternal life. Our Father-son relationship with God in life can never be changed. Life never changes. However, fellowship does change. When a son sins, he feels ashamed when he sees his father because there is a problem with fellowship. When we sin, we are no longer as bold to meet God. We become fearful of Him, and we even are afraid to see our brothers. This means that sin has damaged our fellowship with God. What then shall we do? We have to confess to God. When we were saved, we did not confess every sin that we had committed; no one has the mental capacity to remember all of his sins. When we were saved, we only needed to confess that we were sinners and to believe in the redemption of God's Son. God then forgave us. Eternal forgiveness was granted the minute we believed. However, since we are regenerated and alive and since we are able to tell right from wrong, we have to confess our sins to God one by one before we can secure our forgiveness in fellowship. If we have offended our brothers, we must confess to them as well. We must ask God for forgiveness concerning our offenses. We have to acknowledge what we say and do as sins and ask God for forgiveness before our fellowship with Him can be restored.

Some people do not experience the joy of salvation after they are saved. They do not act like children of God; instead, they act like adopted children. They feel this way because they are not confessing their sins, and they are not in

fellowship with God. Hence, we must deal thoroughly with every sin that we commit each day. We have to maintain ourselves in constant fellowship with God. Today we are walking in the wilderness. Our feet can become defiled with dirt and uncleanness. We live in this world, in an unclean society. Day by day we have weaknesses. It is true that Christians need not sin, and it is possible for us not to sin. Unfortunately, we sometimes sin and become separated from God in fellowship. When we come to God, we have to acknowledge our sinful acts honestly and ask Him for forgiveness. If we do this, our fellowship with God will be restored; our hearts will be filled with the joy of salvation. If we allow any barrier to come between us and God in our fellowship, we will become cold and dark within because the light has gone out from us.

The secret of the Christian life is maintaining oneself in constant fellowship with God. We must maintain ourselves in a holy position and walk in a holy way. Many believers say in their heart that they will never fall. But once they fall, they are shattered; they roll on the floor and can no longer rise up. We must rise up and ask God for forgiveness, and we must recover the sweet fellowship we had with God. This is the forgiveness mentioned in 1 John 1:9.

GOVERNMENTAL FORGIVENESS

This kind of forgiveness is related to our environment. It involves God's arrangement, sovereignty, discipline, and hand. If we have offended God and have confessed to Him, He will forgive our sins and will recover our fellowship with Him. But this does not mean that the case is completely settled. David confessed to God after he sinned, and Nathan told him that God had taken away his sin. However, he also told him that the sword would never depart from his house because he had taken another man's wife to be his wife. He had done it in secret, but the Lord recompensed him under the sun (2 Sam. 12:7-15). It is easy to obtain forgiveness from God when we sin, but it is not that simple a thing when God's disciplining hand is upon us. We reap whatever we sow. We may struggle and wonder why we have encountered all the things that we have encountered, while others are left alone. We should realize that this is God's disciplining hand. We should not reject it; rather, we should submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God. At the right time, His disciplining hand will leave. This is the meaning of governmental forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS IN THE KINGDOM

Many people treat others too harshly in this age. In the kingdom age, they will be disciplined. The Lord says, "For with what measure you measure, it shall be

measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38). If we treat others in a mean way and criticize others mercilessly, God will deal with us in the same way in the future. Therefore, we have to be careful about the way we deal with others today. The way we deal with others will be the way that God will deal with us in the future. May the Lord grant us the grace to be those who show mercy to others, who do not deal with others in meanness, sharpness, or severity so that we can obtain mercy from God in that day (Matt. 5:7).

SECTION TEN

A MESSAGE

GIVEN IN SHANGHAI, 1938

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE

CONCERNING MATERIAL OFFERING

(Editor's Note: This is fellowship given by Brother Nee before a bread-breaking meeting.)

Date: Month unknown, 23rd, 1938

Place: Shanghai

Scripture Reading: Heb. 13:15-16; 1 Cor. 16:1-3

SACRIFICE OF PRAISE AND SACRIFICE

OF MATERIAL OFFERING

I am not in Shanghai much of the time, and according to the words of a few brothers and sisters, the bread-breaking meeting here has not been very good. I also feel the same. Of course, there are many reasons for this, and they may be quite complicated. But of all the reasons affecting the bread-breaking meeting, none is more serious than the one spoken of in Hebrews 13:15-16: "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name. But do not forget doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Here two sacrifices are spoken of. The first is the sacrifice of praise, and the second is that of doing good and sharing with others. A sacrifice is something that is a loss to oneself and a gain to God. A sacrifice of praise is a praise that is rendered to God at one's own loss. A sacrifice of sharing or giving is giving something to God at one's own expense. We do not have adequate praise in the bread-breaking meeting because we fall short in sharing and giving. We must give to the extent that we "feel" our giving. In other words, we have to give to the extent that we can sense the loss. Only this kind of offering can be considered a sacrifice. When we do this, we will

spontaneously offer up the sacrifice of praise. If we give in a casual way, our praise will not be high. If we do not have the sacrifice of giving, we will not have the sacrifice of praise. The apostle told us to offer up a sacrifice of praise. Then he spoke of the sacrifice of giving. The word "but" in verse 16 means that something will follow. In addition to the sacrifice of praise, there is still something that follows. The phrase "do not forget" refers to the fact that it is most easy for men to forget. What should we not forget? We should not forget doing good and sharing with others. Then the apostle explained, "For with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The apostle considered doing good and giving as a kind of sacrifice, and he pointed out that they are sacrifices that are well pleasing to God.

Praise and giving are like two legs. If one is shorter than the other, we cannot expect a person to walk properly. Praise and giving are also like two wings. If one is missing, a bird cannot fly. It may still have one wing, but the wing is useless. A bird with only one wing cannot fly. When we come to the meeting, we sometimes find superficial ones uttering a few words of praise, but their praise is never high.

THE HEART BEING WHERE THE TREASURE IS

Our God is a rich God. He does not need our money. The cattle of a thousand hills and the goats of ten thousand mountains are His. All the gold and silver are His. Then why does He need our money? It is because where our treasure is, there will our heart be also (Matt. 6:21). Money is a material thing that belongs to the earth. Yet the Bible puts God and mammon together. This proves that man's heart is either touched by God or by money. God's test of a man's heart toward Him is in the way of man's giving.

I started working for the Lord sixteen years ago in 1922. Although I cannot say that my work has been perfect, I can say that all the shortages have been covered under the blood. Sometimes I gave one-tenth, sometimes two-tenths, and sometimes five-tenths of what I received. Because there was never a steady flow of income, it was difficult to determine ahead of time how much I should give. But I can say that the times when I felt the pain of giving the most were the times that my thanksgivings and praises were the loudest. Many brothers and sisters can testify of the same thing. I despise anyone who says that he is living by faith, but who knows only how to receive but not to give. Sometimes the best test of where a person stands is to consider his giving. A worker of the Lord must give at least one-tenth, because the Bible shows us that the Levites had to tithe the same way as the rest of the Israelites (Num. 18:25-29). If a worker only

expects to receive from others, and if he considers money as being such a big thing, it is better for him to not be a preacher at all. Rather, he should go to the world and take up a money-making profession.

Someone told me that sisters generally give more than brothers do. The reason for this may be a failure on the part of the workers. One can speak on any subject comfortably; but when it comes to the subject of giving, many are hesitant to open their mouth. Tonight I am forced to speak about it. This is something I have wanted to say for many years but could not find the right opportunity. Tonight I will grasp the opportunity to say something because I will be away again very soon. The Bible records the case of brothers stealing money and sisters offering money (John 12:6; Luke 8:3). This is a shame to the brothers.

IT BEING UNRIGHTEOUSNESS TO HOLD BACK

Putting this matter in simpler terms, if we do not give, we are being unrighteous. The rent and utilities of the meeting hall all cost money. If we do not give, we are not doing our part, and others are paying for us to sit here. This is unrighteousness, and unrighteousness is sin. Do not think that others do not know and that we can cheat. God knows.

SETTING ASIDE PART OF ONE'S INCOME FOR GIVING

Many people are familiar with the meeting in Acts 20:7, but they have forgotten the giving in 1 Corinthians 16. At that time Paul asked the Corinthian believers to give because the Jerusalem believers were lacking. Today we do not send money to Jerusalem, but there are many local saints who are in need. First Corinthians 16:2 says, "You should." This means that whatever is spoken of is an injunction and a command. Paul said, "On the first day of the week each one of you should lay aside in store to himself whatever he may have been prospered." This means that we should set aside portions of our income ahead of time. Of all the money that we receive, we should designate a portion which cannot be touched. Every time we receive anything, we should set aside a portion for giving.

BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

Thank the Lord that we can still find something to give others and to help others with even though we ourselves may be lacking. We must give faithfully before we can receive the Lord's blessing. We should keep our money moving and active and not allow it to become like the stagnant water of the Dead Sea. If we do this, God will do something through our money. The Lord Himself said, "It is more

blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). If we obey the Lord's word faithfully, we will surely see a great blessing.