

*Come* to  
the Presence of  
the Lord

TITUS CHU

Come to the Presence of the Lord  
by Titus Chu

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# PREFACE

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There is a famous hymn that says:

*Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;  
Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;  
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish,  
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.*

The most important word of this hymn is “come.” Come, ye disconsolate! Come, you with wounded hearts! Come, you Christians! When you look unto heaven, heaven is in your heart. When you kneel, you come to the mercy-seat. When you come to heaven and the mercy-seat, you come to the presence of the Lord. By looking at Him, you have peace. By speaking to Him, you have joy. By listening to Him, you have leading. By enjoying Him, you have nourishment. By following Him, you walk in the light. By gaining Him, you get rid of your sorrow and find the answer to your problems. He is your hiding place, your high priest, your Comforter, and your source of life. He is the answer to all your situations.

Christians, have you heard the Lord’s calling? “*Come to Me*” (Matt. 11:28). “*Abide in Me*” (John 15:4). What a pity that most Christians don’t desire the Lord. They are afraid that they would only have the Lord. They leave Him easily to follow something else. Oh, we shouldn’t neglect this matter!

In September 2006, Titus Chu helped brothers and sisters in Cleveland who joined a ten-month training to get close to

the Lord, to come to the presence of the Lord, and to abide in the Lord. In this matter, there are four important items for us to know: first, the Lord's being; second, the flowing out of the Lord's being; third, the means of approaching the Lord; fourth, the manifestation of being one with the Lord. Brother Chu said to those in the training, "If you can learn this in ten months, it is enough!"

This book is similar to "The Secret of Fellowship" by Andrew Murray and "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence. Besides the spiritual inspirations herein, this book also contains revelations and some means to practice. To fellowship with the Lord is not a mysterious, empty, strange meditation. There are ways to practice. Every Christian has the Bible in hand and the Spirit dwelling within, but the inner life also needs the revelation of the Word and the way of practice. Yes, we need both inner revelation and outward practice to come the Lord so that we may abide under the shadow of the Almighty, be saturated with the teaching of the anointing, realize the secret of the Lord, and manifest oneness with the Lord. This book shows this precious foundation of a Christian's journey.

Look, Christians, the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:5). We who are born of the Spirit (John 3:6) should come to the presence of the Lord. His bosom is open wide to welcome us! Come, come to the presence of the Lord! This is our highest privilege as Christians!

## ABIDE IN ME

Abide in Me and I in you.

John 15:4

Dear brothers, this is the Lord's commandment: "*Abide in Me.*" But how do we "abide?" To abide in Him, we must come to the presence of the Lord and have a healthy relationship with Him. In these chapters, we will consider this relationship from four aspects. First, knowing who He is. Who is this Lord that we love? Second, the flowing out of His being. How does the Lord become our enjoyment? Third, the means by which we approach Him. There are some means through which we may enjoy the Lord. Fourth, manifesting oneness with the Lord. When we are close to the Lord, there must be a manifestation. We will talk about these four aspects in this book.

Do you know who He is that you love? Do you know how to approach Him? Do you know how to have a sweet fellowship with Him? Do you know how to live a life one with the Lord when you fellowship with Him?

How do you fellowship with the Lord? Are you able to fellowship with the Lord? To fellowship with Him is to abide in Him. If you are abiding in Him, you are fellowshiping with Him. Only those who know how to fellowship with the Lord are able to abide in Him. Regarding abiding in Him, there are two sides we need to see. On the one hand, we need

to see who He is. In other words, who is this One that we abide in? On the other hand, we need to see who we are.

To see both who He is and who you are will affect how you fellowship with Him. For example, a religious person cannot abide in the Lord because all his prayers are asking for God's blessing: "Lord, give me a house. Give me a car. Heal my illness...." To him, the Lord is only someone who gives blessings. How can he abide in the Lord? He can only live in His blessings. If we desire to abide in the Lord, we must know who He is. The higher your knowing is of Him, the higher and richer your fellowship will be with Him. You will receive more revelation from Him. The more you know Him, the more you abide in Him.

There is a Chinese saying: "You won't know how to enjoy life until you have been rich for three generations." In other words, the lifestyle of the newly rich doesn't match their wealth. When you see a wealthy American family, however, you find that their furniture, tableware, and artwork are all exquisite. For the newly rich, a sofa is still a sofa, a chair is still a chair. For those who have been rich for three generations, one sofa is different from another sofa, one chair is different from another chair. Taste takes time to cultivate. It is not easy to elevate one's temperament.

The same principle applies to enjoying Christ. Christ has unlimited riches. You may know He has unlimited riches, but you only partake of a little. This is because your concept is poor. Gradually, as you grow more and more, you partake of Christ more and more. The more you grow, the more you enjoy His supply, His provision, and His riches.

Although we all have the same Lord, the Lord we enjoy is different. Although we all like to enjoy the Lord, the way and the extent to which we enjoy Him are different. However, we should all know who He is so that we may enjoy Him.

Most people consider the Lord as the One in heaven who blesses us. This is a fallen religious teaching to a fallen people! Our Lord desires not only to bless us but also to impart



Himself into us and become our riches, our strengthening, our enjoyment, our all. As a result, we may be one with Him! If you have this understanding, you will know the word in John 15:4, “*Abide in Me and I in you*” as well as verse 5, “*he who abides in Me and I in him.*”

Dear saints, when we come to the presence of the Lord, we have to understand that our relationship with the Lord is one hundred percent organic. Paul said, “*For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree*” (Rom. 11:24). This shows that we have a grafted life. We were fallen men, poor branches. But these poor branches now have a better grafted life! Because of this, we have an organic relationship with the Lord. All the riches of the Lord become ours through the fellowship of life!

# THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES ARE ONE

I am the vine, you are the branches.

John 15:5a

How wonderful is this: when you come to the presence of the Lord and abide in Him, the result is being one with Him! I want you to know: coming to the Lord is not just for coming to the Lord. Abiding in Him is not just for abiding in Him. The reason you come to the Lord and abide in Him is for you to be one with Him. What is it to be “one with Him”? It means the Lord’s desire is your desire, His purpose is your purpose, and His hope is also your hope. This is being one with Him, the reality of abiding in Him.

How can you be one with Him? What is the secret? Let me tell you the secret of being one with Him: you must understand the great fact that the vine and the branches are one!

The Lord said, “*I am the vine, you are the branches*” (John 15:5a). Do not look down on this. The Lord has told us that His relationship with us is like the vine and the branches. The Lord said He is the vine—the whole vine. He didn’t say that He is the trunk of the vine and we are the branches. When we read the Bible, it is easy for us to imagine this way: He is the trunk and we are the branches. Let me tell you, the vine includes the branches! “*I am the vine*” means He is both the trunk and the branches. He is the origin of life, and He is our reality. In this picture, what is the relationship of the

Lord with you? He abides in you and you in Him. You and He have a sweet, real, heavenly, organic relationship. His being includes you and you may abide in Him healthily.

Dear saints, do you see this organic fact? The branches don't need to strive to abide in the vine! You don't see a branch in tears and a full sweat saying, "I must endeavor and struggle to abide in the vine, otherwise I cannot bear fruit." Such a thing has never happened. All the branches are peaceful. Because the vine is healthy, the branches bear fruit in peace.

The Lord used this fantastic heavenly parable to show us that the center of the universe is the vine. Only this organic vine is valuable. Outside of this vine, things don't have much value. Everything exists for this vine. Heaven is for earth, earth is for man, and man is for God. Dear brothers, in the whole universe, this vine is the most special and most valuable object. This vine is the mystical, heavenly, organic body of Christ. The body of Christ is this vine that includes countless branches. All these branches are the members of the body of Christ.

When we speak of function, we speak of the members of the body. But when we speak of life, all the members are branches of the vine. Paul is a branch. Peter is a branch. John is a branch. Every saint for the past twenty centuries is a branch. Praise the Lord, we also are branches. This is a fact. We don't need to earn it. We only need to enjoy the fact that we are the branches of the vine! Struggling to be a branch only brings us out of experiencing the reality of who we are. The branches abide in the vine—they are one with the vine.

This is wonderful! The infinite Lord is the true vine in resurrection, and we have an organic union with Him. What He has is ours and is imparted into us. We must see that we are one with the Lord in life. We are the branches of the vine. We have an organic union with the Lord in life. We are one with Him!



## PART ONE

# KNOWING THE LORD'S BEING

Section One      He is the Prince of Life

Section Two      He is the Lord

Section Three      He is the Savior



Section One: He is the Prince of Life  
Chapter 3

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## HE IS THE PRINCE OF LIFE

But put to death the Prince of life,  
the one whom God raised from the dead,  
a fact to which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:15

If you want to fellowship with the Lord and be one with Him, you must see who He is. Let me tell you, He is the Prince of life. Oh, your Lord is the Prince of life!

Peter gave a message in Acts, saying, “*(You) put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead*” (Acts 3:15). Other translations of this verse call the Lord the “Author of life.” Both translations, “the Prince of life” and “the Author of life,” are good, although perhaps I like “the Author of life” more. Why? Every time you meet the Prince of life, He gives you life. He is the Author of life. When you call, “Oh, Lord,” the Author of life gives you life. When you say, “Lord, I love You,” the Author of life gives life to you. You cannot touch the Lord without touching life. When you touch Him, you will be filled with His life. If you just pray in a religious way: “Lord, bless me. Give me this. Give me that...” you will not touch the Lord. This is because you can only touch what you ask for. Brothers, the Lord may answer these kinds of prayers when you are young, but this is not Him. The verse does not say, “(you) put to death the Santa Claus.” No. He is not a Santa Claus but the Author of life!

Sometimes, in our immaturity we just pray whatever we want. I want this today. I want that tomorrow. When the Lord does answer our prayer, we testify of it in a meeting, and people even say “Amen!” Why this “Amen”? It is because we all are immature. It is wonderful, however, that even when you pray this kind of prayer, sometimes you touch life, seemingly for no reason. Without even realizing it, you feel it is good to pray. You have enjoyment. Without realizing it, you touched life! This shows that our Lord is the Author of life; He is the very origin of life!

Dear brothers, He is the Prince of life. He is the Originator of life (Darby Translation). You cannot come to the presence of the Lord without gaining life. If you didn't touch life, enjoy life, or gain life, or if you didn't have the supply of life, the support of life, the strengthening of life, or the freshness of life, it shows that you didn't really come to the presence of the Lord. When you come to His presence, it is not simply a matter of time spent. Nor is it simply a matter of practices. For sure, you must spend time and you may use some ways to be in His presence, but in the end, you must touch life. If you spend half an hour in the Lord's presence, by the end of the half hour you must be filled with His life. You must touch life, enjoy life, gain life, enjoy the supply of life, gain the supply of life, and enjoy the strengthening of life so that the life is manifested in you. If you come to the Lord in this way, your life will be rich. You will have a bountiful life!

Praise the Lord, we can come to His presence. When you come to Him, you must enjoy His presence. Such enjoyment of His presence comes from life. When you touch and enjoy life, you enjoy His presence. His presence in life becomes your unspeakable strengthening. Dear saints, when you worship Him in your spirit, you must know who the Lord is. He is the Prince of life! He is the Author of life! He is the Originator of life! When you touch Him, you cannot help but touch life. When you come to the presence of the Lord, you must understand that He is the Prince of life!

## HE IS SPIRIT

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him  
must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24 (NKJV)

He is the Prince of life, but what is life? Life is the Spirit (Rom. 8:10, NKJV). Life is also the result of the imparting of the Spirit (John 6:63). The Spirit is life, and the Spirit gives life.

The Bible also tells us that God Himself is Spirit. John 4:24 says very clearly, “*God is Spirit.*” The literal translation of this phrase from Greek is, “*God, Spirit.*” This expression is even stronger and more direct. Who is God? God, Spirit.

Dear brothers, life comes from the Spirit, and our God is the God of Spirit. It is impossible to touch Him and enjoy Him without touching the Spirit and enjoying the riches in Spirit. This is because God is Spirit; Spirit is God. “*God, Spirit.*” If you desire to come to His presence, you must know His being. Who is He? First, He is the Prince of life, the Author of life, the Originator of life. Then, life is the continuation of the Spirit. We are able to touch life and enjoy life in our spirit because we touch the Spirit. If your spirit is not living, you won’t meet the Lord. Conversely, if you have not touched life in your spirit, you can know that you have not really met the Lord. He is the Spirit. If we meet Him, something must happen in our spirit.



For you to come to the presence of the Lord, you may spend time to talk to Him, to read the Bible, or to sing a hymn. But no matter what you do, you must pay attention to your spirit. The biggest hindrance to this is our mind. When you try to be in the presence of the Lord, you will realize how difficult it is to control your mind. Our thoughts are everywhere, which we don't even realize until we kneel down to pray. You will be surprised at how wild your mind is: "Why am I on an airplane? Why am I thinking about Africa? Why am I thinking about the bills to pay?" If this is the case, what should we do? Some, like the Catholics, use the rosary. This is the same principle as Buddhists who use prayer beads. As you count the beads, your mind settles down. However, I'd like to tell you that God is not prayer beads. You may use the beads to calm your mind, but this does not guarantee that you will touch the Lord. God is Spirit. You may come to the Lord through singing hymns, pray-reading, sighing, or groaning. However, you must remember that these things are not coming to the Lord. It is the spirit when you sing or sigh that brings you close to Him!

Brothers, you must understand that God is Spirit. God and Spirit are one! When you touch the Spirit, you touch God. When you touch God, you must be in spirit. No Spirit, no God. When God is realized in you, it is the Spirit realized in you. Do you want to be close to the Lord? Your spirit must be healthy. The Lord is the Prince of life, and life is closely related to the Spirit.

I must tell you again: your spirit must be healthy! There are some spiritual exercises for you to open to the Lord in spirit. You can sigh in spirit, call the name of the Lord in spirit, groan in spirit, and speak to Him in spirit. You may talk to Him to overcome your mind. Your mind may go to Africa or Asia, but that is ok. Just keep talking to the Lord until you touch the Spirit. When you touch the Spirit, your mind can be calmed, and you can enjoy the Lord by abiding in Him!

## HE IS LOVE

God is love, and the one who abides in love  
abides in God, and God abides in him.

1 John 4:16b

Our Lord is the Prince of life. His essence is Spirit. And His being is love. The apostle John told us that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) and God is Light (1:5). On the one hand, God is Light; on the other hand, God is love. When you touch Him, you touch His essence, the Spirit. When you touch His essence, His essence brings His being to you. His being is love. Therefore, no one can say their spirit is strong yet be without love.

How do you know you abide in Christ? Because you touch life. How do you know you touch life? Because you have enjoyment in spirit. How do you know you have enjoyment in spirit? Because you have love in your spirit!

God's essence is Spirit. God's being is love. God's operation is light. When you touch the Lord, you touch life. When you touch life, you have the Spirit, love, and light. The Spirit is in you. When you touch the Spirit, you touch the Lord who is love. The Spirit pours love into you. Paul said, "Because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). When you touch the Lord, you feel that the Lord is lovely, and you desire to love Him. You feel you need to get closer to Him, and you

begin to confess and repent because the light comes. You see God in light, and you have the desire to be near Him!

Praise the Lord, He is love! Nothing is better than abiding in love! It is true in the human realm as well as in the spiritual realm. Why does the condition of an orphan strike us as so sad? It is because they lack love. Our happiest moments are when we are filled with love. Childhood is the happiest time in human life, but children don't know how to appreciate it. The next happiest is when we fall in love and get married. At this time, many know how to appreciate love, and many write songs and poems to praise the experience. However, the highest eternal love is the love of Christ! His love is poured out in our hearts. When we touch Him and come close to Him, His love makes us so satisfied. We may weep and soften our stony hearts, which then become hearts of flesh. We begin to have so many feelings toward the things of God. Why? It is because of love. When we have such love, we can tell the Lord, "Lord, I enjoy Your presence. I'd like to live for You!"

How can we consecrate ourselves to the Lord? We consecrate ourselves when we fellowship with the Lord, touch His love, and enjoy His love. Allow me to testify of my own experience. I have loved the Lord since 1954. As the years go on, I love Him more and more, deeper and deeper. How do I love Him more and more? There are three ways.

First, I love to sing hymns. I like to sing and memorize hymns of love. When I sing hymns, I cry. I feel that the Lord is so good. I become very soft toward Him. Second, I care about His interests. Everything I do is for His interests. I often pray, "My life is for You! My life is for Your satisfaction. Lord, why do You love me so much? How can I repay Your love?" Third, I pray a lot and learned to fast. When I was young, I fasted once a week. I would kneel down in a room to pray until I was filled with love and with the Spirit. Because of this, it was natural for me to pay a price to follow the Lord. I didn't care about my career or my future. My senior year in high school was hard because we needed to prepare for college entrance exams.

It was a serious matter because our exam grades could decide our future. However, when I prayed and touched the Lord, nothing else could touch me. Because of the Lord's presence, I had wisdom from the Lord and knew how to study.

I want to encourage you to enjoy the Spirit as life in these three ways, so that love may operate in you. When love operates, you must tell the Lord how much you love Him. I am seventy years old. I still tell the Lord, "Lord, I do love You. No one is more lovely than You." An elderly brother wrote these words before he passed away:

*O Lord, I love You,  
I really love You,  
Without You, life is really nothing.  
You are so attracting,  
And You are so charming;  
Your riches are unsearchable.  
Your name is so dear and sweet,  
Calling makes one satisfied,  
Now You are mine and I am Thine, Lord.*

When this elderly man was about to see the Lord, his prayer was still, "Lord, I love You!" This testifies to us of God's being of love. In turn, our direct response to Him is love!

You need to tell the Lord how you love Him. You should tell Him, "Lord, I love You!" all the time. You should tell Him, "O Lord, I love You, I really love You. Although I don't grow much, I do love You." When you dwell in His love and speak a word of love to Him, you will be very close to Him. You need to tell Him everything and remind Him, "I love You. I read the Bible because I love You. I come to the meeting because I love You. I got some help today but I still tell You I love You." When you fall, you need to tell Him, "Lord, I fell, but I love You. I failed, but I love You. I am surprised that You love a fallen man like me, and I am amazed that I can still tell You that I love You!"

## HE IS LIGHT

God is Light, and in Him  
there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5a

Who is the Lord? He is Spirit, He is love, and He is light. When He operates, He operates in light. There are two aspects of light.

The first aspect of light is that when you are in light, you may see His being. For example, you may believe in the Lord and follow Him, yet not really know who He is. Therefore you can think you pay a great price with every step you take. But if you really know who He is, you will say, “All of my other pursuings, even my spiritual pursuings, are common compared to Him.”

Do you spiritually pursue? Common! Did you go to a Bible study? Common! Did you pay a price? Common! Compared to Him, what you did and who you are is nothing. When you see the Lord in the light, you will pursue Him regardless of the price.

You cannot touch life without gaining the Spirit and love. When the Spirit and love come, they bring you to Christ, and you see Him in the light. When you have light, you realize how good our Lord is and how very common your pursuing and consecration are. Why do I say common? It is because whatever you do is a “bargain.” Why did you come to this

training? You may answer: “I want to be spiritual,” “I’d like to be more operative,” “I want to be useful,” “I’d like to gain some riches,” or, “I’d like to be perfected.” All of these are common. If you really see the Lord and see who He is, you will feel “Even if I gave everything to Him, that is too common a thing!”

Dear brothers, this is light. God is light, and light shows you who the Lord is. When you see His wonderful being, you say, “Lord, I could never imagine how glorious You are. I never knew You were so wonderful. When I give my wretched life to You, the value of my existence becomes so high!”

The second aspect of light is that it enlightens you. When light enlightens, you begin to know who you are. Light kills the things that do not belong to God. Enlightenment is not condemning; it is manifesting and killing. Light can be used for disinfection. The stronger the light is, the more it kills the germs. For example, when it rains for some days, mold can build up on the wall. But when the sun shines, it kills the mold. When light comes, negative things are killed. I’d like to say it again: Light that enlightens has two functions on you—it manifests who you are, and it kills the things that are not out of God.

Brothers, when you come to the Lord, you must realize you are one with the Lord organically. You need to touch your spirit and gain life in the Spirit. When you touch the Spirit, you will feel love and light. On the one hand, light makes you know Him and shows His preciousness. You will feel you are not worthy, even if you suffer the loss of all things for Him. On the other hand, light shows who you are, and you may know yourself. It kills all things that don’t match Him. Are you troubled by sin? Are you bound by the world? You may pray and pray, “Lord, save me!” but it seems the Lord doesn’t save you. Why doesn’t He save you? It is because light has not yet come. Before the light comes, you only know right and wrong according to your religious knowledge. When light comes, the power of sin disappears, and you are freed from sin and bondage.

Praise the Lord! The Spirit, love, and light are all life! This life grows deeper and deeper. When you experience the Spirit, you experience love and experience light!

## Section Two: He is the Lord

### Chapter 7

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# HE IS THE LORD

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Acts 2:36

If you want to exercise abiding in Christ, you must first see who He is. Who is He? First, He is the Prince of life. As the Prince of life, He is Spirit, He is love, and He is light. Second, He is the Lord. Perhaps you’d ask, “Doesn’t everyone know He is the Lord?” Here, we must realize that the Bible describes Christ as the Lord in many aspects—He is the Lord Jesus, He is the Lord Christ, He is the Lord Jesus Christ, He is Jesus who has been crucified, and He is also the resurrected Christ. When we come to “the Lord,” He is Lord to us in many ways. Therefore, He is able to meet and satisfy all of our needs.

In Acts 2, Peter stood up and said, *“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear”* (v. 33). Peter’s message was high and glorious. This perfect Lord can satisfy all of our needs!

How does He satisfy our needs? On the one hand, He Himself was exalted to the right hand of God. On the other hand, He has poured out the promise of the Holy Spirit. He is King, yet He also gives us the Spirit and joins Himself with



us. He both reigns in the heavens and lives in us now. And then Peter said, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified”* (v. 36).

Dear saints, when we say He is “the Lord,” it means He was crucified. Because of this, God made Him both Lord and Christ. Not only He is the crucified Jesus, He is also the resurrected and glorified Christ. When we come to the presence of the Lord, we must see that He is at the same time the crucified Jesus and the resurrected, glorified Christ.

The crucified Jesus is able to understand us, sympathize with us, and comfort us when we are in hardship. In the resurrected and glorified Christ, God is able to bring us to glory according to His economy, because the Lord is the anointed One. You must meet this One when you come to His presence. Oh, those who desire to come to His presence must know He is the Lord, and as the Lord, He is able to meet all of our needs!

## HE IS JESUS CRUCIFIED (1)

For we do not have a high priest who  
cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,  
but One who has been tempted in all things  
as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

Who is the Lord? He is Jesus crucified! As human beings, we need Jesus who has been crucified, because mankind always has hardships and sufferings. When you are in hardships, in sufferings, in persecutions, or in distresses, come to the presence of the Lord! When you come to Him and enjoy Him, the crucified Jesus is able to completely sympathize with you. How wonderful this is! Just like the hymn says: “Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, But our toil He doth richly repay.”

In your life, there will be things that cause you pain. You must tell the Lord at this time, “Lord, I worship You. When I come to You, I know that everything I am going through, You have been through. You are Jesus crucified!” Dear brothers, I really treasure this Jesus! Sometimes you will feel the sky is about to collapse. The Lord would answer, “The sky has collapsed before.” You can tell Him, “Nothing could be more painful!” The Lord would sympathetically answer, “Yes, I know.”

When we come to Him, His sympathy, His understanding, His support, His comfort, His encouragement, and His union with us in hardship are incredible! We cannot believe how deeply the Lord understands us. Indeed, we come to the Lord who is Jesus crucified.

He is Jesus crucified. He understands and sympathizes with all of our sufferings. Oh brothers, coming to the Lord is a great matter! In the principle of coming to Him, we should not have any boundary with Him. We usually pretend. When we come to the Lord, we don't like to tell Him the truth. We feel it is better to hide a little bit from Him. We are embarrassed to speak the complete truth. However, you must remember that our Lord is Jesus who has been crucified. There is nothing we cannot tell Him. There is nothing we need to hide from Him. There is nothing we cannot open to Him.

Dear saints, we can open up our deepest feelings, deepest sorrows, and hardest difficulties to Him. He would tell us, "I am Jesus crucified! I know what you are going through." In Hebrews it says, *"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin"* (4:15).

When we tell Him how weak we are, He understands. When we tell Him how low we are, He understands. When we tell Him how scared we are, He understands. When we tell Him how helpless we are, He understands. He would say to you, "I completely understand your feelings. Do you remember how I prayed in Gethsemane? I prayed for God's will. Your prayer is different; you pray for your weakness. However, we have similar experiences."

## HE IS JESUS CRUCIFIED (2)

She will bear a Son;  
and you shall call His name Jesus,  
for He will save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21

Praise the Lord, our Lord is Jesus who has been crucified! He is full of sympathy and understanding. He is also perfect in terminating. What does that mean? For example, you can come to the Lord with your weaknesses, your oppressions, your worries, your failures, and your helplessness. Not only is He able to understand and sympathize with you, but He is also able to terminate all these things. He would say, "I am Jesus who has been crucified. All the negative things are terminated on the cross, where My earthly ministry ended and My heavenly ministry began."

Brothers, the cross terminated for the Lord, and it also terminates for us. For example, when I began to love the Lord, I desired to be perfect and gave myself a lot of pressure. Because of this pressure, my temper actually got worse and worse. Even my mother commented, "Aren't you a Christian? How could you behave like this?" I felt so shameful and had nothing to say. I often prayed, "Lord, save me!" It almost seemed that the Lord didn't want to save me. One day I asked my sister to go with me to see sister Ho, an older spiritual sister. While we were waiting in her living room, my sister and I began to pray.

We prayed and confessed. Sister Ho came and joined our prayer. I prayed for my comfort. She prayed for my termination. I said, "Lord, I have a bad temper. I have my limitations. I do not live a good Christian life. Lord, thank You. You know all of these things." At that time I really had the Lord's presence. At that moment, sister Ho simply prayed, "Lord, 'I' have died with you on the cross!" Immediately, I had a feeling in my spirit, "I died! I died! I am crucified with the Lord. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me!" Oh, I died! I was terminated. I didn't need to have any hope for myself! I didn't need to say anything more, since I had died!

Dear brothers, you need to know that your Lord is Jesus crucified. He is your Savior. "Jesus" means "salvation," for "*He will save His people from their sins*" (Matt. 1:21). When you pray and ask for His salvation, you can open to Him and pour out your heart completely. You may confess, "I have these failures!" You can even tell Him, "Lord, when I pray, most of the time I am in my mind. I am not a pure person. When I come to You, I am still thinking of how to testify before others in the meeting. Lord, please forgive me."

No one can bear you like our Lord! Although you are not good at all, you can tell Him everything. "Lord, I failed. I am weak. It is amazing that a man like me can still come to You!" You must understand why you are able to come to the Lord. It is because He is Jesus crucified! He has been through all the temptations you are going through. You fail, but He died and shed His blood for you. He knows what you experience. You are tempted, and He was tempted. You fail, but He overcame. Yet He knows your feelings. He sympathizes and understands, since He was in all points tempted as we are.

Brothers, since you have a Lord like this, you should feel so peaceful! He knows everything. He knows all your weaknesses and limitations. He has been crucified. When you are with Him and touch Him, the negative things in you are gradually terminated. Even the bondage of sin and the world will be terminated in you because of Jesus crucified!

## HE IS THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

Explaining and giving evidence that the Christ  
had to suffer and rise again from the dead,  
and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming  
to you is the Christ."

Acts 17:3

Yes, Jesus is also the resurrected Christ! When you meet Him, you may feel glorious and fresh in your spirit. When you meet the Lord, on the one hand He gets rid of the negative things in you, and on the other hand He produces all the positive things in you. Why? Because He is both Jesus crucified and Jesus, the resurrected Christ!

The word "Christ" means "Anointed One." Before the foundation of the world, God anointed Him to fulfill His desire. The process of this desire being carried out is called "God's economy." In different generations, God has had different operations and different leadings. Now, in the age of New Testament, the resurrected Christ has become the life-giving anointing oil. Through the Spirit, He dispenses divine life into us. In this life, He has love and He has light.

Dear brothers, the more life you receive, the more you will see heavenly things. When I had just been saved, I prayed a lot. I prayed when I walked. I prayed when I rode my bicycle. I practiced praying unceasingly. I was nineteen at that time. I didn't know much about God's economy or God's eternal

plan. However, when I touched the Lord, I felt I was joined to the heavenly Christ, to His reigning, and to the operation in His reigning. I felt my life was glorious! I touched the Lord and I touched the heavenly things. When I touched the heavenly Lord, so many positive things issued in me.

As you walk, the crucified Jesus gives you strength and the resurrected Christ gives you hope. When I was young, I didn't know what that hope was. I just felt hopeful. I felt I was different from others. I knew I was common. I wasn't a noble man, just a regular kid. However, within me, I felt I was much higher than the nobles. I couldn't explain the reason. I just felt I had touched Christ and it was so high! The worldly people only had void and vanity, but my life was so wonderful and valuable! I didn't know what my future held. Just like a hymn says: "I know not how far the future lies ahead. On this path of no retreating I am led." However, though I didn't know my future, I still had an unexplainable assurance.

Dear brothers, as you abide in Christ, who He is (Spirit, love, and light) will become constituted in you. More than this, He comes and meets all your needs. Even more, He gives you revelations of the divine things so that you may feel your life is so rich!

Praise the Lord, He is faithful. I have believed in Him over fifty years, yet I still have the same feeling when I come to Him. I still touch the same Lord I touched fifty years ago. I still have the same assurance, the same glorious feeling, and the same hope rising within me. When I come to the presence of the Lord, I still know I am one with Him. He is my assurance. What I want and what God wants are one. Today, I still feel my life is glorious!

Dear saints, to touch Christ is not a small matter. Most Christians are just "playing" with Him. They "play" with Him on Sunday mornings and then go back to whatever they were doing. However, if you are serious with Him, He will be serious with you. If you meet Him in your spirit, you will feel so relieved. All the burdens, all the difficulties, all the loads,

all the attacks vanish because you abide in Christ. More than this, you will feel an unexplainable assurance within you. You are able to tell Him, “Lord, I love You so much. It is so valuable for me to follow You in this way. My existence is joined to heaven. The value is so high!”

Perhaps you don’t have the utterance, but you should have the assurance: “A sinner like me can feel so glorious today!” When you are in His presence, you don’t feel the need to talk about sin, failure, or weaknesses. You are just amazed that you met this wonderful, glorious, heavenly Christ!



## HE IS LORD JESUS CHRIST

Remembering that night and day  
for a period of three years I did not  
cease to admonish each one with tears.

Acts 20:31b

He is Lord Jesus Christ! The Bible is very interesting. Sometimes, the Lord is called Christ Jesus, while other times He is called Jesus Christ. We may say that Christ Jesus is from the view of God, while Jesus Christ is from the view of man. When we look at the Lord from God's point of view, He is first the Christ who fulfills God's desire. When we look at the Lord from our point of view, He is often first Jesus, as in our experience we are also very humble. God has made Jesus who was crucified both Lord and Christ. As we abide in Christ, we experience the same process: we must go through the lowliness of the cross to reach the glory of resurrection.

Dear saints, if you desire to love the Lord and follow Him, He must first be the crucified Jesus to you. Your life will be full of many experiences, including the experience of suffering, so that you may sympathize with brothers. The crucified Jesus is not only for you but also for God to gain a certain kind of person. As you learn to abide in Christ, you will come to know the Lord's comfort, support, understanding, sympathy, and satisfaction. Once you know Jesus in this way and then touch Him as Christ, the crucified Jesus will begin to operate in you

and cause you to have burden. You will have tears because of the weakness of a brother. Paul told the church in Ephesus, *“remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears”* (Acts 20:31).

What caused Paul to shed tears night and day? It was the Spirit of the crucified Jesus. Because of this Spirit, Paul was willing to bear the cross for God’s economy. He was willing to pay any price for God’s desire. When he saw many idols in Ephesus (which was a big city, like Los Angeles or New York), he began to preach the gospel and was persecuted by Alexander the coppersmith. (Perhaps Alexander’s idol-making business was affected because many had believed in the Lord and no longer worshipped idols.) Paul knew what abiding in Christ was, and he enjoyed the Spirit of Jesus to the extent that he lived for other brothers. When he was with them, he was in tears night and day. This is the Spirit of Jesus. When you abide in Christ, the Spirit of the crucified Jesus will cause you to have tears.

When you touch the Lord and abide in Christ, the crucified Jesus operates in you to intercede for the brothers, sisters, and churches. You will have a feeling, “Lord, I suffer just like You suffer for them.” Watchman Nee wrote such a hymn about the church life. His hymn was different from our hymns about the church life. Ours are “how lovely is the church life!” The setting of his was, “Sometimes there is fighting, brothers against brothers. Everyone wants to show his fist in anger.” He wrote, “I shut my door and sing hymns to You. I know Your heart is aching. My loss cannot compare to Yours.”

When people attacked Brother Nee, he knew the Lord was the one who suffered most. If he had any loss, it couldn’t compare to the Lord’s. Because of the opposition of brothers, a brother like him with abundant riches couldn’t do anything. However, like Paul, he knew how to abide in Christ. “I know your heart is aching. My loss cannot compare to yours.” Christ’s suffering became his suffering. Christ’s tribulation became his tribulation. Christ’s cross became his cross.

Brothers, our Lord is Jesus crucified. He is able to understand you, sympathize with you, support you, comfort you, and encourage you. He is also Christ, the resurrected one. When you touch Him, you have assurance, you have buoyancy, you feel you are heavenly, you have the strength to walk, and you feel your life has the highest value. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. When you follow Him in this way, you are one with Him. You depart from the realm of self and into the realm of the Lord. You are not for yourself. You are for the Lord. You don't live for yourself. You live for the Lord. And you have so many feelings regarding the brothers, the sisters, and the churches.

My brothers, do not just work for the Lord. We should have the heart of the Lord. If you just work for Him, you still make your own choice. If you have His heart, you don't make your own choice. A worker chooses a good field. He chooses wherever there are blessings. However, a servant of the Lord is not like that. He abides in Christ. He is in the fellowship of His sufferings. He is in tears for the brothers. He is in sorrow for the brothers. He is willing to be poured out upon the brothers for their benefit!

How do you abide in Christ? You see this Lord: He is the crucified Jesus for your satisfaction, He is the resurrected Christ for God's satisfaction, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ whose cross operates in you. You will feel that you need to be with the brothers, that you need to labor among them, and that you need to suffer for their growth. Paul labored for the birth of the Galatians. Yet he wrote to them, *"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you"* (Gal 4:19, NKJV). For their growth, he was willing to labor again until Christ was formed in them.

## HE IS LORD OF LORDS

Which He will bring about at the proper time—  
He who is the blessed and only Sovereign,  
the King of kings and Lord of lords.

1 Timothy 6:15

He is the Lord. He is Jesus crucified, He is Christ resurrected, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Jesus who sympathizes with you. He is Christ who supplies you with all the divine things. As Jesus, He leads you to the fellowship of His sufferings. As Christ, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He leads you to experience His sovereignty.

My brothers, you need to know that He is the One who reigns above all. Isn't He Christ? Yes, He is. Therefore, He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14, 19:16). With this understanding, your life can be so bold, and you can have such trust in Him. You can be assured that everything is arranged by Him.

I often say there is nothing called “unlucky” for Christians. Christians are in God's blessing. We need to tell Him, “Lord, I worship You. Everything is under Your sovereignty. I submit to You in peace.” Those who abide in Christ submit to Him in peace. Brothers, it is good to pray, “Lord, I submit to You. I give my life to You. You are the one who reigns above all. You are the King of kings and Lord of lords. Everything is under You. Without You, nothing would happen to me. I

know You are in everything that has happened so that I may gain You more!”

Throughout your whole life, you will have good days and bad days. You will have good times and bad times. However, you should say, “Whether my days are happy or sad, high or low, there is one thing I know: Lord, You are the Lord. I want to come to You and trust in You.” It is so good to trust yourself to the Lord, to give yourself to the Lord, and to enjoy peace in His sovereignty. Because you are one with Him and abide in Him, you are completely in peace. How good this is!

Section Three: He is the Savior  
Chapter 13

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## HE IS THE SAVIOR OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE

Who is the Savior of all men,  
especially of those who believe.

1 Timothy 4:10b (NKJV)

Who is our Lord? He is the Prince of life, He is the Lord, and He is the Savior. Paul wrote in his last epistle, “*(He) who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe*” (1 Tim. 4:10b, NKJV). If the Lord is already the Savior of all men, why did Paul add “especially of those who believe”? He is the Savior of all men, but not everyone desires Him. He is the Savior of all men, but not all men are saved. Many reject Him. Yet He is the Savior “especially of those who believe.” This shows that He will never give a believer up. He will save you no matter what. You need to learn to tell the Lord, “Every time I turn to You is a time of salvation for me. You are my Savior. You are the Savior of all men, especially the Savior of those who believe! I believe and I trust in You. You are able to save me in everything!”

Dear brothers, let us thank the Lord, for He is not only our Lord, but also our Savior! He is our precious Lord. We follow Him and love Him. More than this, He is also our Savior! He saves us when there are difficulties we cannot overcome. He saves us when it seems there is no way to go on. There is a hymn that speaks of such a hard time: “When nought in the world can give comfort or cheer, When sighing and weeping

encompasses me.” At this time, we need to tell Him, “You are my Savior. Save me!” Is there any sin you cannot overcome? He is your Savior. Is there any bondage you cannot get free from? He is your Savior. Is there any hardship you cannot tell others of? He is your Savior. Is there no way for you to go on? He is your Savior.

Yes, He is the Savior. We need to love Him as our Savior. Paul said of Him, *“Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us”* (2 Cor. 1:10). He will be our Savior forever! No matter what situation or environment we are in, He is able to save us. He is the Savior of those who believe. We worship Him and praise Him!

For our fellowship with Him, He is the Prince of life, He is the Lord, and He is the Savior. He is the Prince of life so that we may fellowship with Him in life. He is the Lord so that we may experience Him in every way. We may experience Him in our sorrow or happiness. We may join to Him in our labor. We may enjoy His reigning, His sovereignty, and the reality of the heavens. Finally, He is our Savior.

How sweet and blessed this is! He is the Savior. We don’t need to be afraid. We don’t need to worry. He is the Prince of life! He is the Lord! He is the Savior!





## PART TWO

# THE FLOWING OUT OF THE LORD'S BEING



## HE BECAME FLESH (1)

When the Helper comes, whom I will send  
to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth  
who proceeds from the Father,  
He will testify about Me.

John 15:26

There is a flowing out of the Lord's being. You must be joined to His flowing out. What is His flowing out? In John 15:26 the Lord said, "*When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.*" In Greek, the word for "proceeds" means "flowing out." The same Greek word is used in Revelation 22:1 for the river of water of life "proceeding out" of the throne. There is a flow from God. God's sending of the Helper is the flowing of the Helper from God.

The flowing out of the Lord was prophesied in the Old Testament, and in New Testament, the apostle John says, "*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). What was the flowing out of God? His flowing out was His becoming flesh. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Looking at the outward appearance, our Lord is a man, but within Him, He is completely God. When this Lord, who is completely God,

appeared before men, He didn't condemn, but was full of grace, full of truth, and full of reality.

When you say, "I love You, Lord," do you really know who is this Lord you love? Outwardly, He was flesh like you. However, you have sin within you, while He is completely God within. You are a fallen man, but He is the divine God. The divine element that is the heavenly reality was ready for us to partake. He was full of grace and truth. Brothers, only fools dare not come to the Lord. The Word has come and dwelt among us. The being of the triune God and His divine attributes manifested as human virtues in His flesh. They are grace and truth to us.

What is grace? When you touch the Lord and enjoy Him, that enjoyment itself is grace. For a couple who are in love, being together is grace. When they have children, being with the children is grace. Nothing can compare to the enjoyment of being with loved ones. It is so sweet, and you feel it's so wonderful and so valuable. Grace makes you have perfect enjoyment. There is no enjoyment in the world better than being with family. Our relationship with the Lord is like parents with children. Each time you come to Him, He is grace to you, and you are grace to Him, too.

Often, you feel you are a sinner before Him, and you ask for His forgiveness. This is good, since the Lord is not only love but also righteousness. He doesn't like for us to live in sin. You should ask for His forgiveness. It is good to begin your fellowship with Him this way. Ask Him to forgive your sins, even your secret faults. We all need His forgiveness. However, at the same time, you should also tell the Lord, "I do enjoy Your presence." The Lord may also be satisfied because you approach Him.

Grace is the flowing out of the being of the triune God. Through the Lord, the very being of the triune God dwells in us and flows out through our abiding in Him. Because He is full of grace, we have the highest enjoyment. The realization of this grace is in our mutual abiding. You live in Him, and

He lives in you. You live in Him and enjoy His supply. He lives in you and makes His home in you. At such a time, God and man, man and God, have the highest heavenly peace and satisfaction. This peace and satisfaction is the realization of grace.

## HE BECAME FLESH (2)

And the Word became flesh,  
and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory,  
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,  
full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

The Lord is full of truth as well as grace. What is truth? Truth makes you one with God. It brings you and the Lord into the oneness God desires. This oneness shows that you have sweet fellowship with the Lord and that your existence is one with Him. Your person is controlled by God and God's desire. When God and His desire are able to control you, you are abiding in truth.

There is something of the Lord called "truth." You cannot touch Him without giving yourself to Him. If you consecrate yourself while gnashing your teeth in tears, you are just playing with Him. You don't have truth, so you bargain with Him: "Lord, I give so much to You, so what will You give me? I consecrate myself to You, so how will You bless me?" This only shows that you are good for nothing! Are you able to tell the Lord, "You are the truth, and the truth will control me all my life"? When you enjoy Him as truth and grace, you have nothing to demand and no choices of your own. Your life belongs to Him. When you touch the flowing out of God, you have no future, no career, no hope, and no plan at

all. You only have God and His economy, and you become completely controlled by Him.

The word “truth” can also be translated as “reality.” Reality is something so real that you can touch. There is nothing more real than the presence of the Lord. When you touch Him in your fellowship with Him, you have unspeakable satisfaction within you. That satisfaction is “reality.” You feel, “The Lord is so good. Everything from Him is so good. My life and my existence are so rich and valuable! I live on earth, but I have touched heaven. This is the reality of my existence.”

What is reality? Reality is when both the inward and the outward are one. This is not an easy thing! Man lives in lies. It is easy for church to become just like a club. When you join a club, you cannot be real. You have to be conformed to the image of the club. When everyone in the church says, “Thank the Lord,” you have to say, “Thank the Lord.” When everyone says, “Hallelujah!” you have to say, “Hallelujah!” In fact, you don’t feel like saying “hallelujah” at all, but you have to say it. This is not reality.

Dear brothers, the flowing out of God is interesting. He became flesh. From outward appearance, He was a man like us. On the inside, He was different from us. We are poor, yet He is rich. The apostle John said, “He was ... full of grace and truth (or, reality).” Reality means that whatever is within and whatever is without are one. This was our Lord! Yet in the church life, we are so short of reality. We have many practices, but we often live in these practices without reality.

Oh, the flowing out of God is so good. He became flesh for your enjoyment. When you come to Him, you enjoy a perfect man. He is absolutely real, and He is absolutely attractive. Just like an old brother said before he passed away,

*You are so attracting,  
And You are so charming*

Yes, He is indeed so attractive!

## HE BECAME THE LAMB OF GOD

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him  
and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29

His flowing out made Him the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When you come to the Lord, you come to grace, truth, and a tabernacle where you may rest. The Lord has also flowed out as the Lamb of God. On the one hand, He takes away our sin. On the other hand, He is small enough for our enjoyment.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Everyone who comes to the Lord is not bothered by sin. You should be joyful when you come to Him because all your sins are forgiven! There is a hymn that says,

*O the joy of having all in Jesus!  
What a balm the broken heart to heal!  
Ne'er a sin so great, but He'll forgive it,  
Nor a sorrow that He does not feel!*

Brothers, you need to sing this kind of hymn. I like how it says, "Never a sin so great, but He'll forgive it." This is because He is the Lamb of God. You must remember that the problems of all your sin are solved. Do you want to come to

the Lord? You need to realize the flowing out of God. When God flows Himself out, not only did He tabernacle among us but He also became the Lamb of God who takes away our sin.

Brothers, the first time you prayed, “Lord, You are my Savior. Please forgive my sin,” all your sins in your life were forgiven, including the sins in the past, in the present, and in the future. They are all forgiven. You are righteous before the Lord. Oh, how sweet this is!

More than this, He is also small. He is a small lamb for your enjoyment. He is great because He takes away all of our sin. He is also a small lamb so that we may enjoy Him. This Lamb forgives us and takes away our sin. This Lamb is also our enjoyment. Oh, He is the Lamb of God!



## HE BECAME THE LADDER

And He said to him, "Truly, truly,  
I say to you, you will see the heavens opened  
and the angels of God ascending and  
descending on the Son of Man."

John 1:51

In His flowing out, He also became the ladder. In John 1:51, Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* In the Old Testament, when Jacob (the father of the children of Israel, God's chosen people) slept in Bethel, he dreamed of a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reached to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. When he woke up, he was afraid and said, *"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"* (Gen 28:17).

The Lord would tell us today, "My flowing out opens the heavens for you. I became a ladder reaching heaven. No matter how earthly you feel you are, no matter how weak you are, remember: the ladder is always here, and the angels of God are ascending and descending upon it!" You who belong to Christ—you are heavenly after being saved. You have a heavenly position. However, you like to go down to earth. If you don't abide in Christ, you become very weak. The wonderful thing, however, is that the Lord always supports you to go to God, no matter

how weak you are. The ladder shows you that heaven is open for you.

My brothers, when you come to the Lord, you ought to be joyful. You can enjoy the Lord. You can enjoy Him as your everything. No matter how weak you are, He is the Lamb of God that takes away all your sin. He is also the ladder reaching to heaven. Whenever you experience Him, you touch heaven. Whenever you come to Him, you enjoy the reality of heaven. Whenever you enjoy Him, you are close to heaven.

Note that in this verse, “angels” are plural. These “angels” are not the Lord Jesus Himself; they are the angels whom our Lord has sent to serve us. The apostle Paul said that angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Everyone has his own angel. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that the little ones around Him each had their own angel in heaven (Matt. 18:10), and it was probably Peter’s angel who struck his side in prison and roused him, saying, “*Get up quickly!*” (Acts 12:7).

Praise the Lord, heaven is open for us! In principle, we are heavenly and we should be God’s heavenly testimony on the earth. In our experience, however, we are often weak, limited, and earthly. Therefore, we need the angels of God ascending and descending to serve us again and again. Dear brothers, it is so sweet to read the first chapter of the Gospel of John. In just these few verses, we sense that the flowing out of the Lord is so sweet! He is the Word in the beginning. He is full of God’s economy. He is the origin of life. In order to fellowship with us, He became flesh and dwelt, or tabernacled, among us. He is the Lamb of God that takes away our sin. He is also the ladder that causes heaven to be open to us. If you have trouble coming to the Lord, pray these verses until you can say, “Lord You are so great! I can enjoy You!”

## HE WAS GIVEN TO THE WORLD AS THEIR SAVIOR

For God so loved the world,  
that He gave His only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish,  
but have eternal life.

John 3:16

We all know this verse very well. However, we may be so familiar with it that we don't partake of it. Dear brothers, this verse includes God, God's desire, God's being, God's will, God's economy, the carrying out of His economy, and our enjoyment. This God of love gave His only begotten Son as His flowing out to us.

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son."* In God's desire, He has only one gift for us; that is, His only begotten Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the gift that we may enjoy, partake of, and experience. Oh, God so loved the world! This is so wonderful. This verse was accomplished in love. We may sometimes skip over *"God so loved the world"* and focus on not perishing and having eternal life. However, God's focus is His only begotten Son. It is because of love that He came and became our Savior. The origin, the means, and the realm of His becoming our Savior are all love.

It is in love that God gave His only begotten Son, so that through believing in Him, we may have eternal life. Paul also wrote in Romans, *"because the love of God has been poured out*

*within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us,”* and, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:5, 8). The love of God has been poured out in our hearts so that we may experience the reality of John 3:16. God doesn’t demonstrate His love to us so that we may see a miracle, understand a doctrine, or learn a teaching. Rather, He demonstrated His love to pour it into our hearts.

Brothers, you should be joyful. The flowing out of God makes Him flesh, makes Him the Lamb of God, makes Him the ladder, and makes Him our Savior. All of this was because of His love. With this understanding, you will not hesitate to come to Him. It is difficult for a fallen man to approach a mysterious God. However, if God can be known, and if this weak and fallen man has the desire to know who this God is, it will be easy for him to come to Him. This man realizes that the love of God has been poured out in his heart. God so loved the world. And He pours out His love into us.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, Paul said, *“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”* When God’s love is poured into you, you will begin to live for Him. As we consider these three verses together, we are able to tell Him, “Lord, thank You. Your flowing out is Your love to us. We experience the pouring out of Your love. This love constrains us; it controls us and limits us.”

Dear ones, when you come to the Lord, His love flows out to you. When you touch this love, you won’t love yourself. You will not live for your own life. You won’t just have your own career, your own future, your own plan, or your own hope. When the love of the Lord comes, you don’t have anything left for yourself. You don’t live for yourself, but rather, for the Lord who died for you. Oh, how I love the flowing out of God! His flowing out is as flesh. His flowing out is the Lamb.

His flowing out is the ladder reaching heaven. His flowing out is the only begotten Son given to us in love, so that His love is poured out in us and would constrain us!

## HE BECAME THE BREAD OF LIFE

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life;  
he who comes to Me will not hunger,  
and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

John 6:35

How wonderful is the flowing out of the Lord! He is the Word become flesh. He is the Lamb of God. He is the ladder reaching heaven, and He is our Savior. He desires all to come to Him to enjoy Him and dwell in Him. This dwelling is not only positional, but also practical and experiential. He said, "*I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst*" (John 6:35).

He is not only our Savior, the Prince of life, but He is also the bread of life. This bread came down from heaven. It is full of the heavenly element and heavenly taste, and it is issued for us according to His unsearchable riches in His unsearchable grace. We have no way to even approach God in heaven, much less eat Him, since He is God in light and full of righteousness, holiness, and glory. However, He flows out His being and becomes the food that we may enjoy.

What bread this is! The essence of the bread is God Himself. The element of the bread is God's nature. The constitution of the bread is the Lord whom we love, desire, trust, enjoy, and partake of. It is the "bread of life!"

When we come to the Lord through our prayer, our calling, our sighing, our interceding, or our thanksgiving, we enjoy Him in our reborn spirit as the bread of life. How satisfying He is! Our taste used to be low, base, and fallen. Now we are born again with His divine life and nature, and we have a new taste to enjoy the divine and heavenly food.

My dear ones, we may enjoy the Lord as our bread of life. He is our spiritual food. We enjoy Him as the unlimited supply of love, holiness, righteousness, light, joy, and peace. This supply is issued from the flowing out of God. Because of the bread, the flowing out can flow into us and transform us. Oh, we treasure the heavenly taste! The riches of the heavenly bread become our being. What a flowing out this is! What a flowing into us this is! Let's come, come to the Lord!

## HE BECAME THE WATER OF LIFE

Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

John 7:37-38

In the flowing out of God, He is also the water of life. *"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink'"* (John 7:37). This is so wonderful! If we thirst, we can just come to the Lord! Dear saints, those who desire the Lord must practice coming to His presence. Those who follow the Lord must exercise coming to His presence. Those who are consecrated to the Lord must come to His presence. It is the most healthy thing to come to the Lord. It should be natural for us to come to the Lord. And He said, *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'"* (v. 38). These rivers indicate the Holy Spirit. When we have the Spirit, we won't thirst.

When you feel thirsty, you need to call on the name of the Lord, to speak to Him, and to tell Him the plain truth. Don't fake anything in front of Him. If you don't love Him enough, just tell Him, "Lord, I don't know how to love You. I pray aloud that I love You, but I just say it for others to hear, not for You. I want to tell You now: I don't love You enough. I



cannot love You. I don't know how to love You. I even wonder why I still pursue You?"

Dear brothers, it is amazing that you pursue the Lord, even though you don't know how to love Him. This indicates that you do love Him a little. With this little love, you need to tell Him, "Lord, make the little love grow." For sure, you need to fear God and not blaspheme Him. However, you shouldn't fear Him to the extent that you would lie to Him, not feeling that you can be true before Him. Is there anything about you that He doesn't already know? He knows. Is there anything you dare not to tell Him? He knows all. Just come to the Lord and tell Him, "I desire You, so that rivers of living water may flow out of my innermost being."

These rivers are a wonderful flow of life! Their origin is God, their course is the Lord, and their flowing is the Spirit. When we believed in God and received the death and resurrection of the Lord as the course, we began to enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:19). How wonderful is the divine Spirit! How beautiful is the flow of life! In the water of life, we receive the Spirit and enjoy His being as our supply. He is power, and we enjoy the power when we come to Him. He is holiness, and we have the holiness when we come to Him. He is righteousness, and we receive the righteousness when we come to Him. He is love, and we live in love when we come to Him.

More than this, in the water of life are all the human virtues, including strength, lowliness, obedience, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. All of these are our reality in the Spirit of resurrection. We are so blessed that we may come to the Lord and enjoy Him. The flowing out of God makes Him the water of life to us. In this water of life, we have the flow of God and taste His riches!

## HE BECAME THE LIGHT OF LIFE

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying,  
"I am the Light of the world; he who follows  
Me will not walk in the darkness,  
but will have the Light of life."

John 8:12

The Prince of life, the Lord, the Savior, has flowed out. In flowing out, He became the water of life and the Light of life. John 8:12 says, "*Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.'*" What makes the Light of life different from the water of life? According to this verse, the Light of life is connected with following the Lord. The Lord commanded us to follow Him. Today, most Christians believe in Him and pursue Him, but the problem is that they don't follow Him! Brothers, this is an important principle: you must follow the Lord!

Why don't many follow the Lord? Why don't they want the Lord? It is because it is not an easy life to follow Him. When you really follow Him, you won't have anything but the Lord. Most Christians don't like having nothing but the Lord. Actually, most Christians don't even want the Lord that much.

Perhaps you don't agree with me. However, I still insist that most Christians don't want the Lord! In fact, only Christians are qualified to reject the Lord. Gentiles are not qualified, in

the same way that only children are “qualified” to reject their own parents.

Christians are funny—they just don’t want the Lord. What they want are their pastors, their congregations, their elders, or things other than Christ. Nevertheless, the Lord tells us clearly: *“He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”* The Lord has flowed out as the Light of life, and when we follow Him, we shall have the Light of life. The light will not be concealed to us!

If you say, “I can’t touch the Lord,” it is an indication that there is something hindering you from following the Lord. Sometimes, you seek fellowship with the Lord and are seemingly following Him; however, you are actually seeking only the particular feeling of fellowship with the Lord. As you are seeking fellowship with the Lord, you are actually seeking for that particular feeling, and if the feeling is not there, then you try with all your might to obtain it. But that feeling is not the Lord! The presence of the Lord is the Lord Himself; the feeling of the Lord’s presence may not actually be the Lord.

Man is very interesting. The Lord Jesus says to us, “I have flowed out. I am the Light of life. If you follow Me, you will obtain the Light of life.” However, we say, “No, Lord, we *gain* You for the sake of *gaining* the Light of life.” Sadly, we switch the order of things. We feel we must gain the Lord as light so we can follow Him; the Lord says if we follow, then we will have the light. We seek the Lord for light, for a particular presence, for a particular feeling, but never say, “Lord, whether I have certain feelings or not, You have never changed and You will not change. What I desire is always Yourself! Even if I kneel down for forty minutes and have almost no feeling, yet I gain You, it is enough.” Oh, Christians, you must not live for a feeling. You must live for the Lord! Feelings will pass, feelings will change, and feelings cannot be replicated. Even the feelings from the best prayers of last year cannot be brought into this year. What doesn’t change? Only the Lord Himself does not change. Only the Lord is always “now.”

Let me repeat again: Christians want everything but the Lord! When we pray, we expect the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit, or a sense of heavenly joy and glory. However, we are disappointed when, after one or two hours of prayer, nothing has happened. It is normal that nothing “happens,” because we are following the Lord, not an experience. If we don’t want Him, but instead want the pouring out of the Spirit, we won’t have it. Christians really are special. You have the Lord, you love the Lord, but you don’t want Him.

I have believed in the Lord for many years. I know our biggest fight is not against the enemy. The biggest challenge we face today is that no one really wants Jesus! Even when you came to join this ten-month training, you bargained with the Lord. Yet you belong to Him in the first place, what stand do you have to bargain with Him? You told the Lord that you give ten months to Him. The Lord would answer, “You belong to Me. You need to follow Me all your life. What is ten months?” You believe in the Lord and love the Lord, but somehow you hesitate to follow Him. Following Him means following all the way to the cross. Do you want to follow Him to the cross? Do you want to be rejected, like Him? Do you want to have no way to turn, like Him? This is the reason no one likes to follow Him. The flowing out of the Lord is the Light of life, but it is only given to those follow Him. He who follows the Lord shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life!

Brothers, it is a great thing to follow the Lord! The Lord commands us clearly: “Follow Me!” Of course, we may go too much to one extreme, so the Lord prepared the church life and all kinds of environments to balance us. However, in principle, we must each follow the Lord. We must testify in our conscience, “I am following the Lord. I follow Him not because of the brothers’ exhortation, not because of the Bible’s teaching, nor because of a certain feeling. It is because He is worthy. Only He is worthy to follow.”

The flowing out of God is so beautiful! He is the bread of life, the water of life, and the Light of life. The Light of life is not a matter of eating or drinking, but a matter of committing ourselves to follow the Lord. If you desire to come to the Lord, you must follow Him closely. When you follow Him, you won't be in darkness but will have the Light of life!

## HE BECAME THE GOOD SHEPHERD

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd  
lays down His life for the sheep.

John 10:11

The Lord is also the good shepherd who bears all our inward and outward responsibilities. When God flows Himself out, His flowing out brings in His care in love. He is the shepherd of life. He shepherds us. He takes care of us and provides for us. He also feeds us so that we would live healthily and contentedly.

John 10:11 says, *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”* The Lord is the good shepherd who flowed Himself out! He gave His life for the sheep. It is like in John 3:16, where God gave His only begotten Son to die for us. In John 10:27–28, it says, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”* Here the Lord said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them.” This shows that He leads us. Oh, I really like that, here, the Lord told us that we hear His voice and He knows us!

Sometimes we feel that we don’t know the Lord. The Lord would answer, “But I know you.” Sometimes we feel the Lord is far away from us. The Lord would answer, “I am your shepherd. You hear My voice. I know you, and you follow Me.”

We hear His voice and follow Him; at the same time He gives us eternal life. When we follow Him, we have eternal life. The Lord also said, “No one will snatch them out of My hand.” This means He will take responsibility for us all the way to the end. John 13:1 says, *“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”* We belong to Him. He gives us life, and we are safe in His hand.

In the beginning, the Lord’s flowing out is just Himself. Gradually, His flowing out is Him with us. Now, the flowing out is us and Him. He is the One who gave His life to us. We hear His voice. He knows us. We follow the One who gives us eternal life. No one is able to pluck us out of His hand. How good this is!

My dear ones, you need to learn to tell the Lord, “Lord, I am Yours. I can hear Your voice. I can follow You. I have eternal life, and no one is able to pluck me out of Your hand. You bear all my responsibilities.” Yes, we hear His voice, and He knows us!

## HE RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection  
and the life; he who believes in Me  
will live even if he dies."

John 11:25

The Lord is the resurrected One in life. In John 11:25, Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.*" God has flowed Himself out, and the highest point of this flowing is resurrection. After He resurrected, Jesus proclaimed, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matt. 28:18). Who is He today? He is the King. He is the Lord. He is the Lord of all. This is because the highest point of His flowing out is resurrection! When God's flowing out reached a culmination, it produced resurrection. This glorious resurrection issued in the complete union of God and man. John 1:14 says that "*the Word became flesh*," showing that God became man and brought divinity into humanity. In resurrection, He brought humanity into divinity! Resurrection issues in the complete union, mingling and incorporation of God with man. Resurrection makes God and man one!

Brothers, if you realize you have a resurrected Lord, you won't worry so much or plan so much. Your Lord is One who reigns in resurrection! He is trustworthy. You should trust your whole life to Him. He flowed Himself out, starting from



incarnation, becoming a shepherd, and eventually resurrecting from the dead. He is the resurrection. And now, He carries out all things in resurrection. If you have a Lord like this, you have truly found yourself a “big boss.”

People are always looking for a “big boss” to rely on. When you get into university, you are happy because you feel hopeful. After graduation, you may feel a need to get into graduate school. When you get in, you feel hopeful again. However, after a master’s degree, you still may not think it is good enough. You need to get a PhD! And so on. People are always looking for a “big boss.” However, Christians should say, “I have a Lord who went through death and resurrection. Now, He is in resurrection and He is my big boss!” When you fellowship with the Lord, you touch Him and have assurance about your life. No matter what happens to you, you are joyful and full of confidence, because you know who your boss really is. Your boss is so strong and so high. Your boss is in heaven!

As the One in resurrection, He bears all our responsibilities. He is the Lord! Brothers, do you desire a romantic life? You need to trust Him more and rely on Him more. Why do you live such a common life? It is because you rely on other things! You are excited when you find a job, but you don’t realize that your earthly boss is worrying about where to find money to pay your salary. That boss is not trustworthy, your job is not trustworthy, but our Lord is. Strangely, few people trust the Lord and accept His mission.

We are funny. We think anyone is trustworthy but the Lord Jesus. I once told a brother to trust the Lord. He said, “Oh, how could I give everything to the Lord?” People are reluctant to give themselves to the Lord. However, do you know who the Lord is? Let me tell you: He is God. He is the Word become flesh. He is the Lamb of God. He is the heavenly ladder. He gave Himself up for us. He is the bread of life. He is the water of life. He is the light of life. He is the good shepherd who gave up His life. He is the One

resurrected from the dead. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. This is His flowing out! His flowing out is so glorious!

Brothers, the Lord will lead you in how to serve Him. Perhaps the Lord will lead you to get a job. However, you shouldn't trust your boss or your job. You should trust the Lord. Your Lord is the resurrection. He is the real "big boss." Praise Him! He is unmovable. I gave myself to Him fifty-two years ago. As I grew up, I never stopped trusting Him. Gradually, I began to know life, but still I trusted Him. I always acknowledged that the Lord is the best of all. He is the loveliest of all. He is the most valuable of all. He is more trustworthy than all. Trusting yourself to the Lord has the highest value on the earth and is the most blessed thing in the world.

## PART THREE

# THE MEANS OF APPROACHING THE LORD

Section One      Through the Spirit

Section Two      Through the Bible

Section Three     Through Hymns

Section Four      Through Prayer



Section One: Through the Spirit  
Chapter 24

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## WHAT DO YOU HAVE? THE SPIRIT!

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and  
that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:6

Dear brothers and sisters, the flowing out of God is so rich! However, as we come to the Lord and learn to abide in Him and be one with Him, there are appropriate means for us to apply.

What are the means? The means are both who you are and what you are given. The most important of all of these is the spirit God made in you. The means are also based on what God gave you. What did God give you? He gave you the Spirit, who is God Himself, to nourish you and lead you in all things. He also gave you the Bible, which is the word of God. God's word is a means through which you may abide in Him. More than this, God also gave you riches that saints have left us through generations. These riches are found in spiritual books and hymns. Hymns especially are treasures for those who desire to follow the Lord. You must learn to enjoy hymns, which are the gentle utterances from the inspirations, the riches, and the constitution that many saints have experienced before the Lord. The Bible is sometimes like a large chunk of bread that is not easy to digest. Hymns are the milk that you may drink at any time and in any place.

Brothers, please remember: the Spirit is number one! The Spirit should be your first priority. The Lord Jesus told us, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6). There is a part in you that is heavenly—the spirit born of the Spirit. The other part of you, which is not as valuable, is the flesh born of the flesh. Your being, especially your spirit, is the best means by which you may touch the Lord and abide in the Lord. The second means is the Bible. The third is hymns. The fourth is prayer. You must have a praying life. The fifth is companions (editor’s note: this final means will not be covered in this book). The Lord will give you many spiritual companions.

Through what means do you abide in the Lord? Through what means do you enjoy the Lord? The first answer is the spirit. You are a person born of the Spirit. John 3:6 says, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* We got our flesh body from our parents. When we are reborn, we receive the Spirit of God, who substantiates the triune God in us. We didn’t have God, but we had a vessel—the spirit that God made in us. We didn’t have God, but this vessel within us desired God. One day, we were saved. We called, prayed, and repented to Him; then, the Lord began to live in us. Our spirit was made alive! At that time, we were reborn. We became another person.

Because we were born again, we became interesting people. We have double identities. One part of us is flesh with many stories from our flesh. Another part of us is spirit with many stories from our spirit. In such a complicated state, you must realize that you are born of the Spirit. Therefore, you not only have a spirit within you, but the Bible says directly that you are spirit: *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* When you are saved, your spirit is made alive, you are born of the Spirit, and thus you are spirit! Nevertheless, you still have flesh. You are spirit with a body of flesh.

## GOD GIVES YOU THE SPIRIT

For He whom God has sent  
speaks the words of God;  
for He gives the Spirit without measure.

John 3:34

The Lord Jesus said, *“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure”* (John 3:34). The Spirit is the triune God Himself. As long as you have the Spirit, you have union with God. As long as you have the Spirit, you are a son of God. As long as you have the Spirit, the triune God lives in you. As long as you have the Spirit, you have heaven and the reality of heaven. However, when you were just saved, the Spirit you had was “limited.” Once in a while, you touched the Spirit and were happy. Most of the time, you felt the Spirit was far away from you. This is the reason you liked to go to church meetings and to be with other brothers and sisters. As you go on, however, your spirit may be fed and grow. As you grow and desire to follow the Lord, you find out something wonderful: God always has more of the Spirit to give you! God Himself is Spirit (John 4:24), and He gives Himself as the Spirit without measure!

Brothers, I have believed in the Lord for more than fifty years. I am always amazed that my love toward Him is not exhausted. Everything else you do will one day be exhausted. Do you have talent? It will one day be exhausted. Do you

have an excellent gift? It will one day be exhausted. Are you eloquent in argument? It will one day be exhausted. But let me tell you good news: God gives us the Spirit without measure! All other things are limited. Nothing is unlimited. Only our relationship with God is unlimited. The more you are with Him, abiding in Him, the more you have the Spirit. The more you have the Spirit, the more you desire to be with Him. The more you touch Him, the more you enjoy Him. The more you enjoy Him, the more you love Him. I have enjoyed Him for so many years. I have experienced Him so much. I have partaken of the Spirit so much. However, I find there is always more for me to enjoy. Oh, you can never graduate from abiding in Christ!

Spending some time in the morning to touch the Lord, to read the Bible, and to pray is a good exercise for anyone. If you don't exercise in this way, the unlimited God will become limited to you. You need to tell the Lord, "Lord, You give the Spirit without measure. I want to learn to tell You I love You, no matter where or when, and no matter what environment or condition I am in. I want to have more supply of the Spirit, and I want to give the Spirit more freedom in me so that I may bear more fruit!"

How do we abide in Christ? How do we partake of Him? What is the means? The answer is the Spirit. Though we have a body and a soul, we are spirit. In God's eyes, He sees us according to our spirit. Our value depends on our spirit. The most valuable part of us in God's eyes is our spirit, and God gives His Spirit without measure! How good this is! We need to worship the Lord. Not only do we have a spirit, but the supply and the operation of the Spirit in us are unlimited. Oh, He gives the Spirit without measure!

## THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE

For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:6b

God gives you the Spirit, and the Spirit continually gives you the divine life. Second Corinthians 3:6b says, *“For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”* The Spirit gives life; therefore, the Spirit is also called the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45, R<sub>c</sub>V).

When you come to the Lord, you must know He is Spirit. You also are spirit. You have a spirit within you, and the Spirit dwells in you. God, who is Spirit, gives you the Spirit without measure to be your supply and enjoyment. No matter how high and transcendent your spiritual condition is, God still gives the Spirit without measure. When you enjoy the Spirit, who God is becomes your reality. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. You cannot touch the Spirit without touching the divine life, and this life is God Himself. When the Spirit gives you life, what He gives is God Himself. Life is what you experience; God is who you gain.

In experience, when the Spirit comes, God comes. When God comes, life comes, and the fruit of life is manifested. When you touch the Spirit, you touch God, and you feel strong, bright, satisfied, peaceful, and restful. How do you know you have the Spirit? How do you know you are in life? It is because you are strong, bright, satisfied, peaceful, and restful. How do you know you are short of the supply of the



Spirit? It is when you feel weak, dark, empty, depressed, and miserable. However, you must understand that weakness, darkness, emptiness, depression, and misery are also symptoms of life. Both hunger and satisfaction are feelings of life. Both weakness and strength are feelings of life. Being strong indicates you have a sufficient supply of life; being weak indicates you need to come to the Lord to gain life.

Let me repeat: how do you know the Spirit gives you life? It is because the Spirit makes you strong, bright, satisfied, peaceful, and restful. How do you know you need to come to the Lord? It is because you feel weak, dark, empty, depressed, and miserable. These are all feelings of life. The positive feelings of life tell you that you have the Spirit. The negative feelings of life tell you that you need to enjoy God, enjoy the Spirit, and enjoy who He is!

Dear brothers, how do you abide in Christ? Through the Spirit! “Abiding in Christ” and “enjoying the Spirit” are actually two ways of describing the same spiritual experience. Praise the Lord! We Christians can all say we are born of the Spirit and we are spirit. We can touch God, who is Spirit, in our spirit. He who is Spirit will continually give His Spirit to us—He gives the Spirit without measure. When we touch the Spirit, life comes because the Spirit gives life. When we gain life, we experience the Spirit of resurrection. The Spirit comes, life comes, and when life comes, the reality of resurrection is manifested!

## THE ELEVEN CONTENTS OF THE SPIRIT

We know by this that He abides in us,  
by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1 John 3:24b

The Spirit we receive is so wonderful! For our fellowship with the Lord, we need to know the contents of the Spirit, that is, what is really in the Spirit. This will help us experience a richer abiding in Christ.

There are at least eleven items that are all different aspects of the Spirit. First, He is the Spirit of God. Second, He is the Spirit of Jehovah. Third, He is the Spirit of holiness. Fourth, He is the Holy Spirit. Fifth, He is the Spirit of Jesus. Sixth, He is the Spirit of Christ. Seventh, He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Eighth, He is the Spirit of Him who raises the dead. Ninth, He is the life-giving Spirit. Tenth, He is the Spirit. Eleventh, He is the seven Spirits. These are eleven “contents” of the same Spirit.

Who is the Spirit that we receive? When God created the heavens and earth, there is **the Spirit of God**. Genesis 1:1–2 says, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”* Then, when God began to have a relationship with man as Jehovah (Gen. 2:7), there is **the Spirit of Jehovah** (Judg. 3:10, Darby). In the Old Testament, there was also **the**

**Spirit of holiness** when God separated people unto Himself (Psalm 51:11, Darby). However, the Spirit of holiness couldn't satisfy God. One day God became man Himself. What was conceived in Mary was of **the Holy Spirit** (Matt. 1:20). A God-man was born—Jesus—and He is our Lord. His living on the earth is indicated by **the Spirit of Jesus** (Acts 16:7). His resurrection is indicated by **the Spirit of Christ** (Rom. 8:9). We experience His death and resurrection through **the Spirit of Jesus Christ** (Phil. 1:19). The Spirit of Jesus Christ, on the one hand, is **the Spirit of Him who raises the dead** (see Rom. 8:11); on the other hand, He is **the life-giving Spirit** (1 Cor. 15:45b, Rcv). The totality of all these aspects of the Spirit is **the Spirit** (John 7:39). Eventually, in order to work on us intensely, there are **the seven Spirits** (Rev. 1:4).

Brothers, have you ever thought about the Spirit, who dwells in you, being so rich in these many ways? In the beginning, the Spirit is the Spirit of God. When He has a relationship with men, He is the Spirit of Jehovah. The Spirit of holiness sanctified people unto God. The Holy Spirit brought God into man. This Jesus lived a human life—the Spirit of Jesus; He resurrected from the dead—the Spirit of Christ; and He became our bountiful supply—the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

What is the Spirit of Jesus? When you have the Spirit of Jesus, God takes care of your humanity. Jesus is God who became a complete man. The Spirit of Jesus in you is the Spirit of a complete man. Why do you, in your Christian life, sometimes feel uneasy? It is because when you lack something, the “complete man” in you comes to trouble you. When you love the world, the Spirit of Jesus comes. When you do something improper, the Spirit of Jesus comes. When you are not in Christ, the Spirit of Jesus comes. Praise the Lord! The Spirit has the perfect humanity of Jesus and desires to supply you in every trial that you go through. Because of the Spirit of Jesus, you need not be afraid of hardship. Because of the Spirit of Jesus, you need not be afraid of trials. The Spirit of Jesus will bring you the joy that is deep within.

What is the Spirit of Jesus Christ? On the one hand, He supplies you with the riches of the Lord; on the other hand, He brings you into the fellowship of His sufferings. Let me tell you, all believers should get ready for sufferings. When we preach the gospel, we should tell people the whole truth. Don't just tell them that if they believe in Jesus, then they will have peace and joy. You yourselves are not always joyful! Why do you tell people so? Don't say that if you believe in Jesus, you won't sin. Do you yourselves sin? Of course you do. Then how should we preach the gospel? You should tell people that they are sinners, and Jesus is able to save them. In one way, that is good enough. However, I like to tell people that I am still weak after believing in Jesus, but that I have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:19)!

The Spirit of Jesus Christ also includes the Spirit of Him who raises the dead and the life-giving Spirit. When the Spirit of Jesus Christ brings you His bountiful supply, He gives you two things: resurrection and life. You should love the Spirit of Him who raises the dead! Why? Because we are all friends with "death." What do we experience most? From our side, we experience failure the most. From God's side, Christians experience resurrection the most. Although you believe in Jesus, you still sin. You sin, and you die. When you die, the Spirit of Him who raises the dead comes! You somewhat follow the Lord, but you still do whatever you want and die. When you die, the Spirit of Him who raises the dead comes again! Although you are weak, the Spirit has the power of resurrection. With the Spirit, weakness and death mean nothing. Oh, how wonderful is the Spirit! Without knowing the Spirit, you don't know how to enjoy the Lord. By knowing the Spirit, you are able to receive the bountiful supply and abide safely in the Lord.

First John 3:24b says, "*We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*" My brothers, the Spirit substantiates all things. Let me remind you again, the first means to abide in the Lord is the Spirit. Pay attention to the

Spirit with your spirit! Exercise your spirit! Make your spirit alive and vital, so that the Spirit may lead you and rule you and make you a man abiding in the Lord.

## ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE SPIRIT (1)

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him  
must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

Dear brothers, do not treat “the Spirit” as a matter of doctrine. Let us examine the rich contents of the Spirit that you received when you were saved. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and all of His operation and work are substantiated through who He is.

God is Spirit. **The Spirit of God** moved upon the face of the waters in His creation (Gen. 1:1–2). Man fell, but God desired to have a relationship with man. His Spirit operated and worked and was called **the Spirit of Jehovah** (Judg. 3:10, Darby). When God called Himself Jehovah, the focus was on His relationship with man (Gen. 2:8–9, Darby). In His desire to have a relationship with man, there is the Spirit of Jehovah. Because of man’s fall, **the Spirit of holiness** worked on men so that they might be separated unto God (Psa. 51:11, Darby). However, whether called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, or the Spirit of holiness, God was still God Himself. He was separated from man. God and man were not blended. For example, Daniel and his friends had the Spirit of holiness, but they did not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. They feared God, and the Spirit of holiness separated them unto God. This is the story of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the Word was made flesh and now lives in us. How did the Word become flesh? That was through **the Holy Spirit** (Matt. 1:18, 20). God, who is Spirit, in His divine nature and His divine being caused Mary to conceive. The Spirit who came upon Mary and caused her to conceive was the Holy Spirit. The child she delivered was named Jesus. He was the first God-man and dwelt among us. Born of Mary, He is a man. Born of the Holy Spirit, He is God. Eventually, He died on the cross and was buried. On the third day, He resurrected! On the one hand, He was terminated in death. On the other hand, He overcame death and resurrected. In His resurrection, we may now enjoy **the Spirit of Him who raises the dead** (see Rom 8:11). In the Spirit, there is both divinity and Christ's humanity, with all the riches of His death and resurrection. There is a very good hymn by Thomas Kelly that says:

*Though angels praise the heavenly King,  
And worship Him as God alone,  
We can with exultation sing,  
“He wears our nature on the throne.”*

The Holy Spirit made Jesus as the first God-man, one in whom God was fully blended with man. He lived a human life before terminating the old creation on the cross and bringing in resurrection, which produced the new creation. In the new creation, there is the Spirit of Him who raises the dead. He is also **the Spirit of Jesus Christ** with the bountiful supply (Phil 1:19). Oh, He is the Spirit! In John 7:39, it says, *“the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”* In other words, without resurrection, we would not have the Spirit talked about in this verse. The Spirit was given to us after the Lord resurrected, ascended, and sat on the throne as a glorified God-man. How wonderful this is! Now our God is both God-man and man-God. His enthronement becomes

our enjoyment, supply, support, and strengthening. He is also our protection, our blessing, and the source of all of our joy.

We need to worship our beloved Lord. He accomplished everything. Not only did He create us, He also desires a relationship with us and separated us. Now, He is with us as the Holy Spirit; through His death and resurrection He redeems and saves us. The Lord Jesus in His ascension and reigning became the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45, RCV) and poured Himself out upon us. The Spirit is all-inclusive, containing God, incarnation, the human life of Jesus, His all-inclusive death, His life-giving resurrection, the power of ascension, and His glorious reigning in power. All of these are our enjoyment in the Spirit.

When we call Him, come to Him, and pray to Him, we enjoy all of His riches in our spirit. Whatever we are short of, He is. Are we formless and empty? He is the Spirit of God to move upon us and produce life in us. Are we far away from Him? He is the Spirit of Jehovah who likes to approach us. Are we in the world? He is the Spirit of holiness to separate us unto Himself. Are we full of difficulties or bound by Satan, sin, or death? He is the Spirit of Him who raises the dead to terminate all the negative things and produce the positive.

More than these, we can partake of Him as **the Spirit of Jesus** (Acts 16:7) and **the Spirit of Christ** (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit of Jesus makes us willing to suffer with Him. The Spirit of Christ makes us experience the transcendence of ascension. Then, when we come to the Lord, enjoy the Spirit, and partake of His riches, **the Spirit of Jesus Christ** gives a bountiful supply to us with the riches of His divine nature and human virtues. The Spirit of Jesus Christ not only causes us to die with Him but also to live with Him and enjoy the reality of resurrection. How blessed this is! We may enjoy the Lord in this way in our spirit. Oh, Christians, we cannot live without the Spirit!



## ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE SPIRIT (2)

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:  
Grace to you and peace, from Him who is  
and who was and who is to come, and from  
the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Revelation 1:4

From man's point of view, we are limited by time. From God's eternal view, however, time is not a problem. This is why **the Spirit**, though it was used in the Bible prior to the Lord's resurrection (see Matt. 4:1), is still able to express the totality of the contents of the Spirit.

Dear brothers, when you enjoy the Spirit, He not only gives you good feelings but also transforms you. For example, a mild man can enjoy the Spirit, and the Spirit may cause him to be angry for the Lord, since even the Lord had a temper sometimes. The Lord said, "*But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*" (Matt. 23:13a). Brothers, dare you say such a thing to others? If you said such a thing, people would immediately ask, "Doesn't God love the world? Why are you so ferocious?" However, the Spirit may indeed make you angry for the Lord. The human life of the Lord Jesus is now in the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit causes you to enjoy and to live out the perfect humanity of Jesus. The Spirit also causes others to enjoy your living out of these human virtues.

As a man, our Lord didn't give way in certain points. He was not a "nice guy." Many Christians may say, in their religious concepts, "Why don't you give way?" Many worldly people may say, "You can gain more if you give way." Sometimes even spiritual people may say, "You need to bear the cross!" Every time I hear this, I feel, "Brothers, the Lord didn't fight for His own rights. However, He always fought for the kingdom of God!" How seriously He rebuked the Pharisees! "*Woe unto you, Pharisees!*" Why? It was because they didn't know the things of God and brought others into destruction. "*Woe to you, blind guides!*" (v. 16). How severe was His word!

Consider our situation today. In the church, we need to be "true people." What is your true person? Your spirit is your true person. If your true person doesn't come out, it is hard for the spirit to be released. Have you noticed that it is hard for a nice guy to release his spirit? He is too nice for his true person to come out. When he speaks for the Lord, he is far away from people. He keeps a distance from others. Every time he speaks, he speaks from a protected "I." If you protect yourself too much, your true person cannot come out. If the true person doesn't come out, the spirit won't be released. The spirit is in the deepest part in man, the part related to his being.

Brothers, if someday you stood up and said to those who are religious and to those who play church, "Woe unto you," you may have the reality of the Spirit. God doesn't like those who are religious or who play church. However, our Lord was also so meek. Consider His response in His perfect humanity toward Nicodemus, toward the woman of Samaria, toward the woman caught in adultery, toward those who were hungry, and toward those who were thirsty. It was so incredible! Remember when the scribes and Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery and, having set her in the midst of people, they said to Jesus, "*Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?*" They said this to tempt Him, so that they might have

reason to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. By doing this, He tried to calm everybody down. And then He answered, "*He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her*" (John 8:1–10).

Indeed, we have to say, "Lord, thank You. When the Spirit comes, He gives us God, gives us Jehovah, gives us holiness, gives us the human virtues of Jesus, and gives us the riches and authority of Christ's resurrection and ascension. He leads us to experience resurrection. He has the bountiful supply for us. We have the Spirit in us, and we are so satisfied!"

Lastly, for the intensified operation, there are **the seven Spirits**; that is, the seven-fold intensified Spirit. God desires to be our bountiful supply. When we are short or weak, the Spirit has a seven-fold intensified operation in us. As a result, we can be one with Him and with His move.

Brothers, all of God's supply for us can only be partaken of through the Spirit. We have considered ten contents of the Spirit, and all of these conclude in "the Spirit." Eventually, we also have the seven Spirits, so there are eleven items in total. Oh, how good is the Spirit! The Spirit is of God. The Spirit is of Jehovah. The Spirit is of holiness. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is of Jesus. The Spirit is of Christ. The Spirit is resurrection. The Spirit is of Jesus Christ.

Praise the Lord, through the Spirit we may come to the Lord. No matter how miserable we are, how weak we are, how deep we fall, how tired we are, or what difficulties and hardships we face, the Spirit is able to supply us and lead us through all our limitations. When we come to the Lord, we enjoy Him as the Spirit. When we come to the Lord, we enjoy Jehovah as the Spirit. Whenever we call and pray, the Spirit sanctifies us. Whenever we come near the Lord, the Spirit revives us, and we enjoy the Spirit of Jesus to live out His human virtues. We enjoy the Spirit of Christ for everything the Lord has accomplished to be realized in us. We also enjoy the Spirit who raises the dead, and we meet Him, enjoy Him,

and have the reality of resurrection. Yes, abiding in the Spirit is abiding in resurrection. Besides all these, we enjoy the Lord, and we experience all our joy and sorrow with Him. We have the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

Brothers, in His ascension and reigning, our Lord became the Spirit, pouring down all the riches we need to live for God's economy, to live Christ, to be one with Christ, and to fight for His testimony on the earth! Eventually, we may experience the seven Spirits. In His intensified work, we may be one with God's operation in life.

Section Two: Through the Bible  
Chapter 30

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## THE WORDS GOD GAVE YOU

In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

John 1:1

The second means by which we may come to the Lord is through His words, the Bible.

Dear saints, when we come to the Lord, His words help us to have fellowship with Him. To have fellowship with the Lord, we must have the Spirit, and our spirits should be vital. We also need to partake of the word of God so that His words may abide in us, may vigorously grow in us, and may operate and work in us. To abide in the words of the Lord is to have His energetic, fresh, instant, and present word in everything. If you desire to have fellowship with the Lord, to abide in Christ, and to be one with Him, you must know and treasure His words.

Dear brothers, we need to see that the realization of God's being, God's work, God's salvation, God's accomplishment, and God's desire are all through God's words, through His speaking, through the water in His word, through the Spirit in His word, and through the milk in His word. When we come to the Lord, we must desire the Lord and His speaking. We must love the Lord and His speaking. We must follow the Lord and His speaking. How wonderful this is! God is

the Word. He loves to speak to us, to speak out who He is and what He desires, and to speak out His leading and His blessing. Through His speaking, He supplies us.

God is the Word. He also gives us words. All of His works are through His speaking. He spoke and created the world. He spoke and Abraham was called. He spoke and Israel became His testimony. Finally, the Word became flesh, and God speaks to us through Christ. Today, the Lord in resurrection speaks to us through the Spirit and through the Bible. We need to memorize the words of God. We need to pray over the words of God. We thank the Lord. The words He has spoken to us are spirit and are life. We need to tell Him, "Thank You for the Bible. Please speak to me through the Bible. Your words of life help me abide in You and realize Your hope in me."

How blessed is the man who has the speaking of the Lord!

## THE WORD WAS THE LORD HIMSELF

You search the Scriptures because  
you think that in them you have eternal life;  
it is these that testify about Me; and you are  
unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

John 5:39-40

The Lord Himself is the Word. In the beginning, He was the Word.

The Gospel of John begins with, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (1:1). First John also begins with, *“What was from the beginning...the Word of life”* (1:1). The Lord Himself is the Word. He was the Word in the beginning, and He was also the Word of life. This shows several things. First, the Lord is the Word, and He is ready to speak to us so that we may dwell in Him. My brothers, you cannot touch the Word without touching the Lord. When God speaks to you, the Word brings you to the Lord. Second, when you touch the Lord as the Word, you touch “the beginning.” What is “the beginning?” It is God’s being and God’s economy. God is not simply existing. He has His desire, His purpose, His plan, and His economy. Those who touch the Word of God touch His economy. Third, the Word is the Word of life. The Lord Jesus told the Pharisees, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal*

*life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life*" (John 5:39–40). The Bible is the Word of God that testifies concerning the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we have a problem today when we study the Bible but do not come to the Lord to have life.

I like to tell you, the Word is to bring us to the Lord. The Word is the Lord. The Word helps us to touch who He is and shows us God's economy. The Word also helps us to have life. Dear brothers, when we read the Bible, we need to know the Bible is the Lord, and the Lord is the Word. He was the Word in the beginning, and He is the Word of life.

We cannot depart from this basic understanding: the Word is God Himself. At the same time, the Bible is the Lord. Many would dare not tell people that the Bible is the Lord. The most we usually say is that the Word testifies concerning the Lord. This is correct—the Lord said the Scriptures testify of Him. However, He continued by teaching us that we need to go to Him to have life. All the Scriptures were Him. All the contents are Him. Who is He? He is life. When you come to the Bible, you come to the Lord to have life.

The Bible is the Lord Himself. It is the utterance of the Lord, the flowing out of the Lord, and the testimony of the Lord. The Bible is the Word of beginning and the Word of life. What is the Word for? It is for the testimony of the Lord. When you open the Bible, you need to say, "Lord, I am not here to study. I am here to have life." No matter which book or which chapter you are reading, do not just try to figure out the meaning or go directly to the footnotes or references. The footnotes and references may help, but they can only give you doctrine and teaching. The most joyful thing when you read the Bible is to meet the Lord Himself and to have inspiration, leading, and encouragement from Him. For this reason, I advise you to get a Bible without footnotes, and the bigger the font size is, the better, so that you may read slowly without skipping any word. You need to remind yourself when you read, "I am coming to the Lord. I am coming to His economy.



I am here to gain life. I want to have the testimony of Christ, since the Scriptures testify of the Lord.”

The Bible should lead you to the Lord Himself. If you just stay at the stage where the Bible meets your needs, you are not reading the Bible well. If you read the Bible well, it will bring you to Christ. What is the use of reading the Bible if the Lord disappears after you read it? The most important thing in reading the Bible is coming to the Lord and dwelling in Him. We should be able to say, “When I read the Bible, I get inspirations. I have life. I touch the Lord. I see how lovely and precious the Lord is.” If this is the case, you are truly blessed. Let me repeat to you, your coming to the Scriptures is the time for you to come to the Lord. Every time you open the Bible, you must desire to gain Him. Watchman Nee wrote a hymn that says,

*Each time, Lord, when reading in Thy holy Word,  
I pray that Thy glory may shine on each line,  
That clearly I'll see what a Savior I have  
And how great salvation that Thou hast made mine.*

He did not write “that I’ll understand how wonderful the truth is,” but, “that clearly I’ll see what a Savior I have.” Which is better: understanding the truth or seeing the Savior? Both are good, if the truth you are understanding is Christ. Without Christ, there is no truth. The hymn also says, “And how great salvation that Thou hast made mine.” His great salvation is His economy. In other words, this is a prayer to see Christ and His economy. To do this, you come to the Lord, you read His holy Word, and you pray that He may shine on each line. You don’t want to read dead letters or common words. When you read, you can ask the Lord to shine on each line and on each word so that you may see the precious Savior, His great salvation, and His wonderful economy!

## ALL SCRIPTURE IS THE INSPIRATION OF GOD

All Scripture is inspired by God.

2 Timothy 3:16a

The Bible is the word that God gave you. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16a). Other translations say all scripture is “God-breathed.” What is the Bible? It is the understanding in spirit given by God. Without receiving inspiration, you don’t have the breath of God. Whether this verse is translated “God-breathed,” “divinely inspired,” or “inspired by God,” all mean the same thing. When you read the Bible, you must know all Scripture is the divine inspiration. If you don’t get inspiration from God, your reading is in vain.

You must not depart from God when you read the Bible. You must beware of just reading the Bible without touching God. Without touching Him, you will not have a healthy relationship with Him. The more you read, however, the more you can see Him and enjoy Him. Your relationship with Him will be healthier and healthier. Dear brothers, do you desire fellowship with the Lord? You must read the Bible. This is the second means by which you can approach the Lord. When you read the Bible, the words must lead you to gain Christ, to know Christ, to enjoy Christ, to see God’s economy, and to have the divine supply, since the word is God-breathed.

God’s breath is the Spirit to give you the supply and flow in spirit. God’s breath also gives you inspiration. All Scripture is

God-breathed, divinely inspired, and given by inspiration of God. If you read the Bible and meet God, your relationship with God will be healthy. And this relationship will cause you to have a lot of inspiration. When you read the Bible, you should be full of inspiration, since His Word is given by inspiration of God.

What is inspiration? When you are inspired, you look at things differently. For example, in a meeting, a brother may see a sister and suddenly feel she is different than before. Before, the sister was just one of many others, but at that moment, he feels she is so special. She attracts him. She inspires him. This is inspiration.

Reading the Bible is the same. When the words are alive to us, it is called inspiration.

Dear brothers, the Bible has sixty-six books. It has been with us for centuries. You may read a verse ten or twenty times without much feeling. However, one day you read it, it may seem different. You feel this verse is alive to you. It affects you. It inspires you. It brings you to the Lord. It causes you to enjoy the Lord. At this time, you have God's breathing-out, His inspiration. This is a healthy way to read the Bible.

## THE WORDS ARE SPIRIT AND ARE LIFE

It is the Spirit who gives life;  
the flesh profits nothing;  
the words that I have spoken to you  
are spirit and are life.

John 6:63

The words that the Lord spoke to us are spirit and are life. John 6:63 says, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”* The words that the Lord speaks to us give us life. In other words, we live because we have the words of the Lord. Without His words, we die. My brothers, every time you open the Bible, you need to tell the Lord, “The words You speak to me are spirit and are life. I come to the words that are spirit, and my spirit fellowships with the Spirit in these words. This fellowship brings in life and makes me live.”

Let me give you an illustration. Take John 6:24 for example: *“So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.”* Are you able to say these words are spirit and are life? Of course you can. You should have the assurance that all scripture is divinely inspired, that the words are spirit. If you read this verse in your spirit, the words are spirit. If you don’t get the Spirit in the words, you read in vain.

This verse could be dead words, or it could be spirit. It depends on who reads it. If you know the Spirit, touch the Spirit, and know the words are spirit, then you can have a lot of inspiration as you read a verse like this. When you read "*When the crowd...*," you may feel, "The crowd! Oh Lord, there are so many crowds on the earth. Crowds who don't want you and crowds who seek for you. I am just one in the crowd. I want to be among those who are healthy, seeking for You!" This is inspiration! You may also get inspired when you read "*the crowd saw.*" You may pray, "Lord, I saw. I saw You touch me. I saw You give me a heart to fear you. I saw You put me among the brothers and sisters. I want to seek for You with them." When you touch the Word as spirit, the words are alive and give inspiration.

When you read the Bible, you must be very clear that the words are the Lord Himself, they are God's economy, and they are life. The words testify concerning the Lord. The words are God-breathed. They should inspire you. They should make you see God and touch the Lord. Every chapter, even every verse, can render you such help. You may even get inspired by a common verse like John 6:24. The verse can be so rich and cause you to have many prayers according to it.

Brothers, from now on, I hope you have inspirations and testimonies when you read the Bible. You can touch the Lord, enjoy the Lord, and have His presence. You must remember that the Spirit gives life. The words that He spoke to you are spirit and are life. Through His Spirit, you enjoy His words and have inspiration. When you are inspired, life comes.

## THE WORD IS TRUTH

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

John 17:17

The words that the Lord spoke to us are truth. John 17:17 says, “*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*” Before this, the Lord said, “*I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:15–16).

In the Bible, the world has three different aspects: the sinful world, the material world, and the religious world. The sinful world is related to our body. The material world is related to our soul. The religious world is related to our spirit. Our living is not apart from the world, and as a result, the Lord prayed to the Father—not that we would be taken from the world, but that we would be kept from the evil one.

Dear brothers, the world lies in the evil one (1 John 5:19), but the Lord said we are not of the world. According to our understanding, since the world lies in the evil one, everything in the world is evil. The world is full of evils, and anything that seems evil must be of the world. We have many feelings concerning these evil things. However, we barely notice that Satan can transfigure himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). This transfigured angel of light has also produced the material world and the religious world. A purse is of the material world. A shirt is of the material world. We are easily

taken hostage by the material world and without any feeling at all lose the transcendence of the heavens. Our home, our car, or our dress can occupy our mind and emotion easily, so that we lose the ability to love the Lord. How dreadful this is! These things all seem legal, but they can easily take the place of Christ. They all seem legal, but they easily trap us. They may not bother our conscience, but they cause us to lose a pure heart unto the Lord.

The most dreadful of the three is the religious world. For those who love the Lord, serve the Lord, and pursue the Lord, the religious world is the biggest temptation and trial. What is the religious world? In the religious world, we do things for the Lord and for His purpose, but the Lord Himself has nothing to do with us. How terrible this is! A man could give himself to the Lord to become a man “for God” but “having no God.” A man working for God may turn out to have many works, but no God at all. Brothers, many saints finish their work but lose Christ. Doesn’t this also sometimes happen to us?

Dear brothers, how can we be saved from the world, especially the religious world? It is through the Lord and through the living and abiding word of God! The Lord prayed that we not only have a sanctified living and serving, but that we ourselves would be sanctified, separated unto Him. He said, “*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*” The word is truth, and the truth sanctifies us. How wonderful this is! Our Lord is the Word of life, and the words He spoke to us are truth. “Word” cannot be separated from “life.” The words are living and abiding. They are not doctrine for us to research. The words are not knowledge for us to stock up on. In fact, the letter kills (2 Cor. 3:6). The words of the Lord are spirit and life. When we have the Word of life, we have the truth. When we have the truth, we are sanctified.

Our Lord doesn’t want us to live a religious life. He doesn’t want us to dwell in the religious world. He is living, heavenly,

and with resurrection power and energy, and we come to His presence. We need to worship Him! It is amazing that ones like us can fellowship with His being. How can we fellowship with His being? It is through the word—the word of spirit, the word of life, and the word of truth! Oh, saints, when we come to the word of truth, it gives us the Spirit and life so that we can be joined to the Lord and be sanctified through our blending with Him.



## THE WORD IS LIVING AND ABIDING

Having been born again,  
not of corruptible seed but incorruptible,  
through the word of God which lives  
and abides forever.

1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV)

In First Peter 1:23, the word of God is called incorruptible seed. It is also living, and it is abiding. Where does it abide? It abides in you.

How can someone be born again? According to the apostle Peter, it is through the living and abiding word of God. The word of God actually entered into you before the experience of being born again. It was like seed sown in you. When someone preached the gospel to you, the word was sown in you like a seed. Whether you knew it or not, this word was living, and it was abiding.

If you desire a good relationship with the Lord, you cannot depart from this word. The word should not be theory, doctrine, or knowledge to you. When the word brings us into the fellowship with the Lord, it begins to operate. In this operation, the word is living and abiding. It is active. Don't you sometimes feel that the word practically jumps up from the paper? You are not only reading printed letters. What you read is a living word, an abiding word. When the word operates in you, it sows itself into you and abides in you.

Do not look down at reading the Bible a little bit every day. When you read and come to the Lord, it gives the Lord a chance to speak to you. This word abides in you like a seed. I can testify to you that the word came into me fifty years ago and is still in me today. Once the word comes, it will never go.

You may not have the Lord's speaking every day. However, if you pray over a verse or memorize it, you will have some inspiration. Maybe one word, one sentence, one verse, or one section becomes living. The living word becomes the abiding word, like a seed sown into you. This seed was the means by which you were regenerated, and it will still grow all kinds of beautiful, heavenly, divine fruit today!

Dear saints, when you read the Bible, do not just try to use your mind to research. You must get the living and abiding word. The word should be like a seed springing up, growing and bearing fruit. Without this, you read in vain. Brothers, in the process, you must have the Lord's speaking. The word can bring you to the Lord so that you have the Lord, so that you can see the Lord, so that you know the Lord, and so that you enjoy the Lord, touch the Lord, and have revelation. The word makes you live! It is not just having some feeling, but you have the word with substance. You live, and it makes your growth so sweet. Let's tell the Lord, "I want to have Your living word every time I open the Bible."

One of the hymns by Watchman Nee says:

*Each time, Lord, when reading in Thy holy Word,  
I pray that Thy glory may shine on each line,  
That clearly I'll see what a Savior I have  
And how great salvation that Thou hast made mine.*

When you read the Bible, you must feel you have the Lord. This will give you the ability to survive. You cannot survive just by calling on the name of the Lord. There will be many difficulties for you to go through. How will you be revived when you have had all the hardships? How will

you still recognize the Lord when you have experienced many blows? How can you follow the Lord when so many things discourage you? It is through the living word abiding in you today and growing and bearing fruit!

Brothers, when you open the Bible, you should feel, “Lord, I cannot say every word in the Bible is living to me, but I know every word of Yours can be living and abiding. It can be sown in me. In the course of time, it can bear sweet fruit!” If you look at the word this way, you will feel it is so wonderful!

Praise God for not only giving us a wonderful Savior but also the Spirit! Praise God for not only giving us the Spirit but also the Bible! What is the Bible? It is the living and abiding word of God. When the word comes into you, it will not leave. It makes us alive. It causes us to love the Lord. It is full of operation!

Dear saints, we must love the Bible. Don’t read the Bible out of religious obligation. It is good to read a few chapters every day, but don’t feel that this is a duty to perform. You know this is a way to gain God. You know this is a sweet way to enjoy Him and to fellowship with the Lord. The word is so wonderful. It is living and abiding!

## THE WORD OF GRACE

And now I commend you to God  
and to the word of His grace...

Acts 20:32a

The word of God is the word of grace, which is able to build us up.

The apostle Paul said, *“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32). Here, Paul repeated the Lord’s exhortation to him. When the Lord appeared to him, Paul asked, “Who are you, Lord? What shall I do?” The Lord answered that He would send Paul to the Gentiles *“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me”* (Acts 26:18).

This was Paul’s life—focused on this inheritance and set on gaining it. He desired both to become the inheritance and to receive the inheritance. How would he receive it? He would receive it *“among those who have been sanctified.”* His life was controlled by the vision of this inheritance. He knew he had to receive it among those who have been sanctified. Therefore, he told the elders of Ephesus the same word with which the Lord had exhorted him. Paul was unique, because

he had seen Christ Himself in a vision. But though the elders couldn't see Christ, Paul could commend them to God and to the word of His grace, which was able to give them *"the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."*

"Grace" means approachable and enjoyable. The "word of grace" implies the enjoyment of the word and the sweetness in love. To give you grace would be to give you something for your enjoyment. It implies a sweet relationship between the giver and the receiver. Why do you feel the word of God is sweet? It is because it is the word of grace. When you enjoy the word, you receive abundant grace. The more grace you receive, the more enjoyment you have. No matter where you are, the word is able to help you. No matter what you need, the word meets your need. No matter on what level you are, the word elevates you. No matter what constricts you, the word will give you a way out. Do you feel isolated, pressed, or confused? The word will enlighten you, encourage you, and give you joy. It is the word of grace!

Dear brothers, you must treasure the word of God. His word is full of grace. I am thankful that the Lord gave us the Bible. The Bible is the word of God, the truth that God delivered to us. If you want to know it, you must spend time to read it. As you touch the word of God, His grace is with you abundantly!

## THE WORD BUILDS UP

...the word of His grace, which is able to  
build you up and to give you the inheritance  
among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20:32b

Dear brothers, the word of God is the word of grace, which is able to build us up. Oh, the word can build you up! Building up is both a personal matter and a corporate matter. Between you and God, you must have the word. Among you and the saints, you must also have the word. Between you and God, the word of grace helps you to enjoy grace. Among you and the saints, the word of grace builds everyone up. Not only do “I” grow, but “you” also grow. Not only does one person grow, but the whole group grows. Not only do the elders grow, but the church grows. How good is this word! Paul commended the saints to God and to the word. What is the word? It is the word of grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

When Paul said this, I believe he had a lot of feeling. He had received the Lord’s command to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive an inheritance among those who are sanctified. However, when he said this verse to the Ephesian elders, he was about to go to Jerusalem, and he may have wondered

if he would ever have another chance to preach the gospel. Paul knew he would be bound when he went to Jerusalem (Acts 21:11–13), but he still went for the testimony of the body. He must have had a lot of considerations. When he left, what would the church in Ephesus do? What would all the churches do? What would the elders do? He was clear that the going on of the churches could only rely on God Himself and the word of God. Therefore, he commended them to God and to the word of His grace, which was able to build them up.

Paul felt that even if he was not able to continue his commitment of preaching the gospel, the word of God was able to fulfill it. He was about to be bound in Jerusalem, and he could no longer receive an inheritance among those who are sanctified. However, he had confidence in the word of God. The word was able to help the saints experience the Lord, enjoy the Lord, dwell in the presence of the Lord, touch the heart of the Lord, receive the leading of the Lord, and be one with the Lord. As the saints enjoyed grace, they were able to be built up. When they were built up, they would receive an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Brothers, I think Paul said this word to the Ephesian elders with a heavy heart. He seemed to be announcing to them that his ministry was coming to an end. However, though his ministry could come to an end, the word of God could continue to operate and build them up. Through God and His word, the commitment that God gave to Paul could be carried out. Dear brothers, you should treasure the Bible. You should tell the Lord, “Every time I come to You, I receive the Spirit, life, truth, and the living and abiding word. Every time I come to You, I enjoy Your word as grace.”

Those who dwell in the word of God are also those who live in grace. What kind of Christian do you want to be? If you desire to dwell in the word, you will live in grace. You will be able to be built up with the saints and to receive an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

## THE WORD IS QUICK AND POWERFUL

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

The word of God is living and active. Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* Other translations of this verse use the words quick, powerful, or operative. The word of God is not only living and abiding (1 Pet. 1:23), but also quick, active, and powerful.

The word of God is powerful, meaning it won't let you go. It is also sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit. Both your soul and your spirit are related to your heart, which is mentioned at the end of this verse. The heart is composed of your soul and your conscience, which is related to your spirit. The soul has three parts: emotion, mind, and will. Emotion moves you, while the mind and will result in action. For example, a brother may like a certain sister. His emotion moves him, while his mind and will help him make the decision to court



her. Emotion alone doesn't make him court, but it pushes the mind to think and the will to make the decision. What your mind thinks is the "thoughts" of the heart, and what you decide with your will is the "intentions" of the heart.

Our relationship with the Lord is a relationship of love. Our following of the Lord is the result of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Our love toward the Lord in our emotion is the motivation. Then, we begin to have thoughts in our mind, and from these thoughts, we have intentions. In experience, our problems mostly come from our thoughts. Sometimes we are afraid that our thoughts might become too clear, and so we make things difficult for ourselves. As a result, our intentions also have problems. We may think, "If I were clear, what would I do? I would have to follow the Lord! But how could I do it? It is better for me not to be so clear!" When we come to the matter of following the Lord, we prefer to remain unclear. We are afraid that if we are clear, our life as we know it will be finished.

You may ask yourself, "Do I want to love the Lord?" Then you may think, "Whatever. Does it really matter?" At this moment, the word of God will come and pierce you.

What does "piercing" mean? When you come to the Lord through the word, the thoughts and the intentions of God will be manifested. At first, your thoughts and intentions are formless, just like the description of the earth in Genesis 1:2. However, the word of God comes, sharper than any two-edged sword, and discerns the thoughts and intentions of your heart. Then you will know what is of heaven and what is of the earth, what is the intention of heaven and what are the intentions of man.

Let me tell you, the word of God helps you dwell in Christ. Brothers, when we come to the word, we should tell Him, "Your word is quick and powerful and operative!" If you indeed enjoy the word, dwell in the word, and experience the word, then all the thoughts that are not of Christ can be discerned, and the thoughts of Christ can be preserved. Some thoughts

are from you, and the word of God comes and rejects them. Some thoughts are from the Spirit, and the word of God comes and strengthens them and preserves them. The word of God is powerful to bring light to you in your formless condition. It is also powerful to create a separation between heaven and earth in you, just like when God created the expanse in Genesis 1:6. Brothers, the experience of Genesis 1 is realized in you through the word of God! When the word comes, light comes. When the word comes, the expanse comes. When the word comes, the dry land comes. When the word comes, the lights in the expanse of heaven come. All of this is because the word is quick and powerful!

Dear saints, do not just “read the Bible.” It is better to pray, “Lord, I come to Your word. I want Your word to be quick and powerful to me, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of things that are of God from things that are of man, of things of a heavenly nature from things of an earthly nature, and of things of God from things of Satan. May the word make my thoughts pure, to have the same intentions as You do, so that I may walk with You.”

## THE WASHING OF THE WATER WITH THE WORD

...so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed  
her by the washing of water with the word

Ephesians 5:26

When you enjoy the word of God, the word is able to cleanse you.

Ephesians 5:25 says, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”* How is Christ’s giving Himself up for the church realized? Verses 26–27 continue: *“so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”* Oh, how good is the Bible! It is an “anti-aging medicine”! There is water in the word, and this water is life.

John 6:63 says, *“the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”* The word in the Bible is the word of life. When you read it, it dispenses life. Through the dispensing of life, that is, *“the washing of water with the word,”* we may be cleansed, washed, and sanctified. As a result, we don’t have any spot or wrinkle but are holy and blameless, *“without blemish”* (NKJV).

Every day we are growing old. Our body grows old, but our spiritual condition also grows old. For example, you could have a heavenly and enjoyable meeting with the saints.

After a couple of days, the enjoyment grows old. Therefore, we have to tell the Lord, “When Your fresh, living, organic work operates in me, I need to be sanctified by the washing of water with the word, so that I would not have any spot or wrinkle!”

This verse says, “*having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing.*” Wrinkles are a sign of aging. Spiritually, they are a sign of oldness. When you go to a meeting and see a lot of “old” people, regardless of their physical age, you know the church has wrinkles. Spots, on the other hand, are filth. Spiritually, they are a sign of a lack of Christ. Perhaps one day you will see “spots” in the church and wonder how the church could turn out like that. You don’t need to rebuke the saints, saying, “You need to wake up! You need to rise up! You need a revival!” No, what they need is the washing of water with the word. You need to supply them with the word and with the riches of the word, so that they may be cleansed and sanctified. When their spots and wrinkles are removed, you will see the church is ever new, just as the Lord is ever new. How sweet this is!

## THE WORD IS NUTRITIOUS MILK

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk  
of the word, so that by it you may grow  
in respect to salvation.

1 Peter 2:2

You should long for the word of God. The word is heavenly nutrition.

First Peter 2:1–2 says, *“Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”* My brothers, you should not say, “I am tired of reading the Bible.” Actually, you are not tired of reading the Bible. You are tired of reading doctrine. If you realize that the word is quick, powerful, and living, you won’t feel tired. Reading the Bible becomes your enjoyment, and in such enjoyment, you should long for the pure milk of the word like a newborn baby. Newborn babies really desire milk. They cry when they don’t have milk, and they are satisfied when they are fed. Their existence is determined by the milk. They live for the milk. Without milk, they have nothing.

This verse shows us that, like babies, our existence is also determined by the milk. All of our being should be for this milk. We need to desire the word of God just as newborn babies long for milk. As a result, we will grow in respect to salvation. Here, salvation doesn’t mean to be born again but

the salvation of our soul. We can be saved from all malice, all deceit, hypocrisies, envies, and all slander, and grow unto the salvation of our soul.

It does not have to be that difficult to read the Bible. We can read it like newborn babies drinking milk. By it, we may grow up into salvation. Many saints complain that the Bible is too hard to understand. What is the reason? It is because they are using their mind too much. They like to research and analyze with their brain. You shouldn't approach the Bible this way. You have to enjoy the word in your spirit, and then the Bible will be easy for you. The word is like milk. All you need to do is enjoy the pure and spiritual milk of the word.

## THE WORD IS THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...

Ephesians 6:17–18a (NKJV)

When we come to the Lord through prayer or supplication, we cannot depart from the word of God. Our prayers and petitions should always be accompanied by the word of God.

The apostle Paul told us to take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. According to the original Greek text, the Spirit is the word of God. The Spirit and the word cannot be separated! When you pray, you should have a godly attitude, which means you should use your spirit. Not only should you use your spirit, you must have the word—the word from the Bible; the word that God speaks to you in your reading of the Bible. When you enjoy the Spirit, you must have the word. When you enjoy the word, you must have the Spirit. A man of prayer is a man who has the living word and a fresh spirit.

How do you have fellowship with the Lord? It is through the word. The whole Bible is the word of God, the life-giving word. The word is the expression of the will of God and the work of the Spirit. Because of the Spirit, the word becomes living and operative. The word of the Bible is for us to partake

of in our spirit, and it makes us enjoy life and gain Christ in our spirit. You cannot just “search the Scriptures”; you must come to the Lord to have life when you read. This is what God wants. When we read the Bible in our spirit and receive the word in our spirit, the word of God becomes a sword for the Spirit. It becomes, not only our enjoyment, but even the source of our protection, growth, and operation.

Anyone who exercises coming to the presence of the Lord should have many wonderful experiences of “the sword of the Spirit.” The sword is not only for defense but also attack. When we have the word of God as the sword of the Spirit, we may stand against the stratagems of Satan. This is the defensive aspect. The word of God as the sword of the Spirit can also open up newer, higher, more heavenly realms. This is the offensive aspect. When the things from the sinful, material, or religious worlds attempt to destroy or occupy us, the word of God, that is the sword of the Spirit, helps us to overcome.

Can you not overcome the sin that entangles you? With the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, the chains will fall off. Can you not overcome the lust of the eyes? With the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, you are able to stand against it. Are you troubled by the zeal of your natural man? With the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, your soul and spirit can be divided. When we touch the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, it brings us new light, new revelation, and new vision, and we may have new understanding and new consecration. When the word is opened to us, we may follow the Lord and love Him more earnestly. The word of God, the sword of the Spirit, opens up a more heavenly realm for us to see the things of heaven and the loveliness of the Lord.



## THE WORD MAY DWELL IN YOU

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,  
with all wisdom teaching and admonishing  
one another with psalms and hymns  
and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness  
in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

Colossians 3:16 says, *“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”* Other translations of this verse connect *“with all wisdom”* with the phrase *“dwell within you.”* For example, the New King James Version says, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom....”* The phrase *“in all wisdom”* can modify the dwelling of the word, or it can modify the operation of teaching and admonishing. Both ways are very inspiring.

This verse is so wonderful! First, a man coming to the Lord must let the word of Christ dwell in him richly *“in all wisdom.”* The dwelling of the word brings us to know Christ and His being, and it causes us to live a life close to Him. The word of God shows us how lovely the Lord’s being is and how precious His operation is. It also causes us to love Him, pursue Him, and be one with Him. How wonderful it is! The word in us becomes the reason we come to Him. The

dwelling of the word in us causes us to come close to Him and to love to pray before Him. The dwelling of the word in us makes us living and powerful, and it makes us love the Lord and follow Him even more.

Through this fellowship with Him, we can know Him and be one with Him. Then, second, this wisdom also strengthens us to operate. Our operation should be full of “*all wisdom*”: unto the Lord, we have psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in our hearts; unto the saints, we may teach and admonish one another to enjoy and experience the Lord.

Where does wisdom come from? It is from God. It is from above. True wisdom is pure (James 3:17). It makes us just desire the Lord purely. Those who come to the Lord must be pure in wisdom. What they want is the Lord. Who they love is the Lord. Who they pursue is the Lord. They consecrate themselves to the Lord. Their center is the Lord. This is pure. This purity allows them to see God Himself with a pure mind. They may have the experience of Moses and the seventy elders, who saw God over a pavement of sapphire as the very heavens for its clarity (Exo. 24:9–10). This purity makes us live and labor solely for the Lord. This is wisdom.

Dear brothers, I desire that we all have the word dwelling in us richly, so that we have “*all wisdom*” to enjoy Christ in the word. I also desire that we all have wisdom to enjoy, experience, and pursue the Lord whom we love.

## THE WORDS ARE TIMELY RHEMA

If you abide in Me,  
and My words abide in you...

John 15:7a

If we abide in the Lord, that is, abide in His words, His words will abide in us.

John 15:7a says, “*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you.*” The Greek word translated here, “words,” is not *logos* (which refers to the constant word, a long narration, the word of economy), but *rhema* (indicating the timely word, a word that can be different in different situations). Additionally, it is not *rhema* singular, but *rhema* plural: “words.” Brothers, if you abide in the Lord, you will have lots of timely words that the Lord speaks to you. These timely words are *rhema*. According to your situation, the Lord has timely words, words to meet your need in different aspects so that you may abide in the Lord.

The Lord told us, “*the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life*” (John 6:63). The Greek word translated here, “words,” is also *rhema*. Ephesians 5:26 says, “*that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,*” also using *rhema* for “the word.” These verses indicate we can not just have *logos*. Both *logos* and *rhema* are the word of God, but they are different aspects of the word of God. When *logos* is alive, it becomes *rhema*—the words that

are spirit and life; the word that has water able to wash us and cleanse us, ridding us of our spots and wrinkles. The Lord told us that if we abide in Him, His words—His *rhema*—would abide in us. These are the words that are according to different situations, words that can meet all our needs. The Lord speaks such words to us so that we may abide in Him. Then, as we abide in Him, we receive even more kinds of *rhema*. Oh, the secret to abiding in Christ is to abide in His timely words!

Dear brothers, you should tell the Lord, “I want to be full of Your words. Through Your words, I may have fellowship with You. Through Your words, I may have more of Your words. Through Your words, I may enjoy You. Please speak to me. I don’t want to depart from Your words. Every day, I want to have Your words to bring me before You. Every day, I want to have these words operate in me freshly.” Oh, if this is the reality of your life, you will be a person in fellowship with the Lord, abiding in Christ!

Section Three: Through Hymns  
Chapter 44

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## GOD GIVES US HYMNS

The Lord is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.

Exodus 15:2a

Are you able to come to the Lord and enjoy His being and His presence in His flowing out? This depends on whether you can read the Bible and whether you can use hymns. The Bible is like bread, while the hymns are like milk.

There are hymns of all different levels and with different depths. Some hymns make you feel joyful, satisfied, and encouraged. These kinds of hymns are not that deep. Gradually, you will begin to enjoy deeper hymns. These hymns testify of your consecration, your oneness with the Lord, and your deep spiritual experiences. This stanza is a good example of such a hymn:

*My eyes are teary; I can't see You clearly,  
As though all Your words aren't as real as before.  
You make me decrease, that You might thus increase,  
To make Your will sweeter than e'er before.*

If you desire to come to the Lord, you must know that hymns can help you to touch the Lord, to be opened up, to be strengthened, and to fellowship with the Lord. When you come to the Lord, you must have hymns. In my experience,

hymns are what usually bring me to enjoy the water, the milk, and the light in the word. Hymns help you to have sweet fellowship with the Lord. Sometimes you want to spend time before the Lord, but you simply cannot touch Him. One way to help is to use your spirit and sigh: "Oh, Lord!" Another way is to pray-read the Bible. Another way that many saints like is to sing a hymn.

If you are newly saved, hymns can quickly bring you to the Lord. You may be worried that you don't know music. It is okay. Just sing! I met some saints in one locality who, when they sing, are completely out of tune. However, they are so filled with the Spirit. It is hard for you to imagine how much they enjoy the Spirit! None of them care whether their singing is good or bad, in tune or out of tune. Dear brothers, we are not musicians. We are just those seeking to come to the Lord through spiritual hymns to enjoy His face and His presence.

## YOU ALWAYS HAVE A HYMN

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching...  
Let all things be done for edification.

1 Corinthians 14:26

If we desire to touch the Lord, to be opened up, to be strengthened, or to have a good beginning of fellowship with the Lord, singing hymns is a good practice that doesn't require a lot of time. Just by singing hymns, you may touch spiritual reality. Then, you may be restful before the Lord and begin to pray. If you kneel down and feel you don't have anything to say, you may sigh and groan before the Lord and let Him speak to you. You may also pray-read the Bible. It may give you some inspiration. However, if the verse you pray-read does not match your situation, you can sing a hymn. No matter what condition you are in, there is always a hymn for you.

Hymns are very rich. Brother Watchman Nee collected 1052 hymns in his hymn book. Why did he collect so many? This amount shows that there is always a hymn for you, no matter what condition you are in, no matter what feeling you have, whether you are joyful or worried, or whether you are stuck at a spiritual crossroads or have a specific bondage. You may be bound by sin, by the world, or by your personal weakness, but there is always a hymn to help you to come to the Lord. Dear brothers, you must be familiar with hymns!

The hymn book published by Watchman Nee is worth a recommendation. These hymns were selected from thousands and carefully divided into several categories. [Note: the following paragraphs are about the hymnal Watchman Nee helped compile. Your hymnal may also have helpful categories and subcategories.] Just by looking at the categories, you will realize how rich they are. For example, there are categories of hymns that are useful in the Lord's Table meeting: "Praise of the Lord" (for the first part of the Lord's Table) and "Blessing of the Trinity" and "Worship of the Father" (for the second part of the Lord's Table). There are more than two hundred hymns for the Lord's Table. They are very rich and help you to be touched by the Lord.

Even in the category "Praise of the Lord," there are subcategories: His Divinity, His Humanity, His Name, His Eternity, His Incarnation, His Life, His Humiliation, His Suffering, His Death, His Redemption, His Resurrection, His Victory, His Exaltation, His Glory, His Kingdom, His Love, His Faithfulness, His Salvation, His Grace, His Goodness, His Sweetness, His Beauty, His Worthiness, His All-inclusiveness, His Increase, The Father's Delight, Satisfaction With Him, Remembrance of Him, and General. And there are hymns under every subcategory.

If you want to get help from hymns, you should study the categories. They were well-done and render you much help. If you are newly saved, you may enjoy the hymns under "Assurance and Joy of Salvation." When you desire to follow the Lord, you should sing hymns under "Longings." When you touch the Lord, you should sing hymns under "Consecration." On the way of following the Lord, you should sing hymns under "Union with Christ," "Experience of Christ," "Experience of God," "Glorying in the Cross," and "The Way of the Cross." When it feels like the cross is about to crush you, you should sing hymns under "The Resurrection Life." These categories are remarkable. If you lose all of your feelings, you should sing hymns under "Gospel." Gospel



hymns are very helpful. For example, you may find yourself on the way to gamble, yet you start singing, “Coming home, coming home, nevermore to roam.” Wouldn’t you just turn around and come home? Do not look down on the gospel hymns. Even older believers need them.

Let me repeat again: there is no condition or situation you are in that a hymn cannot help. No matter where you are, there is always a good hymn to help you to touch the Lord, to be opened up, to be strengthened, and to have good fellowship with the Lord. Hymns are one means for you to get close to the Lord. Singing them is for you to touch the Lord. Your praise to the Lord should be distinct from others. Take, for example, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9. It is also for praising God, but it is hard to get close to God through it. Many people just listen to it, maybe appreciate it, but have no feeling toward God. This should not be your attitude toward hymns. It is not right for you to be away from God when you sing hymns. You should sing to the point that the Lord is near. Some sing hymns and the Lord is still far away. Singing becomes their spiritual entertainment. You don’t need spiritual entertainment. You need to appreciate good hymns and use them to come to the presence of the Lord.

## LEARN TO APPRECIATE HYMNS (1)

The Lord will surely save me;  
So we will play my songs on stringed instruments  
All the days of our life at the house of the Lord.

Isaiah 38:20

You need to learn to appreciate hymns. Those who know how to appreciate hymns are full of inspirations. I doubt the ability of those who lack inspirations to serve the Lord well. In fact, for you to get saved, you need inspiration. You are saved because you are touched and moved in your spirit; this is inspiration. Let me ask you, why do you love the Lord? Loving the Lord is also a thing of inspiration. A life loving the Lord is a life in inspirations. A religious person doesn't need inspiration. If you are just a meeting-goer, you don't need to sing hymns or appreciate hymns. You only need to wipe the dust off of your Bible and carry it to the meeting every Lord's day. But if you desire to love the Lord, to follow the Lord, and to be one with Him, you must learn to appreciate hymns.

How do you know a hymn is a good one? A good hymn must be full of inspiration. It should also be beautiful. Hymn writers express their spiritual sentiments through their hymns. They write with their spiritual sentiment, so we should sing their hymns in their spiritual sentiment. Animals don't sing hymns, because they don't have spiritual

sentiments. All good hymns have spiritual sentiment behind them. Take, for example, the hymn “How Vast, Immense, and Measureless.” Watchman Nee wrote it when he gave up his girlfriend for the Lord (although eventually, she became his wife). Verse six says:

*Thou art my comfort, gracious Lord!  
I've none in heav'n but Thee.  
And who but Thee is there on earth  
With whom I love to be?*

Not only was he inspired, but he also had a spiritual sentiment—He was absolute to the Lord. Such absoluteness was the mark of his spiritual life. It was because of his absoluteness that Brother Nee, while away to preach the gospel, was excommunicated by his coworker. His coworker did this in order to be ordained by a denomination. With another spiritual sentiment, Watchman Nee wrote another hymn, “What Comfort I Could Feel Anon.” Verse one says:

*What comfort I could feel anon  
If from His way I'd turn;  
But I recall how my Lord Christ  
Did His own comfort spurn.*

Verses six and seven say:

*Let others fight for glory, wealth;  
Let them puff up their name.  
Let their lives be for winning friends,  
Applause, and loud acclaim.*

*But I would be but lonely, poor,  
With no prosperity;  
My heart desires to follow Him  
And finish faithfully.*

Man experiences feelings. When a feeling is heavenly and elevated, it becomes a sentiment. For example: living absolutely for the Lord, touching the presence of the Lord, having a special consecration, experiencing the death and the resurrection of the Lord, or, having a special relationship with the Lord. These sentiments produce good hymns.

At the same time, inspiration is also needed. We often have feelings. When we touch the Lord, our tears come out. However, most of us struggle to write hymns. Why? It is because we have a sentiment but lack inspiration. A spiritual sentiment is the base, but a good hymn must then have inspiration. A heavenly sentiment results in an inspiration. A good hymn must have inspiration as well as sentiment.

A good hymn usually relates to a special experience. Take, for example, the hymn “I Gladly Waste All for the Church” (translated):

*Lord, I offer myself into Thy gracious hand  
And aspire to “waste” all for the church.  
Though affliction and pain be the lot that I should gain,  
If Thy smile be my reward; Where’s regretting?*

How high is the concept for these few lines! The writer had a sentiment according to his experience. He felt there was no way to go on and he expected affliction and pain would be his lot. Although there was no comfort and encouragement, he knew he had to experience the Lord’s death on the way of following the Lord. He wouldn’t take a comfortable life. For the church’s sake and for the smile of the Lord, there was no regret.

I like the last words: “Where’s regretting?” I have experienced so many misunderstandings, mockings, and reproaches. I just feel, “Where’s regretting?” Why do you pay attention to the mocking? Brother Nee said, “But though the worldlings glare in rage; I seek His smiling face.” This hymn writer had a sentiment. From the sentiment he had an inspiration that

was related to a special experience. In that experience, he had a special feeling, and he had an utterance and expression for his vision according to his experience. Such elements are the reason hymns help us to come to the Lord.

When you enjoy a good hymn, you should learn how to appreciate the sentiment, the inspiration, the experience, and the vision in it. Let me give another illustration: “Oh, How I Love Jesus”:

*There is a name I love to hear,  
I love to sing its worth;  
It sounds like music in mine ear,  
The sweetest name on earth.  
Oh, how I love Jesus,  
Oh, how I love Jesus,  
Oh, how I love Jesus,  
Because He first loved me!*

This hymn writer had a simple and pure sentiment. He also had an inspiration: “How I love Jesus!” He had an experience that he was willing to love Jesus. But why was he able to love the Lord? He had a vision that the Lord first loved him. The Lord loved us to the extent that He was willing to give Himself to us. This becomes the reason we desire to give ourselves to the Lord, too. Oh, how I love Jesus!

Take the hymn, “Why Don’t We Praise Him Together” (translated), for another example. Verse one says:

*Why don’t we praise Him together!  
We are blessed and dwelling in the holy mountain.  
No matter old or young, we should testify  
The reigning Christ is our king.  
How real and abundant is the church life!  
Sin and the world are fading day by day.  
We leap for joy, singing heartily.  
We leap for joy, singing heartily.*

Verse two says:

*Praise Him! He was equal with God  
Descending from heaven; injured and died for us.  
Praise Him! Resurrected, reigning on the throne.  
We may taste all His riches.  
How rich that His riches fill all in all!  
How we've become the expression of His riches!  
Oh hallelujah, the expression of His riches!  
Oh hallelujah, the expression of His riches!*

From verse one to verse two, the hymn goes higher. A good hymn should be beautiful and filled with inspiration. Its beauty comes from a sentiment, an inspiration, a special experience, and a heavenly vision. Without these four elements, it cannot be a good hymn.

## LEARN TO APPRECIATE HYMNS (2)

So the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
And come to Zion with singing,  
With everlasting joy on their heads.

Isaiah 51:11a, NKJV

A good hymn has inspiration and experience, but it should also be based on truth. Truth itself cannot compose a hymn, but without truth, a hymn won't be good. Take, for example, the hymn, "Whispering":

*Lord, Your person so compels;  
I am drawn wheree'er You go.  
You're so full and boundless, Lord;  
More than I could hope to know.  
Like a pretty henna flower  
Blooming in the barren field;  
As the myrrh with fragrance sweet  
Deeply in my heart concealed.  
Oh, do hear my whisper, Lord.  
There's no other Lord to me.  
As Your riches I enjoy,  
Your life brings maturity.*

The first two sentences are an expression of inspiration. Then, the middle of the hymn contains the truth from the

Song of Songs. The reason this hymn is enjoyable is because it is full of inspiration and based on truth. You cannot continue singing a hymn that only has inspiration but lacks truth and experience. You will get bored easily, and singing it won't take you anywhere deeper.

“Since Long Ago” is one of the best hymns. This hymn is full of inspiration, truth, and experience. Verse one says:

*Since long ago at Bethany we parted,  
Within my heart there is a ceaseless void;  
How can I take my harp down from the willow?  
How can my songs without Thee be enjoyed?  
And when at night I'm keeping lonely vigil—  
Grown numb alike to sorrow and to cheer—  
Then I recall the promise of Thy coming,  
But sigh: O Lord, why, why Thou dost not yet appear?*

You can see that it is full of truth and experience. The writer felt he was like those exiled in the Old Testament (Psa. 137:1–2). His inspiration was coupled with truth to make this outstanding hymn.

More than this, the tune of a good hymn should match its lyrics. Tune is very important for hymns. When I write a hymn, I usually try to first continually listen to the tune. Then I write according to the feeling of the tune. For example, the tune of “I Gladly Waste All for the Church” (original Chinese) is sad but with resolution, while the tune of “Enjoy the Riches of the Lord” (original Chinese) is very joyful.

### I Gladly Waste All for the Church

1. 主，我 今 將 自 己 交 在 你 恩 手 中，我 只  
望 能 為 著 召 會 花 費，雖 不 知 我 前 途 有 何  
患 難 或 痛 苦，若 是 為 著 你 召 會，何 來 懷 悔！



## Enjoy the Riches of the Lord

1. 享 受 主, 享 受 主, 享 受 祂 的 丰 富。  
 享 受 主, 享 受 主, 享 受 祂 的 丰 富。  
 享 受 主, 享 受 主, 享 受 祂 的 丰 富。  
 享 受 主, 享 受 主, 享 受 祂 的 丰 富。  
 享 受, 何 必 天 天 愁 苦, 失 去 见 证。  
 享 受, 何 必 天 天 愁 苦, 失 去 见 证。  
 享 受 主, 享 受 主, 享 受 祂 的 丰 富。  
 享 受 主, 享 受 主, 享 受 祂 的 丰 富。

A good hymn must have a good tune. However, tunes do change according to the age. Recently, young people have begun using new tunes to sing old hymns, because they have their tunes in this age. Every age has its own tunes. Martin Luther wrote a famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” according to the tune of a bar song!

## A Mighty Fortress is Our God

1. A might - y For - tress is our God, A Bul - wark nev - er  
 fail - ing; Our Help - er He a - mid the flood Of mor - tal ills pre -  
 vail - ing; For still our an - cient foe Doth seek to work us  
 woe; His craft and power are great, And, armed with cru - el  
 hate, On earth is not his e - qual.

Reformers usually suffer persecution. I think Luther was persecuted by the Catholic Church to the point that he wrote this hymn. Today, we may feel the bar songs at that time were very solemn, and we may not be able to enjoy them as much. By any means, the lyrics and the tune of a good hymn must match. If they cannot match, it is not a good hymn.

Good hymns should also match those who sing them. In other words, a good hymn cannot be like caviar to the general public. You should not write hymns that most people cannot enjoy. Not every hymn I write is enjoyed by everyone, but some must be able to enjoy my hymns in their particular experience. Good hymns can match the people who sing them and express what is in their heart. When you try to pray but don't know what to say, a good hymn can become your prayer.

A good hymn should also bring you to a new spiritual realm. A good hymn speaks to your heart but also elevates you. It brings you out of your confinement. After you sing it, some divine element is produced in you, and you feel some divine things are revealed to you.

Dear brothers, after considering all of these elements, what is a good hymn? In the end, if a hymn brings you to touch the Lord, enjoy the Lord, love the Lord more, and consecrate yourself to the Lord, it is indeed a good one. Speaking from experience, hymns by Watchman Nee and M. E. Barber are the best. When you sing hymns by Miss Barber, you feel they are one with you. They elevate you and make you love the Lord more. They also open up a new spiritual realm for you.

## WRITE DOWN YOUR INSPIRATION

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns  
and spiritual songs, singing and making melody  
with your heart to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:19

Brothers, I hope there could be more hymn writers among us. I advise you not only to learn to sing hymns but to also write down your inspirations. These inspirations can come either from your experiences or from the revelations of your Bible reading. If you exercise in this way, you may eventually write some hymns. In the beginning, what you write may be simple. For example:

*Lord Jesus loves little children.  
He descended from the heaven.  
Suffered for the little children,  
Died on the cross to show His love.  
His love moves me to come  
Give myself in His bosom.  
(translated from Chinese)*

A high school student wrote this song for children. This is a good hymn. It has the sentiment of consecration, it has inspiration, and it has truth. It is not for adults, but when small children sing it, it could move them.

If at first you write simple hymns, eventually you may write something deeper. For example, take the hymn, “The Offering of Isaac.” The concepts in this hymn are very deep. It was written according to a spiritual sentiment. When the writer was giving a message on Genesis, he talked about the offering of Isaac. He had a feeling at that time, “Lord, I must give You everything that I desire. I must consecrate everything I have to You, even though I know this is not an easy way.” Let’s look at verse one:

*With difficulty I forward tread  
Near to the side of my beloved;  
Within my heart does sorrow flow  
Knowing our journey soon must end;  
Shoulder to shoulder I meditate,  
How he’s the focus of my life.*

In order to offer Isaac, Abraham walked a three-day’s journey. It was not an easy way. He knew every step he walked was a step closer to the death of his son. How hard this must have been! He remembered clearly that the focus of his life was this child. He had lived many years with his son, yet after this journey, the son would be no more, since Abraham was about to offer him. The reason Abraham followed the Lord was this son. God had promised him, “*To your descendents I will give this land*” (Gen 12:7a). His son was the center of God’s promise. When God promised him all the riches, he said, “*What will You give me, since I am childless?*” (15:2). His son was indeed his focus of life. Verse two of the hymn says:

*I see the wood he bears for the pyre;  
I hold the torch, the blade in hand;  
His questioning does grieve my soul,  
And his dear sweetness breaks my heart;  
Many a year in my bosom lay  
Treasured by God, admired by men.*

How cruel was it that Isaac carried the wood for the pyre? His asking of Abraham where the offering was shows that he suspected nothing. He didn't know he was about to be offered as a burnt offering. Try to imagine how Abraham felt. The offering was his son! "Many a year in my bosom lay treasured by God, admired by men." Even from God's point of view, this child was the focus of God's economy. Without this child, God's promise could not be fulfilled. From man's point of view, all of Abraham's wealth and riches were about to be given to Isaac. How precious was the child! He was indeed treasured by God and admired by men. However, he would be no more after being offered. Verse three of the hymn says:

*My God, what strange design has moved  
You to demand this offering?  
Common as I, I ne'er dared hope  
Pledged by You for my aging days;  
It is Yourself come forward to give  
With Your appearing You promised to me.*

Abraham could have argued with God, "I didn't ask for this son. When You told me I was going to have a son, didn't I laugh? I am just a common man. You made me spiritual and I suffered. Without Your appearing, I should have lived a simple life. I should have lived like others and died like others. Now You brought me to this state. I never imagined that I would have a son in my aged days. It is all Your doing. And now You ask me to give him back. How could You be so cruel?" However, Abraham did not say anything like this. Verse four of the hymn:

*As in a dream I walked, and yet  
By cov'nant, Your provision know;  
But my own hands the altar raise;  
Wood I lay up, my son I bind,  
I know that once this moment's gone,  
All gain will vanish by my own blow.*

“As in a dream I walked.” Abraham could have asked himself, “Could this be happening? God gave a son to me and now He asks him back.” “By cov’nant, Your provision know.” Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb for the burnt offering was. Abraham answered, “*God will provide for Himself*” (Gen. 22:8). He didn’t know what God would provide. He didn’t know if the provision was Isaac or a lamb. However, Abraham did believe his son would live again, even if he killed him. Oh, what kind of faith was this! Hebrews 11:19 tells us, “*He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received [Isaac] back as a type.*” The hymn says, “I know that once this moment’s gone, all gain will vanish by my own blow.” How deep was this experience! Such an experience will be the most difficult stage for us to pass. If God doesn’t give to us, we have nothing. But if God gives you something, it becomes your center and God Himself disappears. Abraham had such a deep experience. He knew his gain from the Lord would be terminated after this blow. How high is this concept! In verse five of the hymn, he complains to God:

*Why o’er and o’er have You appeared,  
Drawn me to gain the promised land?  
Why have You promised blessing to me,  
Given this land e’en to my seed?  
Why have You named me Abraham,  
Granted me faith and righteousness?*

These three “why” questions are very good. As we follow the Lord, we eventually need to ask, “Why did You do so much? Why did You bless me so much? Why did You lead me this way? And when You have done so much, why do You just admire me as your work and do not want to use me?” In this verse of the hymn, Abraham seems to say, “Why did You go through so much trouble? If You wanted to kill him, You shouldn’t have found me and blessed me and called me Abraham in the first place! What is the use of all these things?”

In the sight of God, those who have this experience are so precious. If you have seen and gained something high from the Lord but you live only for these things, you will become a problem in the church and a hindrance to God's economy. Why is this? It is because God desires nothing but Christ. He desires nothing but Himself. In verse six of the hymn, Abraham says:

*I'm just a common man on earth,  
And every step I take seems hard,  
Your loving hand, not letting go,  
Draws me to walk this path of faith.  
Wand'ring alone, my body dead,  
I out of death to life was led.*

"I'm just a common man on earth." He wasn't a great man. God called him out of Ur but he delayed in Haran. In Haran, God had to call Abraham to leave his father's house. God asked him to leave his kindred, but he took Lot with him. Sometimes we think Abraham was very spiritual. In fact, he was not like what we imagine. All those who serve the Lord will eventually see that they are not special at all. We all are very common. "And every step I take seems hard." Abraham would say, "God, it was hard for me to leave when you called me in Ur. It was hard for me to depart when you called me in Haran. I have nothing to boast. And every step I take seems hard." However, "Your loving hand, not letting go, draws me to walk this path of faith." Every time it seemed he could go no further, God came and drew him to walk the path of faith. "Wand'ring alone, my body dead, I out of death to life was led." He had experienced death and resurrection once. Romans 4:19 tells us that he contemplated his own body as good as dead, yet God gave him a son. In verse seven of the hymn, he asked again:

*Remember, Lord, Your promises;  
Do You forget Your doings of plan?*

*Remember how You spoke to me,  
Caused me to wander in this land.  
Now You took him who make it all real:  
Replacing him with Yourself alone.*

We know Abraham had Isaac in resurrection. Although his body was as good as dead already, he experienced resurrection and had Isaac, the only begotten son, according to God's promise. Now God wanted to take Isaac back. Abraham was about to offer his son. "Now You took him who make it all real; replacing him with Yourself alone." Verse eight of the hymn:

*I raise my hand, I clench the blade,  
Eyes full of tears, t'ward my beloved;  
Son, once I promised all to you,  
Knowing you are God's top desire.  
Now I must give you back to God;  
You I must kill with my own hand.*

"I raise my hand, I clench the blade, Eyes full of tears, t'ward my beloved." He seems to say, "I am going to kill him now. When I kill him, won't I have tears in my eyes? This is my son! When I kill him, won't I cry?" The hymn continues: "Son, once I promised all to you, Knowing you are God's top desire." Isaac was the commitment that God gave to Abraham. "Now I must give you back to God; You I must kill with my own hand." How deep is the description of the experience! Verse nine of the hymn:

*Where now my way, where now my hope.  
All that I am has ended here.  
Appearing, promises all past;  
Experience, gifts remembered not.  
Only my God, this glorious God,  
My goal, my portion, my treasure, my all.*



He cried, "I have nothing now. I have God alone!" Jesus-lovers must eventually have a hymn like this. The sentiment, the inspiration, the truth in these verses will bring you to another level. When you sing a hymn like this, you will have a deeper consecration. It is not just saying "Lord, I love You. I give myself to You." Deep within, you recognize that appearances, promises, experiences, and works will all pass, but God Himself will not pass.

I love the last verse. "Where now my way, where now my hope. All that I am has ended here." How good this is! "Appearing, promises all past; Experience, gifts remembered not." We all desire God's appearing, God's promises, God's gifts, and experiences of God. But at this time, Abraham desired nothing but God alone. "Only my God, this glorious God, My goal, my portion, my treasure, my all."

This hymn is so high that not many are able to appreciate it. If you do appreciate it, you are a man in life. In the beginning, it is good to love to sing, "Oh, How I Love Jesus." However, if you are still only singing this after twenty years, it is not healthy. You should grow higher and higher and walk further and further. The more you sing hymns, the more you advance.

## APPRECIATE HYMNS (1)

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;  
Sing praises to our God on the lyre.

Psalm 147:7

According to what we covered, let's look at some hymns. Good hymns are inspiring, beautiful, and they express spiritual sentiments. Take, for example, the hymn, "Dearest of All is He" (translated from Chinese):

*Dearest of all is He,  
The One I love the best;  
'Tis Him we all must seek,  
And rely on Him at last.*

*Supplying all my need,  
In weakness He sustains;  
Fairest of fair to me,  
Ever faithful He remains.*

*He, our joy endlessly,  
The same through every test;  
Dearest of all is He;  
He's the One I love the best.*

When you sing this hymn, you feel the Lord is so good. It is

poetic, inspiring, and pure. Singing a hymn like this will help you touch something very deep. Just three short stanzas show us a spiritual sentiment. They describe our life in a simple way. Sometimes we are in need, sometimes we are in weakness, and sometimes life is fair. Whatever state we are in, however, the Lord is faithful. The writer told us that the Lord is his supply when he is in need, the Lord sustains him in weakness, and the Lord is the fairest among the fair. Whenever we enjoy Him, He is the most faithful One.

How good is our existence! The Lord is our endless joy. Time changes, but He never changes. He is the dearest of all, the One we love the best. The words are simple, but this song leads the singer to the way of life. This is a hymn of life. When you sing, “Dearest of all is He; He’s the One I love the best,” you just feel that the Lord is so good.

The hymn, “Whispering,” is similar to this one. It is also pure. You enjoy nothing but the Lord. You have to learn to enjoy these kinds of hymns. They are simple and short, but after you sing them, you feel you are cleansed. They wash away the unclean or improper things in you so that you may have a sweet relationship with the Lord.

Some gospel hymns are good, too. Take, for example, “Oh, the Love that Sought Me”:

*In tenderness He sought me,  
Weary and sick with sin,  
And on His shoulders brought me  
Into His flock again.  
While angels in His presence sang  
Until the courts of heaven rang.*

*(Chorus)*

*Oh, the love that sought me!  
Oh, the blood that bought me!  
Oh, the grace that brought me to the flock,  
Wondrous grace that brought me to the flock!*

The chorus is so good! It is so sweet to always be singing, “Oh, the love that sought me! Oh, the blood that bought me!” This is not just a gospel song. After you have been saved for fifty years, you can still enjoy it. If you enjoy hymns in this way, your Christian life will be so rich. Brothers, learn to sing hymns. You should never graduate from singing hymns. You cannot grow to the extent that you don’t have a hymn anymore. No matter where you are, no matter what situation you are in, you should always have a hymn. Remember: you should always have a hymn in you!

## APPRECIATE HYMNS (2)

O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord,  
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.

Psalm 95:1

Let's look at the hymn, "Within My Heart a Praise O'erflowing" (translated from Chinese). Verse one says:

*Within my heart a praise o'erflowing,  
'Tis the gracious Lord, my song;  
There never was a song so excellent;  
Heaven's joys to me belong.*

*(Chorus)*

*In my heart there springs a melody,  
The sweetest melody, a song so heavenly,  
In my heart there springs a melody,  
There springs a melody of love.*

The words are so simple: I have a song, and the song is my Lord. No song is better in the world. It makes me taste of heaven's joy! Verse two:

*O wondrous love, the Lord has saved me,  
Granting me new life and joy;  
Amazing grace! He's living now in me;  
Grace and love I now enjoy.*

We were dead in sin, but He saved us. We have the joy of new life. He not only saved us but also lives in us. As He lives in us, our song is full of grace and love, and we enjoy Him as grace and love. Verse three:

*O light of life, my Lord now leads me.  
Step by step this song I raise;  
O perfect peace, Christ now abides in me,  
Welling up in psalms of praise.*

Because the Lord leads us, our life is so bright, and we can joyfully sing: “Step by step this song I raise.” This hymn is for the newly saved. If you just got saved, you should enjoy a hymn like this. It tells you that your life is full of light. The Lord saved you and lives in you. Today, He leads you to walk every step. And the psalms of praise are welling up in you! Hymns like this are very inspiring. Verse four:

*O what release! I shall be raptured,  
Where the vict’ry song we’ll sing;  
O what an honor, reigning with the Lord;  
Angels’ celebrations ring.*

Some day the Lord is going to come and we will sing the victory song. How full of glory and honor we will be! We will reign with the Lord, and on that day, even angels will admire us. The last verse:

*The Holy City, what a blessing!  
Living water flowing free,  
The tree of life with fruits abundant, sweet,  
Satisfy eternally.*

It is not I alone entering into the holy city. The saints and I together constitute the holy city and drink the living water eternally. There is the living water and the tree of life with its

abundant fruits. In the eternal future, the tree of life will still yield fruit every month. This hymn is so simple, yet so rich, describing how the Lord gives His riches as our provision. What a blessing!

Though this hymn is simple, it has a good spiritual sentiment. The writer had a feeling that the Lord's salvation is so good! The hymn is inspiring with truth and experience. The author indeed seemed to taste how good salvation is.

Let's look at the hymn, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." This hymn is similar to the previous one. Verse one:

*All the way my Savior leads me;  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.*

"For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well." I know that no matter what befalls me, the Lord has His perfect will in it. I don't need to conjecture. I just receive everything from the Lord. I know Jesus does all things well. Whosoever can say, "whatever befall me, Jesus doeth all things well," is a spiritual person. This is a good hymn. The inspiration is simple. It is not as deep as "Dearest of All is He" and it is based on man's feeling. However, the feeling that the writer conveyed is precious. Verse two:

*All the way my Savior leads me,  
Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for every trial,  
Feeds me with the living bread.*

*Though my weary steps may falter,  
And my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! a spring of joy I see;  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! a spring of joy I see.*

How can I walk every step? It is by His encouragement. When I suffer, He has living bread for my growth. His spring of joy, gushing from the Rock, hastens my steps (see Exo. 17:6). For this verse, the hymn writer used the truth that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. Although your steps falter, your journey is weary, and your soul is athirst, look—a spring of joy is gushing from the Rock for you to drink! Verse three:

*All the way my Savior leads me;  
Oh, the fullness of His grace!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father's blest embrace.  
When my spirit, clothed immortal,  
Wings its flight to realms of day,  
This my song through endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way;  
This my song through endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way.*

It is a fact that one day, we will enjoy the fullness of His grace. We will rest in His embrace. “My spirit, clothed immortal,” is a good utterance, one that we do not hear very often. What we often say is, “our body will be transformed” (see Phil. 3:21). You can see the utterance here is so excellent; it indicates that our spirit is still our center in eternity future. Today, our spirit is clothed in a confined body. On that day, our spirit will be clothed in a glorious, immortal body!



“Wings its flight to realms of day” is also a good utterance. We won’t need to walk on that day. Today, we walk. On that day, we will fly to realms of day. “Wings its flight to realms of day” is very poetic. “This my song through endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.” We will still sing our praise in eternity; praise that He led us all the way. Although this hymn is simple and basic, it leaves you with a very sweet feeling.

## APPRECIATE HYMNS (3)

They shall utter the memory  
of Your great goodness,  
And shall sing of Your righteousness.

Psalm 145:7, NKJV

At the beginning of your Christian life, you are drawn to the Lord. You feel that He is the dearest of all. You enjoy all His provision and you are joyful. The Lord shows you that He Himself is our joy endlessly. Therefore we have hymns about His love. Take, “I Prostrate, Lord, Before Thee,” for example. This hymn talks about your life. We will start from verse five:

*Midst men, then, am I better?  
More noble, then, was I  
That Thou should'st so be willing  
To suffer, bleed, and die?  
When I myself consider,  
There's nothing to be praised;  
I wonder at such ransom,  
And by such love amazed.*

When we begin to follow the Lord, we often feel that we are like a hero. “OK,” we say, “I will spend ten months to go to a training and pursue Christ!” But I tell you, the Lord will extend your life from 93 to 96 years. What are ten months?

In this hymn, the writer has a feeling: “Who am I? I am no better than anyone.” Verse six says:

*I find no cause nor reason  
That Thou, my God, should'st gain  
By loving this vile rebel;  
Such grace I can't explain.  
No, not because I'm worthy  
Nor that I've merit high,  
But that Thou dost love sinners,  
That, that alone is why.*

The Lord just loves us without any reason. The writer continues to describe our true condition in verses seven and eight:

*Much was the grace imparted,  
Much may I earnest be,  
Both loving and obeying  
And not ashamed of Thee.  
More mercy show unto me,  
For still this heart is cold;  
Though mighty grace I've sighted,  
Still more I need to hold.*

*Thy heav'nly throne Thou leavest,  
For me to Calv'ry trod,  
Yet I am still half-hearted,  
With apathy toward God.  
The world holds my allegiance,  
Thy path too narrow felt,  
My little self too precious,  
And yet I am indwelt.*

The hymn writer expresses the feelings we struggle with: “Lord, even my little self I cannot disregard. I feel Your path is too narrow to walk. I really cannot love You.” How honest is

this hymn! The writer confesses that he is half-hearted. If we wrote this hymn, we would say, “Oh, how I love You!” Yet, we would still do whatever we want after writing it. This hymn is so good because the writer so honestly wrote his heart and described our true condition. Verse nine:

*When I my case consider,  
My heart does feel some loss;  
Hating my nature rotten,  
My vicious living's dross.  
Thou Lord, didst know already  
My heart would be like this.  
Since Thou foreknew my coolness,  
Why didst Thou impart grace?*

“Thou foreknew my coolness.” How deep is the description of love here! The Lord already knew everything about our hearts, about us, yet He still imparted grace. Verse ten:

*To bear with pain and mockings  
From heaven to depart?  
Accepting earth's mistreatings  
To woo this hard, cold heart?  
E'en though Thou knew my nature,  
To shed dear blood for me?  
E'en though Thou knew I'm evil,  
To suffer painfully?*

This touches the highest love. “Lord, I am so cold toward You. Why do You still love me? I am not worthy for You to die for me!” Such sentiment is so different from, “Lord, You died and I live. Thank You that You died for me.” The hymn writer, realizing his true condition, describes the Lord’s love in an even deeper way. Therefore, he wrote, “E’en though Thou knew my nature, To shed dear blood for me? E’en though Thou knew I’m evil, To suffer painfully?” Verse eleven:

*Yes, Thou didst know my coolness,  
My fickle mood and heart;  
Yet Thou wouldst pay most dearly,  
Die for me, life impart.  
When I such love consider,  
I weep without restraint;  
My Savior is all-giving,  
My thanks compared is faint.*

You should learn to sing hymns like this. They will save you from self. No one loves the Lord like a hero. No one loves the Lord on their own. You can only love the Lord because of His mercy! Therefore, the writer said in comparison to how much the Savior gives, “My thanks compared is faint.” Verse twelve:

*O Lord, Thy love in vastness  
I cannot understand;  
Not seemly I would worship,  
Nor can I comprehend.  
Though glory’s joy I’ve tasted,  
My heart is much too small;  
I’ll sing Thy praises ever,  
Before Thy throne I’ll fall.*

There is a sentiment here: “I don’t really care for the joy of glory. I just want to sing Your praises forever.” If you dwell in a hymn like this, even memorizing it, your way of following the Lord will be straightened.

## APPRECIATE HYMNS (4)

Serve the Lord with gladness;  
Come before Him with joyful singing.

Psalm 100:2

Let's look at the hymn, "I Have a Friend, Whose Faithful Love." This hymn describes our experience. It shows us that the Lord had certain experiences, and we will eventually experience the same things. Let's start from verse three:

*It was a lonely path He trod,  
From every human soul apart;  
Known only to Himself and God  
Was all the grief that filled His heart,  
Yet from the track  
He turned not back,  
Till where I lay in want and shame,  
He found me—Blessed be His name!*

How many of us have this kind of understanding of love? If you follow the Lord faithfully, eventually you will have this experience. You will say, "Lord, all my grief was known only by You and myself." You will feel apart from every other human soul. The path is a lonely path. This hymn is good because it can match your condition, yet in your condition,

it shows the Lord's love and His life in love. More than this, it also assures you that this is going to be your life. Verse four:

*Then dawned at last that day of dread,  
When desolate, yet undismayed,  
With wearied frame and thorn-crowned head,  
He, God-forsaken, man-betrayed,  
Was then made sin  
On Calvary,  
And, dying there in grief and shame,  
He saved me—Blessed be His name!*

Brothers, if you love the Lord, sooner or later you will be forsaken and betrayed. Recently, I read some Christian biographies. These gave me a deep feeling that if you are not forsaken, you are not a true servant of God. God renders such a difficult path to His servants. Why? Because it makes His servants rely on Him alone and pray: "I for greater power pray not, deeper death is what I need." If they forsake such a path, it becomes easy for them to develop a system and a work that will devour them. Verse five:

*Long as I live my song shall tell  
The wonders of His dying love;  
And when at last I go to dwell  
With Him His sovereign grace to prove,  
My joy shall be  
His face to see,  
And bowing there with loud acclaim  
I'll praise Him—Blessed be His name!*

A good hymn writer doesn't focus on the hymn itself. If you focus on your writing, it usually won't be very good. Instead of trying hard to compose a hymn, a good hymn writer lets it flow out. You can tell this was the case with this hymn.

Now let's look at the hymn, "It Passeth Knowledge". Verse five is very touching:

*I am an empty vessel—not one thought  
Or look of love to Thee I've ever brought;  
Yet I may come, and come again to Thee,  
With this the empty sinner's only plea,  
Thou lovest me.*

This is a confession of someone who really touched the love the God. Without deeply experiencing such love, it is hard to recognize that you don't really love Him. I often say that Christians don't love the Lord. You believe in Jesus, but you don't really love Him. Especially when Christians fall into religious concepts, they can become so cruel and terrible. However, those who know God's love say, "I am an empty vessel—not one thought or look of love to Thee I've ever brought; Yet I may come, and come again to Thee, With this the empty sinner's only plea." What is the only reason the writer can come again to the Lord? It is because "Thou lovest me." Verse six:

*Oh, fill me, Jesus, Savior, with Thy love!  
Lead, lead me to the living fount above;  
Thither may I, in simple faith draw nigh,  
And never to another fountain fly,  
But unto Thee.*

This concept is very high. Most hymns would say something like, "Oh, fill me, Jesus, Savior, with Thy love, so that I may be filled with joy in spirit!" However, this hymn says, "Lead, lead me to the living fount above." In other words, there is not just a filling, but a leading to the living fount above. The last verse says:

*Lord Jesus, when Thee face to face I see,  
When on Thy lofty throne I sit with Thee,*



*Then of Thy love, in all its breadth and length,  
Its height and depth, its everlasting strength,  
My soul shall sing.*

The sentiment here is, “I experience Thy love today. But on that day, I will be surprised at the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of that love.” Why did the writer say such a thing? It is because today, we cannot realize the eternal characteristic of the Lord’s love. We won’t realize it until the day we see the Lord. Then, in eternity, we will realize what love is. This hymn is so good. It describes God’s love, our condition, and the outcome of love. It is truly a masterpiece concerning the love of God. This is why hymns are a treasure for us to get into and enjoy. By knowing how to enjoy good hymns, we can be healthy before the Lord.

## BE A HYMN LOVER

Sing to the Lord a new song;  
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Psalms 96:1

Brothers, learn not just to sing good hymns, but to be a hymn lover. We all have a spirit within us, and that spirit is very sensitive. In principle, those who love the Lord also love to sing hymns. I rarely see someone who doesn't love hymns but really loves the Lord. Of course, there are always exceptions, but in principle, a Jesus-lover is also a hymn-lover. I hope you all treasure hymns. Learn to get help from hymns all your life.

Being a hymn lover, you need to pay attention to two things: knowing how to appreciate hymns and enjoying hymns in your daily life.

First, you should know how to appreciate both the lyrics and the tune of hymns. You should also appreciate the beauty of the sentiment. Some hymns are delicate. Some are buoyant. Some are full of feeling. Some are full of fine descriptions. Hymns are different from the Bible. Hymns are milk. They are the product of the experiences of the writers. Therefore, you should try to also get into the feeling and the spirit of the writer. Take, for example, "Dearest of All is He" (lyrics can be found in chapter 49). This hymn is so pure. The tune is pretty, and the lyrics are beautiful. To fully appreciate it, you should get into the feeling of the writer. Enjoy the utterances

and the spirit. When this hymn was written, the writer's spirit was so pure.

Hymns express the feelings of the writers. These writers dwelt in the Lord, were before the Lord, and had many experiences with the Lord. Then, they wrote a hymn. To do this, they must have possessed a certain kind of spirit. One who has a depressed, hostile, or unruly spirit will not be able to write a hymn. What he writes will only express his anger. Good hymns come from writers who know how to face all kinds of unreasonable experiences. When they go through such things, they are not angry or bitter; rather, a sweet feeling is produced.

Second, you should enjoy hymns in your daily life. When you cook, do the dishes, or drive, you can sing hymns. Whether in meetings or by yourself, you should enjoy the Lord through hymns. Good hymns bring you to different experiences, and good hymns bring you to the Lord. When you sing a good hymn, you come to the presence of the Lord. You may touch the Lord and enjoy His presence and strengthening. Good hymns can also help you to be opened up and released.

A good hymn brings you to the presence of the Lord. You are strengthened and it may grant you vision. Take, for example, "Lord, Enlighten Me" (translated from Chinese):

*Lord, enlighten, enlighten me, Amen!  
Manifest, manifest my sins, Hallelujah!  
Wash me with your blood,  
Cleanse all my defilement, Amen!*

You may feel this hymn is too simple. However after you sing it for a few times, you will be strengthened, opened up, and revived. Let's look at another hymn, "You Need Jesus." The chorus says:

*You need Jesus! You need Jesus!  
Men and women all need Him!*

*For redemption you need Him,  
For salvation you need Him!  
And for everlasting life,  
Yes, you need Jesus!*

After singing it for a few times, you are opened up. You feel you should go preach the gospel and get people saved! Such sentiments help you know that this is a good hymn. “Good hymns” are not only from beautiful tunes and elegant lyrics!

If you don’t know how to enjoy hymns, you will suffer a lot as you follow the Lord. You must enjoy basic hymns like “Lord, Enlighten Me.” After you sing it, it will change you. The writer used simple words, but he wrote them from the spirit. When you sing the hymn, you enjoy the Lord’s presence, strength, being opened, and releasing in life.

You should respect every hymn. When you open a hymnal, do not criticize that this one is not good, that one is bad, etc. The problem is not the hymn. It is that it doesn’t match your condition at this time. For example, when you are ill, you like to have some warm soup. You don’t have the appetite for steak. Steak is good, but when you are sick, it just doesn’t fit your condition. One day, you will need steak, but for now, you cannot take it in. It is the same with hymns. When a hymn is hard to touch, just realize that it does not match your condition at this moment. One day, however, you may need it for strength and for going on.

## TWENTY-TWO CATEGORIES OF HYMNS

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth,  
Sing praises to the Lord.

Psalm 68:32

We have said that hymns are able to help you, no matter what condition you are in or what experience you are going through. In your Christian life, you will experience the following twenty-two conditions and experiences.

First, you love the Lord purely. This is a healthy condition. Second, you desire to grow. Third, you feel that you are not worthy of the Lord. Even here, there are some hymns to help you. Fourth, you feel you are weak. Fifth, you desire to flow out life. Sixth, you desire to have life through the word of God.

After these six conditions, you may desire further consecration to the Lord. This is the seventh experience, and it begins another stage of life. Eighth, you desire to dwell in light. Ninth, you desire more breaking from the Lord. Tenth, you desire more of the Lord Himself.

After these ten experiences, what kind of life do you live? Eleventh, you live a life in faith. Twelfth, you live a life in fellowship. Thirteenth, your life magnifies the Lord. Fourteenth, you live a life of the cross. Fifteenth, you die with Christ. Sixteenth, you live a life in spirit. Seventeenth, your life is full of praises and satisfaction. In each of these seven situations, there are hymns to help you.

Eighteenth, all is dark. Nineteenth, you are pressed beyond your strength. At this time, you go through a deep experience in which all is dark. You feel you don't have any strength to overcome the affliction and pain. Twentieth, you desire to be with the saints. Twenty-first, you desire a healthy church life. Twenty-second, you desire the return of the Lord.

Dear brothers, in your Christian life, you will have these twenty-two experiences. There may be some times in your life you cannot sing. However, take care that you don't lose feeling. Sometimes you are healthy and sometimes you are weak. This is normal. However, a real problem is when you lack any feeling at all. One of Watchman Nee's hymns says, "I don't sing a song." What he meant was that he was so sorrowful that he couldn't sing a song. But he still had feelings within him. The most dreadful thing for a Christian is to lose all feeling and appetite for spiritual things. You should be aware of this, and you should also realize that hymns nurture the feelings within you. You need to remember that no matter what condition you are in, there are hymns to help you, to lead you, and to encourage you. There is always definitely at least one hymn to meet your need.

## FOUR STAGES OF THE TWENTY-TWO CATEGORIES OF HYMNS

Sing to the Lord, bless His name;  
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation  
from day to day.

Psalm 96:2

The twenty-two categories of hymns from chapter 54 can be divided into four stages.

The first stage is for a believer's beginning. When you just begin to believe in the Lord and love Him, you should enjoy these kinds of hymns. There are six categories of hymns in this stage. First, loving the Lord purely. You just desire the Lord. Second, desiring to grow. Since you love the Lord, you want to grow in life. Third, realizing you are not worthy. As you grow in life, you know you are not worthy. Fourth, knowing you are weak. Fifth, desiring to flow out life. Although you are not worthy and weak, you still want to flow out life. Sixth, desiring to gain life through the word. You not only want to flow out life but also to gain life through the word of God.

Brothers, these six categories are basic, and enjoying hymns of these categories will give you a foundation for a good Christian life. There should be a period of time that you really desire the Lord. You want to have only the Lord. You want to have a close relationship with Him. You want to enjoy Him. At that time, you will feel you really need to grow. In the growing process, you will realize you are weak and unworthy.

However, you still want to gain life through the word of God and to flow out life to others. This stage usually lasts between a half year and one full year. If you haven't had this stage, I am afraid that your spiritual growth hasn't yet begun.

Every believer needs to come to the Lord for a period of time and tell Him, "I desire You. I want You. I just want to love You purely. And I need to grow. My life needs to grow." If you don't have this basic desire, your Christian life will be very common. You will not have deeper and more precious experiences.

The second stage has four categories of hymns. First, desiring greater consecration. You want to give yourself to the Lord more. When you love the Lord and grow in life, you will have a desire to give yourself to Him. You should feel you don't belong to yourself anymore. Then, when you consecrate, you will have the following desires: to dwell in light, to have further breaking from the Lord, and to gain the Lord even more.

The third stage has seven categories of hymns. These hymns reflect the kind of life you live. First, living a life of faith, trusting in the Lord. Second, living a life in fellowship with the Lord and in the Lord. Third, magnifying the Lord. Fourth, living a life of the cross. Fifth, living a life of dying and living with the Lord. Sixth, living a life in spirit. Seventh, a life full of praises and satisfaction. These seven conditions actually all happen at the same time. When you love the Lord and consecrate to Him, you will naturally have these seven conditions.

The fourth stage has five categories. First, all is dark. Second, being pressed beyond your strength. Third, desiring to be with the saints. Fourth, desiring a healthy church life. Fifth, desiring the return of the Lord.

These twenty-two categories will reveal to you that you cannot walk this path without the Lord. Without enjoying hymns from these categories, you will still be far away from spiritual things. No one can continue without such basic



learning. It is easy to be wild and do whatever you want. However, if you really desire to serve the Lord, you cannot depart from this basic learning. There must be a period of time that you love the Lord purely. There must be a period of time that you desire the growth of life so that you may match the Lord. Although you are weak and not worthy, you still love the Lord and desire many experiences with Him. In all these conditions, hymns are your help.

Section Four: Through Prayer  
Chapter 56

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## TELL THE LORD YOUR HEART

Trust in Him at all times, O people;  
Pour out your heart before Him.

Psalm 62:8a

Telling the Lord all that is on your heart is a good exercise. Actually, this exercise should be the first priority in your Christian life. Nothing is more important than having close fellowship with the Lord and joining to the Lord. You may serve a lot. You may have many experiences. However, in the process you must have the Lord and His presence. As you exercise to fellowship with Him, one thing is most crucial—that you tell the Lord your heart.

We are hypocrites. Even our prayers are often not true. We tell the Lord, “Lord, I praise You.” The Lord would ask, “Is it true?” We say, “Lord, I love You.” The Lord asks again, “Is it true?” We say, “Lord, I consecrate everything to You.” Again, the Lord asks, “Is it true?” And we cannot help but answer, “Lord, none of these are true.” When we finally tell the Lord the truth, the Lord is happy.

Human beings are tricky. We like to find our own way in everything. We have our way to be with people. We have our way to do things. We have our way to study. We have our way in the church life. And when we come to the presence of the Lord, we also have our way. How can you cut through your

ways to have a healthy relationship with the Lord? You must learn to tell the Lord exactly what is in your heart.

Dear brothers, when you fellowship with the Lord, you should always begin by speaking your heart. Be honest and sincere before the Lord. You should tell Him what's deep inside of you. When you speak to Him like this, you will begin to intercede, because as you tell the Lord what's in your heart, He will tell you what is in His heart. The Lord will seem to tell you, "You need to pray for this one. You need to pray for that one. You need to pray for yourself. You need to pray for your family. You need to pray for the gospel preaching. You need to pray for the Lord's testimony. You need to pray for the building up of the church." A good prayer of honesty should be continued with intercession. Indeed, those who have good fellowship with the Lord are those who intercede.

## VINE AND BRANCHES

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who  
abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit,  
for apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

How do you tell the Lord your heart?

You must understand that your relationship with the Lord is organic, like a vine and its branches. John 15:5 says, *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”* It is common for Christians to speak of this picture and the need to abide in the Lord and the Lord in us. Please note that the vine includes the branches. The Lord is not just the stem of the vine. He is the vine, the whole vine tree, which includes the branches.

John 15:1 says, *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”* We don’t like verse 2: *“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.”* We may feel that if God took the first part of this verse seriously, we should all have been taken away. There are not many of us who bear fruit. The second part is not easy either. Being taken away is agonizing. Being pruned is painful. The Lord is not easy on us, His branches. He even seems harsh and cruel. However,

you must remember that in this universe, there is only one true vine. This vine is Christ Himself. This vine is Christ and His members. This vine is organic, and our relationship with the Lord is also organic.

Is there any encouragement? Verse 3 says, *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."* When the Lord said the Father would either take us away or prune us, we may have thought we were finished. However, according to verse 3, the Lord seems to say to us, "Aren't you reading my word? Aren't you reading this verse? Your reading shows that you are bearing fruit. And when you contact My word, you are clean."

Dear brothers, abiding in the Lord is according to the heavenly fact that we are already in the Lord! How wonderful this is! The Lord said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. Every branch in me that bears no fruit, the Father takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes."* His pruning comes through His word. We are clean through the word. And the Lord said again in verse 4, *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."*

I really enjoy John 15:1–5. None of us can be cleansed without the word. In His mercy, we heard the word of God. The word had an effect on us and we believed in Him. Then we love Him, pursue Him, and follow Him. From God's point of view, this fact is abiding in the Lord.

Brothers, how do you abide in the Lord? Your being saved proves that you abide in the Lord and His word cleanses you. Your pursuing proves that you abide in the Lord and the word has its effect on you. Abiding in the Lord is not a law but an enjoyment. The Lord has done everything for us. His word cleanses us. Oh brothers and sisters, you don't need to strive to abide in Him. Even if you feel you are away from Him, you are in Him! As soon as you turn back to Him, you again have the reality of abiding in Him.

## IT IS THE LORD WHO CALLS US

Come to Me, all who are weary  
and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

How do you tell the Lord your heart?

You must see that it is the Lord who calls us to Himself. Matthew 11:28–30 says, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* When you feel the yoke is not easy and the burden is not light, it is a sign that your expectation is exceeding what the Lord portioned to you. As you are following the Lord, you should always be able to say, “The Lord’s yoke is easy and His burden is light.” In recent years, my outward situation has become more difficult. However, I like to testify that my spirit is more and more joyful. What is the reason? The Lord’s yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

Who is able to say, “The Lord’s yoke is easy and His burden is light”? Let’s go back and read verse 20: *“Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.”* Brothers, do you realize when Jesus spoke of an easy yoke and a light burden? It was when nothing was going His way. He had done so much, but the

cities didn't repent. Therefore He even said, "*Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!*" (v. 21).

When people rejected Him and refused to repent, the Lord still had a place to go—He went to the Father! Verses 25–30 are His prayer. He told the Father what was in His heart. It says, "*At that time Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight'*" (11:25–26). Jesus told the Father that although He had done mighty works, they didn't repent. What was the reason? It was because they were "wise and intelligent." They knew too much.

Brothers, you should learn to be like an infant. Learn to tell the Lord, "Lord, I really messed things up. I dare not to think about who I am and what I do. I denied You. I didn't want You. What I said was not what I thought. However, as a sinner I still come to You. You know my real situation." Dare you pray like this? Many dare not. Few Christians go to the Lord like an infant. Infants are pure. They never pretend. They simply show their true feeling.

When we come to the Lord, He will give us rest. The verses tell us that He has hidden things from the wise and intelligent and has revealed them to infants. Those who come to the Lord are like infants. The Lord said, "for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight." How good was His word! When you come to the Lord, whatever the Lord portioned to you, including your situation, your experience, your strength, your weakness, your success, or your failure, is not important any more. You can tell the Lord, "For this way was well-pleasing in Your sight."

The Lord then continued, "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*" How does the Lord give us rest? He is our pattern. He was forsaken by sinners. Many cities refused to respond to Him. Yet when all deserted Him, He went to the Father. He told Him everything in His heart. He poured out all His feelings to the Father.

Dear brothers, you should tell the Lord, “Lord, I want to be absolutely honest with You. I want to tell You all of my strengths, my weaknesses, my overcoming moments, my failures, my gains, my losses, my encouragements, and my disappointments. I don’t want to hide anything from You. I want to tell You all of my heart.”

Coming to the Lord is the most basic learning for a Christian. Christians who hide from the Lord will not grow unless the Lord brings them back to Himself with His grace and authority. Those who follow the Lord must have the ability to come to the Lord in every situation. When they are strong, when they are weak, when they are joyful, when they are sad, they come to the Lord! When they have gained a lot, when the church life is buoyant, they come to the Lord. When they are confined, when thorns and briars overspread, they also come to the Lord and tell Him everything. This is a healthy learning for us to have rest before the Lord.



## I COME JUST AS I AM

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

Our coming to the Lord is based on His calling. Hebrews 4:15 says, *“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”* On the one hand, the Lord knows our weaknesses. On the other hand, He was without sin. He was tempted with the same temptations that tempt us. He didn’t sin, but we do. He didn’t fall, but we do. He wasn’t weak, but we are. He didn’t lose His spirituality, but we do. Yet in spite of this, we can still come before Him.

As a result, verse 16 says, *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* We are told to come to the throne of grace just as we are. This throne is the throne of Jesus Christ. Although it is a throne of judgment and a throne of government, it is also a throne of grace. We may boldly approach it to receive mercy and find grace.

What is mercy? Mercy indicates that you are in a pitiful situation, and the Lord descends to your situation to lift you up. Not only do we obtain mercy, we also find grace. What is grace? Grace indicates the Lord becomes your enjoyment. When you sin, you may despair. You may think you cannot

follow Him anymore. You may feel so weak and fallen that you can no longer walk this path. However, the Lord would tell you, "I am familiar with the temptation. I was tempted before, so I know. If you don't enjoy the divine life and the divine nature as your support at every moment, you will surely fail. I completely understand your failure." The Lord would comfort us, saying "Don't be afraid. Don't cover your face. Don't say you dare not pray. Come to Me just as you are. Come boldly!"

Being bold is not easy. People with limitations are not bold. Thieves are not bold. Offenders are not bold. How can we be bold when we see who we truly are? But Christians should boldly come to the Lord! The book of Hebrews tells us to be bold. Dare you bring all your troubles to the Lord? The problem is not that you dare not, but that you are too crafty. When you pray, your craftiness and slyness takes control. You are not bold! Instead of being honest, you like to make up a good speech to say in your prayer.

We rarely tell the Lord, "Lord, let me tell You how good I am." If you cannot find anything good in you, what kind of person are you? Aren't you a member of the body of Christ? As a member, you must have something good in you. I am afraid you don't know how to come to the Lord just as you are. You always put on a mask. You come with religious words or with false humility. You always tell Him falsehood. You always pretend to be someone else.

Dear brothers, you must realize that He understands everything you are going through. He knows your pride. He knows your boasting. He knows your failure. He knows your weakness. He was in all points tempted as you are. The only difference is that He didn't sin. Therefore, you must learn to come boldly to the throne of grace. You will receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The Lord will help you according to your need at the time. Generally speaking, if you fail to get help from the Lord, there are two possibilities: first, you still don't know how to tell the Lord your heart; or second, the Lord does not feel you need the help at this time.

## WE COME BECAUSE HE IS

He who comes to God must believe  
that He is and that He is a rewarder  
of those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6b

Hebrews 11:6b says, *“He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”* This verse is precious. It shows us we “must believe that He is.” What does this mean? It means that we believe that whatever we need, *“He is.”* We come to the Lord and He simply “is.” Do you need wisdom? He is wisdom. Do you need power? He is power. Do you need support? He is support. Do you need comfort? He is comfort. Do you need encouragement? He is encouragement. He is all we need.

This verse also says He is “a rewarder.” Why is a reward brought up here? It is because, in the context of Hebrews 11, the Lord desires you to be His witness. Hebrews 11 gives us many examples of faithful witnesses, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, etc. They all had faith. Then, Hebrews 12 begins by saying, *“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us....”* God is everything. Also, “He is.” He desires to reward us and calls us to be His witnesses. The reward is that God blesses you both according to your need and according to who He is. Your need is met by the One who is, and issues in encouragement. This is the reward.

When you come to the Lord and tell Him your heart, who He is mixes with your need. This mixing is the reward. It is not that you are poor and the Lord lets you win the lottery. Such a reward would only be according to your need, not also to who He is. The true reward is according to your need, but it is also according to who He is. When the Lord's being matches your need, it is your reward.

Dear brothers, it would be easy for God to let you win the lottery. However, this money would rob the true reward away. If you ask God for a car or a house, He may not give you these things. However, when you come to the Lord and speak to Him, He is able to meet, to satisfy, and to bless all your needs by dispensing Himself to you as your reward. This experience constitutes you into a witness. Yes, He desires you to live Him out, to magnify Him, and to become His witness, and He does this by rewarding you with Himself to meet your need!

## WE COME BECAUSE HE IS LIFE

Jesus said to him, "I am the way,  
and the truth, and the life; no one comes  
to the Father but through Me.

John 14:6

In John 5:39–40, the Lord said, *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life."* There are two actions the Lord attributes to us in these verses: searching the Scriptures and coming to Him that we may have life. It is easy for us to think these two things are one. We think that if we read the Bible, we will spontaneously have life. However, the Lord reminded us here that reading the Bible is to help you come to Him. We may be willing to approach the Lord, but it is too easy for us stay in the Bible. We read it fast. We read it slow. We even study it. We read verse after verse, chapter after chapter, and book after book. We may even study a lexicon. Yet, our Bible reading stays in the reading. We don't go to the Lord. This is the reason the Lord reminds us to read the Bible but to also come to Him. We must come to the Lord to have life through the Bible.

What is life? The Lord Himself is life. He said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6a). The apostle Peter also told the Jews that they *"put to death the Prince*

*of life*” (Acts 3:15). These verses show that the Lord is the Prince of life, even life itself. A man who has the Lord is a man with divine life. A man with the operation of the divine life is a man who has the Lord Jesus Christ. Life is inseparable from our dear Lord. Who we love is the Lord. What we enjoy and experience is the divine life. When our Lord manifests Himself, life manifests. He is the light of life. When the Lord supplies us with His life, He is the bread of life. When He supports us with His life, He is the water of life. When He operates with His life, He is the word of life. Every time we come to the Lord to call on Him, pray to Him, and fellowship with Him, we experience the breath of life (see Ezek. 37:5). The Lord breathes His being and power of divine life into us and we are revived and strengthened. More than this, the Lord is the life-giving Spirit who opens us up, leads us, and strengthens us so that we may know Him and walk the heavenly path.

The triune God is life. In the Gospel of John, it says, “*In Him was life*” (John 1:4a). Life is in Him! He who we love and pursue is constituted with the divine life. It is impossible to have Him without life, since in Him is life and He is life.

The Greek word translated “life” in these verses is *zōē*, which indicates heavenly, divine, eternal life. The Greek word for the life of man and animals is *psuchē*, which means “soul life,” lively but transient life. Different lives have different natures. In the moment we were saved, we received the divine life and began to partake of the divine nature (see 2 Pet. 1:4). The more we partake of the divine nature, the more we live out the reality of heaven. The Lord calls us to Him, the source of life and the substance of life, to have more abundant life. How wonderful this is! Those who often come to the Lord are filled with the divine life and constituted with the divine nature. The constitution of the divine nature causes us to love the Lord fervently, and turns us into spiritual people full of Christ.

Different lives also have different livings. Life at different levels has different manifestations. The Lord wants us to go to Him because He desires that we would have the highest and most transcendent living. Those who come to the Lord to have His life don't live according to themselves. Those who come to the Lord to have His life allow the divine life to be constituted in them. They are filled with the divine nature and live out the divine being. Dear brothers, how blessed and precious this life is!

The Lord does desire us to search the Scriptures and to know His being, His desire, and His doing. However, more than this, He desires that we would go to Him to have life. Through life, all we have seen in the divine economy may be our reality, constitution, and testimony. Let's come to the Lord to gain life!

## WE COME BECAUSE HE IS SPIRITUAL FOOD AND SPIRITUAL DRINK

All ate the same spiritual food;  
and all drank the same spiritual drink.

1 Corinthians 10:3–4a

The Lord told us, *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst”* (John 6:35). He is the bread of life and water of life. Bread makes you full and water makes you satisfied. Bread supplies you so that you may grow. Water quenches your thirst and makes you happy. No one can live without bread and water. When we are thirsty under the scorching sun, how satisfying is a cup of water! When we lack food and are hungry, just a little bread can strengthen us and give us growth. The Lord said this food perishes, but He is the eternal bread of life. How wonderful!

Besides the food and water on the earth, there is real food and a real fountain—they are heavenly and spiritual. Earthly food has all kinds of nutrients to help us grow. Likewise, spiritual food has all kinds of nutrients to help us grow spiritually. Christ as the bread of life supplies us, satisfies us, and strengthens us. He makes us strong and makes us grow spiritually.

Do you understand what God has portioned to us? He gave Himself to us as spiritual food and spiritual water to supply us day by day, moment by moment. As we need different



foods for our fleshly body, spiritual food is the same. We are thankful that our beloved Lord Jesus is this kind of food.

When we come to Him to gain Him, enjoy Him, and partake of Him as our spiritual food to supply us, we experience his limitlessness. We often are in the dark and need His light as our nutrition. We often are weak and need His strength as our nutrition. We often are earthly and need His heavenliness as our nutrition. We often are fleshly and need His Spirit as our nutrition. We often are foolish and need His wisdom as our nutrition. We often have a conscience with offense and need His righteousness and peace as our nutrition. We often are for ourselves and need Christ and His death as our nutrition. We often get lost and need the Shepherd and His rod and His staff as our nutrition. Oh, what delicacies are our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the bread of life. He supplies us and satisfies us that we may live a heavenly life on earth.

He is also the spiritual water. Water is related to life. Our bodies may survive without food for a period of time, but we cannot live for more than a few days without water. The majority of our body is made up of water. Water quenches our thirst and satisfies us. Water helps our body function properly. Our Lord not only desires us to partake of Him as the bread of life, but also desires to satisfy us as the water of life.

Ephesians 5:26–27 tells us that the Lord sanctifies us and cleanses us by the washing of the water with the word. This is so that He might present us to Himself, glorious. We need the water as well as the bread. We have every perfect supply of the bread of life. We also are cleansed by the sweet and sanctifying washing of the water of life.

The water is so wonderful! It quenches our thirst and meets our need. Because of the water, we are able to overcome our weaknesses and enjoy His sweet presence. It also helps us to triumph over the temptation of the world and the bondage of sin. The Lord told the Samaritan woman, *“whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst”* (John 4:14a).

The water of life quenched her thirst and helped her get rid of her sinful life.

Dear brothers, we are usually pretty weak and pathetic. We are full of struggles. We lack peace within ourselves. However, we can come to drink this water of life. The water can cleanse us. It makes us clean, joyful, satisfied, and strengthened! Brothers, let's drink the water of life!

## WE COME BECAUSE HE IS RESURRECTION

"No one can come to Me unless  
the Father who sent Me draws him;  
and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:44

When the Lord told the Jews that He was the bread that came down from heaven, "*the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread that came down out of heaven.'*" *They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?"*" (John 6:41–42). The Jews doubted that He was the incarnate Word. The Lord answered them that He gives resurrection (v. 44). Those who come to Him will be raised up on the last day.

As the One begotten of God, the Lord is the bread that came down from heaven that can give eternal life. He is eternal. He is in eternity. He was born from eternity and lives in eternity. His being is eternity. What is eternity? Eternity is the reality of resurrection. What is resurrection? Resurrection is eternity. One will never die in resurrection, and he enters into eternity. The content of resurrection is eternity.

Our Lord once experienced death when He was on earth. He was in death for at least thirty hours, but He came out of death and entered into resurrection. Although He went through death, He was still eternal. His entering into death

did not change the fact that He was still eternal. He came out of death and He is still eternal. Based on His eternality, He came out of death. Based on His eternality, He entered into resurrection. Resurrection is the operation in eternity. After the Lord resurrected, He dispensed His eternality to us. There is no death in resurrection, nor is there weakness and failure. There is no struggling and disappointment in resurrection. His divine being is eternity.

The Lord is resurrection. He said, "Come to Me, and I will raise you up on the last day." But do not think you can only experience resurrection on the last day. No! Come to the Lord and you will know He is resurrection. The being of resurrection in eternity enters into you and has the operation of resurrection in you. Where are you now? You are in the resurrection of Christ. How do you exist? You exist in the resurrection of Christ. How do you live? You live in the resurrection of Christ. As you are in the resurrection of Christ, eternity operates in you and issues in the effect of the resurrection. This is eternal life, the unceasing operation of resurrection in you.

Dear brothers, we are all professional failures. However, there is something special within us. Even as professional failures, we have resurrection in us. If the Lord delays His return, we will be resurrected on the last day. However, today there is still an element that operates in us continuously, an element called resurrection.

When there is resurrection, we are transcendent. Will you fail? Yes. Then you will need to experience resurrection. Will you be weak? Yes. Then you will need to experience resurrection. Will you be disappointed? Yes. Then you will need to experience resurrection. Will you be cast down? Yes. Then you will need to experience resurrection. Will you lose your hope? Yes. Then you will need to experience resurrection.

When you come to the Lord, you come to the source and being of resurrection. As resurrection, the Lord will help you to overcome your environment, your limitation, your failure, and your shortage. This is because you are in resurrection.

On the last day, your body will be resurrected. Today, you experience resurrection as your sustenance.

Brothers, do you feel dead? Do you feel weak? Are you disappointed? Come! Come to the Lord who is resurrected! Come and partake of His resurrection!

The most precious thing Christians possess is resurrection! Without the resurrected Christ, you are just in religion. The difference between Christians and unbelievers is resurrection. Christians live in resurrection. Take today for example. How many times have you died? How many times have you lived? How many times were you disappointed? How many times were you full of energy and spirit? You have to say many times. What was the reason? It was because of the operation of resurrection. You must come to the Lord to experience the reality of the resurrection. Resurrection will continually lift you up!

Brothers, you must come to the Lord every day. Spend twenty to thirty minutes before the Lord every morning. Sing a hymn. Have some prayer. Read a few verses. Come to the Lord boldly and tell Him your heart.

## WE COME BECAUSE THIS IS HIS TEACHING

"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me."

John 6:45

John 6:45 says, *"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me."* Brothers, God desires to speak to you. He desires to teach you. His teaching has only one purpose, that is: "Come to the Lord!" The whole Old Testament is the teaching of God, and it has only one focus: Jesus Christ. Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* This is for you to come to the Lord. God said, "Let there be light." Light is the Lord. "God separated the light from the darkness." The separation is the Lord. God said, "Let the dry land appear." The dry land is the Lord. God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens." The lights are the Lord. Everything in the Old Testament is for you to come to the Lord. All the teaching of God is for you to come to the Lord. Everything that happens to you today is also for you to come to the Lord!

God is not interested in anything but His Son. For any spiritual pursuing to have value, it must bring you to the Lord. It must be for you to know Him, to experience Him, to enjoy Him, to gain Him, to be broadened in Him, to be

enlarged in Him, and to be constituted by Him. There is only one purpose of God's teaching: for you to come to the Lord. If anyone has a teaching that is for the teaching itself, it is wrong. If anyone exercises a ministry for the ministry itself, it is wrong. The teaching of God is for you to come to the Lord!

Dear brothers, when you think about God or when you have some fellowship about Him, it must issue in your coming to Him. God's teaching can come in all situations. He does not judge things from appearance. For example, your car may be scratched by someone. You shouldn't just go argue with that person. You should come to the Lord. Or, you may hate rain and it is raining. What does God teach you? Come to the Lord. When you experience some difficulties in your work, God would teach you one thing: come to the Lord!

All of our learning is for us to come to the Lord. The Greek word translated "learn" in John 6:45 is *manzanō*. It means "to learn by instruction from one's experience." When you have a teaching, you begin to learn, and you learn from your experience. When God speaks, you should respond, "Lord, I need to come to You." Christians may not experience the Lord much in their daily life. However, when they experience something special, it brings them to the Lord. The more you exercise such coming to the Lord, the more you will come to Him in all things.

I earnestly advise you to spend some time with the Lord every morning. This exercise helps you to come to the Lord. However, it doesn't take effect instantly. You must practice for a period of time to get used to it and become prudent about it. Eventually you will be "professional." How would you become a professional potter? You would need to practice and practice and practice countless times. In the beginning of learning, you could finish a pretty work and find out that you are talented. Then, you have more learning to design something extraordinary. Eventually, you may finish a masterpiece. This is the process of learning.

Coming to the Lord is in the same principle as becoming a master potter. Brothers, starting from today, you should exercise twenty or thirty minutes every morning to come to the Lord. You may sing hymns. You may pray. You may pray-read or read-pray. You may sigh. You may groan. You may exercise in different ways. You have to exercise until you are so experienced that you come to the Lord all the time to receive mercy, help, strengthening, and blessing. You will only become experienced through your practice and continual exercise.

*“Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread that came down out of heaven’”* (John 6:41). The Lord told them that He was resurrection and that *“everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me”* (6:45). This verse tells you your whole life. God would not give you anything else but His Son. True learning is for you to come to the Lord to enjoy and partake of Him. If the Lord cannot operate in you and you cannot gain Him, any learning is not true learning.



## WE COME BECAUSE HE WON'T CAST US OUT

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me,  
and the one who comes to Me  
I will certainly not cast out."

John 6:37

Dear brothers, do you see the Lord's wonderful promise to His children? We are saved because the Father has given us to the Lord, and the Lord said, "*the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*" His promise gives us assurance. His word of love calls us so that we come to Him joyfully. His word of authority assures us that He has the power and will never cast us out as long as we are willing to come to Him.

The author of Hebrews encouraged us, "*Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace*" (Heb. 4:16a). Since His throne is the throne of grace, we may come to Him and receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (v. 16b). Brothers, do you hear the calling? He is calling, "Come to Me. Whoever comes to Me I will never cast out!" Do you hear the encouragement from the apostle? He is encouraging, "Come boldly to the throne of grace to find help in time of need!"

Sometimes we don't feel like coming to the Lord. Perhaps we are otherwise satisfied or feel we can handle everything. Perhaps we feel too weak or unqualified to come to the Lord. Perhaps our Christian life is so common that we don't need the Lord in order to live our daily life. However, our Lord

keeps calling us, “Come! Come just as you are! Are you happy? Let Me share your joy, that your joy may overflow! Are you weak? Let Me dry your tears and strengthen you and comfort you. Come to Me! Live a life with My sweet presence, My support in grace, and My heavenly strengthening.” The Lord loves to give Himself to you. He loves to give all to you. He desires you to see the heavens, to know the surpassing riches, and to enjoy the reality of the spiritual mystery. The Lord is calling: “Come to Me!”

Sometimes we are in an especially difficult situation and are suffering unbearable tribulation. The torment within and without causes us to forget even how to sigh. The Lord would say, “Come to Me, you who are sorrowful! Come to Me, you who are suffering! I am here. I am the Lord. I love you. I control everything. I love to give you grace and strength. I want to give all My riches to you. Cast your burden upon Me. Tell Me all your sorrows. Open up your dry and falling situation to Me. Give yourself to Me, and experience Me as your all!”

Sometimes, we dare not go to Him because our fall, failure, weakness, and hardness is beyond us. However, the Lord would still say, “Come to Me, you who fail! My blood is always effective. My throne is the throne of grace. I don’t want you to stay in your weakness and failure. I want you to come to Me to be strengthened. Bring your tears to Me. Bring your sorrow to Me. Bring your repentance to Me. Bring your hopelessness to Me. I will cleanse you. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. You will enjoy the washing of the water of life because you are given to Me from the Father. Come to Me, and I will never cast you out!”

## LIVE A LIFE IN THE LIGHT

God is Light, and in Him  
there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5b

Not only do we need to “come,” we also need to “live.” How do we live? We live a life in the Light.

First John 1:5 says, “*God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.*” God is Light. Those who speak to Him live in the Light. Please note that I am saying that they live in the Light, not that they are “enlightened.” Light and enlightenment are different. We like to be enlightened, but God likes to be our Light. Enlightenment is related to our life, but light is related to our existence. If I am enlightened, it means the Lord enlightened my living. If I am in the light, it means my existence is manifested.

Light is related to the value of our existence. Enlightenment is related to our behavior and living. We ask for the Lord’s enlightenment, and the Lord shows us how sinful we are. However, we should have a higher understanding, that the cleansing of sin is not based just on the cleansing but on God’s being. In the Light, we see both who we are and our existence. How good this is! God is Light! The Light makes our life so valuable! Why is our life valuable? It is because God is Light and we walk in Light! There is a hymn that says:

*O light of life, my Lord now leads me.  
Step by step this song I raise.*

The apostle John told us that God is Light and we need to abide in the Light. God is Light and eliminates the darkness. When we live in the Light, we have sweet fellowship with both God and the saints. Light is wonderful. It manifests the true being. If the being is rich, the light is strong. No one on the earth can proclaim that he is Light. Only God Himself can proclaim that He is Light.

Light is one of the attributes of God. It is the expression and manifestation of God's being. How rich is God's being! Our God is Light and dwells in the light (1 John 1:5, 7; 1 Tim. 6:16). We may come to Him—He is holy, righteous, wise, faithful, true, good, joyful, hopeful, glorious, honorable, authoritative, and powerful. One who dwells in the Light shares in all of these exalted attributes and has a life based on these divine attributes. When we come to God, we dwell in the Light. When we have fellowship with Him, we partake of the reality of the Light. When we pray to Him, we receive the dispensing of these attributes.

How blessed we are! God is Light. In the Light, there is holiness and righteousness. When we fellowship with Him in the Light, we are separated from the world and live a life of righteousness. In the Light, there is wisdom and discernment. When we dwell in Him, we will know how to follow Him with understanding and discernment. In the Light, there is faith and truth. When we come to Him, we are filled with assurance that He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). In the Light, there is goodness and mercy. We may come to Him just as we are in our weakness and failure. In the Light, there is glory and honor. We are attracted to live a life following Him in revelation. In the Light, there is authority and power. When we dwell in the divine being, we experience the reality of all things working together for good for us. What an existence this is! Only those who

follow the Lord and fellowship with the Lord may enjoy it.  
I hope we all have this kind of existence and live a life in  
the Light!

## TWO WAYS TO BE CLEANSED

But if we walk in the Light as He Himself  
is in the Light, we have fellowship  
with one another, and the blood of  
Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

In 1 John 1, there are two ways to be cleansed. The first is through the fellowship of the body of Christ and receiving the organic cleansing (1 John 1:7). The second is through the confession of our sins and receiving the cleansing of forgiveness (v. 9).

First John 1:7 says, *“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* This is an organic cleansing. In other words, just through fellowship with the brothers and sisters, you have life and light, and your sins are cleansed.

Dear brothers, no matter how much you confess, your sin is much greater than your confession. You are just a sinner. You are away from God. You are far away from God to the uttermost. The most serious sin, the only sin you have, is having a problem with God, not the transgressions you commit. The reason you commit transgressions is that you have a problem with God. Watchman Nee gave a message called “The only sin men have.” He said our only sin is having

a problem with God. When you have a problem with God, all kinds of improper situations will be manifested.

However, God is Light. If we walk in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and it results in having peace with God. I like to advise younger believers that they need fellowship with saints even more than reading the Bible by themselves. When you fellowship with the brothers and sisters, you will be cleansed. It is not important how weak you are, since the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses you from all sin. In other words, if you live in fellowship with the body of Christ, it doesn't matter whether you confess or not. Through the fellowship of the body in the Light, there is no distance between you and God. When you are close to God, you will have a feeling that you are cleansed!

Most Christians have this experience. When we come to a good meeting, we are in the Light. When we sing hymns, read the Bible, or fellowship with one another, we are joyful and encouraged. At this time, we feel it is so good and so precious to follow the Lord. What is the reason? It is because the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. Although we didn't confess, we are still cleansed.

Of course, when you come to the Lord by yourself, you need to confess. First John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* We need to confess to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I am a sinner." Each time we come to the Lord, we have to understand that God is Light. Coming to the Lord is coming to the Light. In the Light, we have to confess so that we are sanctified and one with God.

Dear brothers, let me remind you again: there are two ways to be cleansed. One is through fellowship, through being with the saints in the meetings to enjoy the presence of the Lord. At such a time, you can feel the burden of sin is cast off. Another way is to come to the Lord and confess your sins. You can pray, "Lord, I am sorry. My main sin is that I don't have a good relationship with You. My sin is I am only concerned

about myself, not You.” The verse says, *“If we confess our sins”* (1:9). Our sins are our problems with God. What is sin? Sin is the problem between us and God. The only real sin we have is that we don’t have God. The reason we commit sins is that we have this problem with God.

In principle, “to confess” is to recognize that there is distance between us and God. Why do you lose your temper? It is because you are far away from God. Why do you do things that are wrong? It is because you are away from God. When you confess, you have to acknowledge that you are distant from God. In other words, after losing your temper or doing something wrong, you didn’t have the presence of the Lord. This is the reason we need to confess.



## ABIDE IN THE ANOINTING (1)

But as His anointing teaches you  
about all things, and is true and is not a lie,  
and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

1 John 2:27b

First John 2:27 says, *“As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”* In the Old Testament, the anointing oil consisted of a hin of olive oil, five hundred shekels of pure myrrh, two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet cinnamon, two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet calamus, and five hundred shekels of cassia. A hin of olive oil represents God Himself. God was blended with the death of Christ (represented by the myrrh), the fragrance of Christ’s death (represented by the sweet cinnamon), the resurrection of Christ (represented by the calamus), and the power of resurrection (represented by the cassia).

We need to dwell in the anointing. What is the anointing? The anointing oil signifies the Triune God and the accomplishment of the Triune God. When you believe in Jesus, the divine life enters into you. It operates in you. That operation is called “the anointing.” It is the operation of the divine life in you. You have the Lord within you. You have

His life in you. You have the Triune God in you. You also have the operation of the Triune God. This operation makes you feel so content. How do you know a meeting is good? It is because it is full of anointing—God and His operating. You enjoy the sweet presence of the Lord. You feel peace. You are joyful because of the Lord. However, the anointing is not for you. It is for the Lord.

The anointing brings you to the Lord. As the anointing has taught you, you must abide in the Lord. The more you abide in the anointing, the more you love the Lord. The more you abide in the anointing, the more you have the Lord. The anointing is not just for itself, it is for you to gain Christ. The more you abide in the anointing, the more you enjoy it. You experience the olive oil, which is Christ Himself. You experience the myrrh, which is the death of the Lord. You experience the sweet cinnamon, which is the fragrance of the Lord's death. You experience the calamus, which is the resurrection of the Lord. You also experience the cassia, which is the power and the transcendence of the resurrection of the Lord. Oh, the anointing oil gives you the perfect enjoyment of the Triune God!

Brothers, those who abide in the anointing don't dwell in their circumstances. Those who abide in the anointing abide in Christ. Why do you feel tortured in certain circumstances? It is because you feel your experience is more important than the Lord. The more you read the Bible and write outlines, the more you should have the Lord. However, sometimes you regard your Bible reading and outline writing as more important than the Lord. That is the time it becomes a torment to you. Both your personal life and corporate life as a Christian should be in the anointing. The anointing brings us to the Lord one-by-one. The anointing also brings us to the Lord corporately. If we just enjoy the feeling of the Lord's presence but do not end up with the Lord Himself, our enjoyment will soon be gone.

Not long ago, I heard many brothers say that the Lord will come back in a certain amount of time. After that time had passed, the Lord still had not come. What was the problem? Their teaching focused not on “the Lord” but on “the Lord’s coming back.” It is true that the Lord will return one day, but who is He coming back for? He will come back for those who desire Him. Dear brothers, you must see that the anointing is for us to gain Christ!

## ABIDE IN THE ANOINTING (2)

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things...

1 John 2:27a

What is the purpose of the anointing? The anointing brings you to the Lord, and it causes you to live and labor for God's testimony. Those who abide in the anointing are united with the operation of God. They love the church. They are in the church life, just like the anointed vessels in the tabernacle. They are anointed priests living before God and bringing God to men. They also live among men, know the needs of men, and bring men to God. They are also anointed kings who war for the kingdom of God. Finally, they are anointed prophets who speak for the Lord.

Dear brothers, the operation of the anointing is for you to gain the Lord. The operation of the anointing is for you to live in the church life. The operation of the anointing is for you to bless the church. The operation of the anointing is for you to care for people and bring them to God. The operation of the anointing is for you to fight for the interest of God. The operation of the anointing is for you to abundantly supply God's children with His words and desire.

Brothers, I want to say it again: the teaching of the anointing is for you to come to the Lord. When you abide in the teaching of the anointing, you should desire to come to the Lord. Every time you come to Him and speak out your heart, the anointing speaks to you. You may sigh before the Lord, “Oh Lord, have mercy on me!” This is a good beginning. You may not have much to say, perhaps only: “Have mercy on me, Lord! Cleanse me, Lord! I am here to enjoy You. Lord, I love You!” As you sigh and groan before Him, you pour out something deep within yourself to Him. Your sighing speaks a lot to the Lord. Your groaning speaks out your love, your helplessness, your sorrow, and so many things in your mind to the Lord.

Every time you come to the Lord, you have to learn from the anointing. The Lord may give you a hymn, so you begin with that hymn. The Lord may give you a verse, so you begin with that verse. If you want to speak to the Lord, you learn to sigh, “Oh Lord! Oh Lord!” As you sigh, the Lord’s anointing will speak to you something about Christ, about the church, about God and men, about the kingdom of God, and about the things that God’s children need to hear. Through the anointing, you are able to speak to others and flow out riches for the Lord. Prophets are anointed. The more you abide in the anointing, the richer your speaking will be for the Lord. You may repeat some words you have spoken before. However, as long as the anointing is there, the words will still be rich. The anointing keeps you from being tired of the same words.

Praise the Lord! We have the anointing upon us and within us. This anointing teaches us concerning “all things” (v. 27). What are “all things?” They are all the things we have talked about in this book. I hope you can tell the Lord, “Lord, I desire to come to You. You are not only the Lord in the heavens. You and I abide in each other. I may come to You just as I am because Your throne is the throne of grace. You are the ‘I AM.’ You are life. You are the bread. You are the water.

You are the resurrection. You teach me concerning all things. You won't forsake me. You will be with me and support me forever!

"You are also Light. I know the value of my life because of You. I can be with the saints. I can confess to You because I am away from You. Lord, thank You. I have the anointing and it pushes me to come to You, to speak to You, and to tell You my heart. The anointing pushes me to open up to You to have Your blessing so that I may bless the saints in the church. You make me a priest to care for Your interest and for Your people. You make me a king to live for Your testimony and to war for Your kingdom. You also make me a prophet to supply Your words abundantly to Your children." Oh, how good this is!

## IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything  
by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4:6

Besides Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18 says, “*pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus,*” and 1 Timothy 2:8 says, “*Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*” These verses tell us to pray without ceasing, in everything, in every place, and to give thanks in everything. This is the best thing to do between you and the Lord.

Dear brothers, it is very good to begin with prayer when you come to the Lord. What is prayer? Prayer is speaking to the Lord. Prayer to God means you speak to Him. You speak your heart. Tell Him who you are and what you have done. Tell Him your feelings, your victory, your failure, your strength, your weakness, your joy, and your sorrow.

Praying is the sweetest exercise of Christians. Those who love the Lord learn how to pray in everything. They tell the Lord everything. How sweet this is! We may tell the Lord our heart. We don’t need to be afraid of our distress and grief since we can tell Him anything, anywhere, anytime. There is a hymn that says:

*Sweet hour of Prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
That calls me from a world of care,  
And bids me at my Father's throne  
Make all my wants and wishes known.  
In seasons of distress and grief,  
My soul has often found relief,  
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,  
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!*

*Sweet hour of Prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
Thy wings shall my petition bear  
To Him whose truth and faithfulness  
Engage the waiting soul to bless.  
And since He bids me seek His face,  
Believe His word and trust His grace,  
I'll cast on Him my every care,  
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!*

Dear brothers, do you have this exercise? Do you pray a lot? Do you tell your heart to the Lord? Do you open yourself up to the Lord without hiding anything? The Lord blessed us not only with an inner life, but also with the gift of prayer. When you come to the Lord, you must learn to open up and tell Him everything in your heart without any fear. We know that through our prayer, His blood cleanses us, His Spirit strengthens us, His presence comforts us, and His leading is real to us. How blessed is a man of prayer!

Praying often brings in supplication, or intercession. Sweet fellowship with the Lord should cause you to have a lot of feelings in your spirit. You will have feelings about yourself, about the brothers, about unsaved ones, about men's needs, about the environment, about the spiritual situation in the church, about the work of the Lord, about God's being, and about God's economy. These feelings should then cause you to have a lot of intercession.



Intercession is something that comes out of your burden. Fellowship with the Lord should cause you to have a burden to intercede. Interceding is not only speaking to the Lord but also releasing your burden. Sometimes you fast or watch at night. You may kneel before the Lord a long time and tell Him what burdens you, what troubles you, or what encourages you.

Interceding is a good practice for Christians. We have the assurance of the Lord because of the answers to our interceding. We trust the Lord because of the practice of interceding. We give Him thanks because of the result of the interceding.

Thanksgiving comes from prayer and interceding. Prayer makes us touch the Lord. Interceding makes us one with the Lord. The result is thanksgiving from us to the Lord. Giving thanks is a sweet thing. It is not just being polite. It is the praise and worship from the deepest part of your spirit. Christians can give thanks to the Lord, "Lord, thank You. Thank You for the environment. Thank You for the salvation of this person. Thank You for my family. Thank You for my job. Thank You for my daily life." There are so many things in the prayer of thanksgiving.

We worship Him. The Bible tells us: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."*

## TO BE ONE WITH GOD'S DESIRE THROUGH PRAYER

For this reason I too...  
do not cease giving thanks for you, while making  
mention of you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1:15-16

My brothers, you need to learn to tell the Lord your heart. When you have such fellowship with Him, it will bring in intercession.

What is intercession? It has two sides: on the one hand, the Lord puts something in your heart and shows you the need; on the other hand, it depends on the healthiness of your spirit and the revelation you have. In other words, the value of our interceding depends on the condition of our spirit, the level of our spirituality, how real spiritual things are to us, and the vision and revelation in our spirit. How much we know God's desire, how much we give ourselves to the Lord, and how much we labor according His desire decide the level of our interceding.

God desires to gain a group of people who pray not only for man's needs but also for God's need. Their prayer is not only to satisfy men but also to satisfy God. Their prayer is one with God's desire. God seems to be saying, "I desire to do all. I am able to do all. However, I still need your prayer! The more you pray, the more I can do. The higher you pray, the more My desire can be fulfilled."

God desires to gain a group of people who pray according to His desire. The apostle Paul was a good example. His prayer for the Philippians was so sweet! He said, *“always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all”* (Phil. 1:4). Paul testified that he always prayed for the Philippians with joy, in view of their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. He was fully confident that the good work begun in them would be perfected until the day of Jesus Christ (vv. 5–6), yet still, he prayed!

We are often amazed at God’s work. However, we must realize that the continuation of His work requires prayers. We can see how heavenly Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1 was. He saw the economy of the Triune God, and he prayed that God would give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, that they would know the hope of His calling and how rich was His inheritance in the saints, that they would experience the power of His resurrection, and that they would see His church. What a prayer! This is a prayer that was one with God’s desire!

There was no “Paul” in his prayer. There was none of his own needs or desires. He was controlled by God’s economy. His prayer had no self but was full of God. Dear brothers, God desires that not only Paul would pray like this, but that we all would pray like this.

You who come to the Lord, you must give yourselves to Him. You should tell Him, “Lord, not only do You satisfy me and meet all my needs, but I would like to satisfy You through my prayer to fulfill Your desire. I want to grow. I want to be constituted with You. I want to be one with You. I want to live You out. Lord, I may not be so spiritual now, but I desire my prayer to be less and less for myself and more and more for You. The less my desire becomes, the more Your desire, Your purpose, Your work, and Your economy will occupy me! Lord, I love You. I desire I could be one with Your desire in my prayer!”

## PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCHES (1)

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father  
of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and  
of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Ephesians 1:17

The apostle Paul was one with God's desire in his prayer. Two of his intercessions for the church in Ephesus are found in the Bible. The first is found in Ephesians 1, the second is found in Ephesians 3. These intercessions were one with God's desire.

In Ephesians 1:1–14, Paul talked about the wonderful things the triune God has done. However, Paul didn't stop there and say, "Praise the Lord! I have discharged my burden. I have spoken out the being and the work of the triune God. Now my job is done!" After finishing verse 14, he knew that for the fulfillment of God's desire, the saints must experience God's being and His work. As the result he prayed in verses 17–23.

Paul said, "*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him*" (Eph. 1:17). There are two precious things here. Because of the commitment from his heavenly understanding, Paul's prayer was with commitment. At the same time, because of his practice based on his heavenly understanding, Paul's prayer was very practical.

Sometimes you pray without commitment. Among the churches today, you hardly see the ministry of prayer. All the services are systemized in the church. All things are done according to the arrangement. We don't need to pray anymore; we just perform the task. Only when the churches want to be responsible before the Lord and let the Holy Spirit have authority will the elders and brothers pray desperately before the Lord and look for God's mercy. After Paul told the Ephesians the work of the Triune God, he was burdened for them to have the wisdom and revelation to really see and experience God's work.

If we desire spiritual things, we must have wisdom and revelation. Wisdom is related to purity. James 3:17 says, "*But the wisdom from above is first pure.*" Note the word "first." It shows that wisdom and purity are closely related. Brothers, wisdom makes us pure and purity brings in wisdom. We should ask the Lord for purity so that we may gain wisdom to see the spiritual things.

Seeing the spiritual things is the revelation. You can talk for hours, but others just don't get it. What is the reason? There is no revelation. If things are known just by listening, they are not spiritual things. Spiritual things require revelation. Where then does revelation come from? It comes from the spirit.

Paul prayed the saints would receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Such a spirit is for those who are pure, seeking the Lord, magnifying the Lord, and pursuing God in order to know His desire. Brothers, if you have followed the Lord for many years yet without many prayers for God's economy, for God's kingdom, for God's testimony, or for God's church, it shows that you have not allowed God to speak to you when you pray.

God's testimony today seems to be almost disappearing. We hardly see Christ holding preeminence in the church. Churches today are very much like the churches in Galatia: you only need to follow, you just do this, you only need to be in this principle, and then you are fine. This is the same

principle as keeping the Law, and it is away from a purity toward Christ. When works are so complicated and saints are being ruined, are you able to pray: "Lord, give the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of You"?

Because our relationship with the Lord is not deep, our prayers are shallow. We pray, "Lord, I forgot my umbrella. Please stop the rain now." Even those who follow the Lord for many years still pray such shallow things! How many today kneel down and pray for God's kingdom, God's righteousness, God's testimony, God's economy, the going on of the churches, and the continuation of the divine revelation we received? We have seen the divine revelation is being ruined and destroyed. However, we don't have much feeling. Why? This shows that we are not close to the Lord!

Brothers, when you are in spirit, you will pray not only for yourself, for your companions, or for your church, but also for God's kingdom and righteousness. When you come to the Lord and fellowship with Him, such fellowship should bring in burden. You will pray for God's kingdom, for God's testimony, for God's desire, for God's economy, and for God's plan. God desires to gain a group of people who pray like this. Dear brothers, rise up and fight for this!

## PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCHES (2)

That He would grant you, according to the riches  
of His glory, to be strengthened with power  
through His Spirit in the inner man.

Ephesians 3:16

In Paul's first prayer for the church in Ephesus, he asked for a spirit of wisdom and revelation for the saints so that they would have the assurance and experience of God's being, God's work, and God's achievements. What does it mean to have assurance? Falling in love "at first sight" does not involve the assurance. It is a good start, but it does not necessarily end up in marriage. Marriage requires time to develop assurance and then bring in reality. Our relationship with the Lord is the same.

What was the reason that the churches in Galatia were distracted by observing days and months and times and years (Gal. 4:10)? It was because they didn't have assurance toward Christ! They were surely zealous, even to the point that they were willing to pluck out their eyes for Paul (4:12–15). So why did they so soon remove from Christ unto another gospel? It was because they were far from the Lord Himself. Dear brothers, you must learn to have assurance toward the Lord by coming to Him again and again. If you have such assurance, you will not be tossed to and fro, considering whom you should follow. Brothers, you don't need to follow anyone but the Lord!

Paul's second prayer for the church in Ephesus is found in Ephesians 3. He said, *"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man..."* (3:14–21). In the first prayer, he mentioned the spirit; in this second prayer, he mentions the inner man. In the first prayer, he asked for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. In this second prayer, he prays that God, according to the riches of His glory, would grant us to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. Through His rich and perfect supply and according to the operation of His Spirit, He is able to strengthen our inner man, and our spirit will become our person. Only when our spirit becomes our person will we begin to have the riches in Ephesians 4—the "ones" and the saints growing unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The riches in Ephesians 4 can only be realized by those who are matured. This is why Paul here doesn't mention "spirit" but "man." How can you grow and mature in this line? You must learn to speak your heart out to the Lord and then have intercession. Such fellowship comes from the calling of the Lord. It happens in the Light, and it is the result of your dwelling in the teaching of the anointing. When you speak to the Lord continually, you will pray and intercede and give thanks. You will have a life in the spirit and pray according to the desire of God.

At this time, your prayer will really be like what the Lord said: *"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven"* (Matt. 18:18). Dear brothers, if your prayers produce intercessions, you are quite matured in the Lord. Today, God is looking for those who abide in Him. They know how to abide in Christ and let Him to be their all.



## PART FOUR

# MANIFESTING ONENESS WITH THE LORD

Section One	Enjoying the Presence of the Helper
Section Two	Living in the Resurrected Christ
Section Three	Full of the Operation of the Word of Life



Section One: Enjoying the Presence of the Helper  
Chapter 74

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## ENJOYING THE PRESENCE OF THE HELPER

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another  
Helper, that He may be with you forever.

John 14:16

When you come to the Lord and live in Christ, you will have some manifestation that you are one with the Lord. What is this manifestation? What is it like to live in Christ? How do you know you are living in Christ? How do you know you are one with the Lord? How do you know that you are healthy before Him?

The first sign of your healthiness is your enjoyment of the presence and indwelling of the Helper. Before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus said: *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever, that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”* (John 14:16–18). If these words are real to you, you know that you have the Lord.

How do you know that you have a healthy relationship with the Lord? First, you don’t feel like you are an orphan. People are afraid of loneliness. However, we often feel lonely. When we are young, we need our parents. When we grow up, we need a spouse. After marriage, we need children. When the children grow up, we want grandchildren. Otherwise, we

feel lonely. Yet the Lord told us that He would not leave us as orphans. He is with us all the time and makes us feel so peaceful, so relaxed, and full of assurance and sweetness.

Where does this sweetness come from? It is from the Spirit whom the Lord gave to us, the Spirit of truth. The word “truth” can also be translated as “reality.” The Spirit of truth brings what is truly reality to us—who the Triune God is, what He has done, and what He has accomplished. How do we know we are one with the Lord and in fellowship with Him? It is because we have a feeling of fullness, satisfaction, and overflowing. We are able to say, “Lord, it is so good. I have the truth in me. It makes me know who my Lord is. The truth makes me understand how lovely You are. It makes me trust You. It makes me know that You are my full supply.” Yes, the Spirit is the Spirit of reality. He realizes the being, the work and the achievements of the Triune God in us.

Dear brothers, do you realize how rich the Spirit is? There is a hymn that says:

*O the joy of having all in Jesus!  
What a balm the broken heart to heal!  
Ne’er a sin so great, but He’ll forgive it,  
Nor a sorrow that He does not feel!  
If I have but Jesus, only Jesus,  
Nothing else in all the world beside—  
O then everything is mine in Jesus;  
For my needs and more He will provide.*

“O then everything is mine in Jesus” indicates the experience of the Spirit of reality giving everything to you. When you have Him as your all, you have everything.

How do you know that you are healthy before the Lord? It is when you don’t feel like an orphan. When you feel lonely, when you feel helpless, or when you just feel so tired of being a man, it shows that you have some distance from the Lord. Though sometimes you may feel so tired physically, there is a

strength in your spirit. This support in your spirit gives you strength to overcome everything. You are not afraid, because you have the Lord. When you have the Lord's presence, you can overcome all sufferings and griefs.

Dear brothers, let me ask you again, how do you know that you have a healthy relation with the Lord? It is because you have the Helper, and you are not an orphan. You have the Spirit of reality. He is with you and dwells in you. This is just like air that is both with you and in you. Air surrounds us—it is with us. We also breathe it in and out, and it fills our bodies—it is in us. In this way, we are completely joined to air.

The Helper is the Spirit of reality, the Spirit of truth. He brings us the reality and realizes all the truth in us. This realization is both outward and inward. The Helper is both with you and within you. Brothers, if you see this, you will love to fellowship with the Lord. You will say, "Lord, thank You. You are one with me, and You live in me. Today, You are the Spirit of reality. All You have, Your being, Your work and Your achievement include me, embrace me, and fill me. You and I have a one hundred percent, absolute, active, organic union."

Section Two: Living in the Resurrected Christ  
Chapter 75

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## LIVING IN THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

Even when we were dead in our transgressions,  
made us alive together with Christ.

Ephesians 2:5a

Dear brothers, when you enjoy the reality of being one with the Lord, you have the following conditions: First, you enjoy the protection and presence of the Spirit. The Spirit of reality is with you and abides in you. Second, you know you are a man of the heavenlies. You are not of the earth. You are heavenly. You live in the resurrected Christ and in the Spirit of resurrection. You are in resurrection. Your Lord is the resurrected Christ, and your spirit is a spirit of resurrection. Your Lord is in the heavenlies, and you are also with the Lord in the heavenlies. Your living is in the heavenlies, and you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

How do you know that you have a good relationship with the Lord? It is because you live in resurrection. Do you know where you live? Your position is in the heavenlies. Your life is in the heavenlies. Your existence is in the heavenlies. Although your body is still on the earth, you are a man of heaven. Let me give you an improper illustration. It is like a Chinese person living in America. His body is in America, but his taste may be Chinese. Although he lives in America, others may still consider him Chinese, not American. Now, *we* all are on the earth. When people look at us, they should

have a feeling that we are men of the heavenlies. Like the man who eats Chinese food to match his tastes, we should have a taste for things of the Lord—for prayer, for hymns, and for calling on His name. Although our body is constrained on the earth, the realm of our living is in the heavenlies.

Brothers, you live in the heavenlies, in the resurrected Christ! The more you partake of resurrection, the more you experience being one with the Lord. The more you partake of resurrection, the more you experience His transcendent work. The more you partake of resurrection, the more the reality of the heavenlies will be lived out of you. What is the reality of the heavenlies? It is manifested in the following things, which will all be examined in the coming chapters:

1. Living in love (John 15:9).
2. Living out that your joy is full (John 15:11).
3. Living in the peace of Christ. Not being troubled, afraid, or even attacked by the ruler of the world (John 14:27, 30).
4. Enjoying the tabernacle of the power of Christ (2 Cor. 12:9).
5. Living in the Light. Living a life of loving the brothers (1 John 2:10, 1:7).
6. Being firmly attached to Christ and to His economy with the saints (2 Cor. 1:21).
7. Partaking of Christ as all the reality (John 16:13).

## LIVING A LIFE IN LOVE

Just as the Father has loved me,  
I have also loved you; abide in my love.

John 15:9

My dear ones, you need to live a life in love. In John 15:9, the Lord Jesus said, *“Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; abide in my love.”* To abide in His love is to live a life in love. Here, the Lord not only focused on love but also on His relationship with the Father. The Lord said, *“I have loved you.”* How did He love us? *“As the Father has loved me.”* This love that the Father has for the Lord is the highest love, the most valuable love, the most organic love.

This organic love is the love between a father and his child. There is no reason you love your father. There is no reason your father loves you. You just love each other. This is an organic love. In the same way, the Father loves the Son. The Lord said, *“Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you.”* It is beyond any “reason” that the Father loves the Son. He just loves the Son. This love is organic. The Lord’s love toward us is also organic, without any reason or condition.

Though some children are not obedient, their parents always treasure them. The parents always find virtues in their children. People may criticize the son, saying he is naughty. The father may reply, “He is a good kid. He even cooked for us yesterday!” We may think a child is not smart, not diligent,

not gifted. The father may say, "But he is good at making coffee!" If parents don't know how to treasure their children, the children won't grow well. If parents only give laws and punish the children when they violate the laws, the children won't grow well. The healthy growth comes from a healthy relationship, one that is organic. You cannot separate a father and son who share an organic love. Likewise, as God the Father loves God the Son, so the Lord loves us. Our relationship is organic. This kind of love is beyond any description.

This love is also the most valuable. Valuable love has nothing to do with our being good or bad, right or wrong, old or young, useful or useless. The Lord loved Watchman Nee, and He loves you too. He loves His great servants, and He loves us who are common. The Lord loves the talented ones, and He also loves those who give Him troubles. Parents love their children whether they are good or bad. God's love is the same. It is organic, valuable love.

Dear brothers, how do you know you live in love? It is related to the assurance of love. As a son, you don't need to shout every day, "My dad loves me!" As a Christian, you don't need to shout every day, "Lord, You love me!" Instead, you have the assurance of love. With this assurance, you know you will go home when it's time, you will go find your father when it's time, and you will talk to your father when it's time. And the father knows that he will look for his child when it's time. This is the assurance of love! Such assurance shows that you are living in organic love. This love won't be added to or lessened by anything.

Brothers, do you live in this kind of love? You don't need to feel this love or to shout about love every day. You just need the assurance that the Lord loves us just like the Father loves Him. We live in His love. We enjoy Him in victory. We enjoy Him in failure. We enjoy Him in obedience. We enjoy Him when we are against Him. We live in this kind of love. There is no distance from Him.



How do you know you live a life in love? First, know the love between you and the Lord is organic. Nothing adds to it, and nothing lessens it. Second, know the love is valuable. The Lord always looks highly upon you. Third, because the Lord loves you, realize that He will cultivate you. I love my children. I try my best to cultivate them and I hope they grow up healthily. Brothers, when you abide in love and enjoy the organic relation with the Lord, you have the highest evaluation and enjoy the cultivation of the Lord. As parents cultivate their children, so the Lord cultivates you in love. In the process, you may not feel comfortable, but you still need to tell the Lord, “Lord, thank You for Your cultivation. I love You in every environment You measure for me. Yes, indeed I love You.”

## LIVING OUT THAT YOUR JOY IS FULL

These things I have spoken to you  
so that My joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be made full.

John 15:11

Dear brothers, if we come to the Lord and abide in His love (John 15:9), we will have a life in which our joy is full. We come to the Lord and let His love dwell in us; as a result, our joy may be made full.

Being full is the result of a process. We eat and eat and then we feel full. The Lord desires that our joy may be made full. Oh, you who come to the Lord need to realize that joy is related to our Lord! We abide in the Lord, joy is in us, and the Lord makes our joy full. He is the source of joy, and He makes it full. We enjoy the Lord, partake of the Lord, experience the Lord, have the reality of living in the Lord, and as a result, we are joyful people.

In Greek, “joy” (*charia*) and “grace” (*charis*) are closely related. Of the two, “joy” is the root, and “grace” is derived from “joy.” We speak of the grace of the Lord coming to us. In fact, it is joy that comes. Joy is related to the grace that the Lord gives us. Those who abide in grace are joyful. Those who are joyful abide in grace.

What is grace? The source of grace is the Lord. We have joy because we enjoy the Lord as grace. God desires us to enjoy

grace, experience grace, and partake of grace in Him. He desires to give all of Himself, His being, His work, and His achievement as grace to us who come to Him and abide in His love.

What is grace? Grace is the Lord Himself as our enjoyment, supply, support, and strengthening. Those who come to the Lord may enjoy all the divine being in grace. God is love, and grace supplies love to us. When we enjoy and experience grace, we enjoy and experience God who is love. God is light, and grace supplies light to us. When we enjoy and experience grace, we enjoy and experience God who is light. God is righteousness, and grace supplies righteousness to us. When we enjoy and experience grace, we enjoy and experience God who is righteousness. God's unlimited riches—all He is and all He has—are in the grace that supplies us and supports us. Through grace, God's riches become the reality of our joy.

We experience every aspect of God's being and of the bountiful supply of the grace given to us through the Spirit. The result is joy—a joy that is made full. If we abide in the achievement of Christ, allowing His achievement to supply us in grace, we will be those who come to Him, who live in Him, who are one with Him, and whose joy is made full.

Dear brothers, how wonderful is this! The Lord loves us. He desires that we abide in His love. He calls us to enjoy, to experience, and to partake of Him. He is the grace that comes upon us and becomes our reality. No matter who we are, no matter what situation we meet, and no matter how we pursue, we may enjoy Him in His abundant grace and live a life with joy that is made full!

## LIVING IN THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Peace I leave with you;  
My peace I give to you.

John 14:27a

What is peace? It is complete calm and restfulness. It is freedom from anxiety. In John 14:27, the Lord told the disciples, *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you.”* What kind of peace is this? It is the Lord’s peace—*“My peace.”* How peaceful was the Lord when He was on the earth! Although people rose up against Him, He still prayed, *“I thank You, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight”* (Matt. 11:25–26). He was not anxious. He was peaceful. He was one with the Father. He was such a peaceful person, and He left His peace to us!

Brothers, if you often praise the Lord joyfully, you will also have an unspeakable peace before the Lord. You may even supply your peace to others, just as the Lord was very peaceful on the earth and was able to give His peace to us. The Lord continued to say to His disciples, *“Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful”* (John 14:27b). There will be environments that trouble you and make you fear. However, you can have unspeakable peace within you because it is the peace of Christ.

In John 14:30, the Lord said, *“I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing*

*in Me.*” When the Lord said this, the ruler of the world, Satan, was about to come and give his fiercest attack against the Lord. Yet, at such a moment, the Lord was still speaking of peace! He was still peaceful. He still faced toward Jerusalem. He still went forward to the cross! This shows us that peace does not mean we won’t suffer. It is not that there will be nothing to trouble us. It is not that there will be nothing to make us fear. In fact, there will be many things to trouble us and make us fear. However, we are able to overcome because the Lord left His peace to us. Even the ruler of the world cannot occupy us. He has nothing in the Lord’s peace.

How do you know you are abiding and living in Christ? First is love. Second is joy. Third is peace. Brothers, treasure these things. Where are you? You are in the heavens. What realm are you in? You are in the heavenly realm. What do you enjoy? You enjoy the love that is organic, valuable, and cultivating. Works of love make the Lord joyful. The joy of the Lord then makes your joy full. That joy not only makes you happy, but also satisfies you with the Lord. The Lord also tells us, “In the world you shall have tribulation. But be at peace, I have left My peace to you” (see John 16:33).

If a servant of the Lord doesn’t know how to partake of the peace of Christ, he will be crushed by pressure. The work of the servants of the Lord is making miracles—to call things not being into being. People in the world have money as capital, but our capital is the Lord. We use our invisible capital to develop a work. In the process, Satan will try his best to attack us. Unbelievers will not understand us. Even other Christians will persecute us. How do we survive? We can only say, “Lord, You have left Your peace to us. Oh, I have Your peace. The ruler of the world has nothing in You. Therefore we are not troubled or afraid.” My brothers, partaking of such peace shows you are one with the Lord.

## ENJOYING THE TABERNACLE OF THE POWER OF CHRIST (1)

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast  
in my infirmities, that the power of Christ  
may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9b (NKJV)

In this verse, the words “*the power of Christ may rest upon me*” can also be translated, “*the power of Christ may tabernacle over me.*” Our understanding of this verse is very shallow. We think, “I am weak and the power of Christ tabernacles over me; I fail and the power of Christ tabernacles over me; I don’t have faith and the power of Christ tabernacles over me.” On the one hand, this is true. On the other hand, we should have a higher understanding. The tabernacle of the power of Christ is not just for when we lack basic faith. It is also for us to join to God and to match His economy. It is for us to fight for God’s testimony.

In 2 Corinthians 11:30, Paul said, “*If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*” In 12:9b he said, “*Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” If Paul had to boast, he would boast of the things concerning his infirmity, his weakness. He would rather boast in his weaknesses so that the power of Christ might tabernacle over him. His weaknesses were different from what we think of as weaknesses. Paul’s weaknesses were something incredible!

In order to understand the weaknesses, let's read from 2 Corinthians 11:23. The context of these verses is that people had risen up to attack Paul, trying to humiliate and destroy him. Paul was angry and said, *"Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so."* I like what Paul said: *"I more so!"* He continued with the proof of his apostleship: *"in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure"* (11:23b–27). No one wanted Paul, yet this was proof that he was an apostle. Paul's testimony is really special!

He continued, *"Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches"* (11:28). All the things he mentioned before were "external things." Our "external things" are quite different from his—what we ate for dinner yesterday, where to get gasoline today.... What were Paul's external things? He was in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. We can even find many of these experiences in the book of Acts. These were all external. And then, there were the things on the inside—he was anxious and pressured concerning the churches. When he thought about the churches in Galatia, the churches in Asia, the churches in Macedonia, and the churches in Achaia and Greece, he was worried. The anxious concerns for all the churches pressed upon him daily.

Now we should have a little understanding of Paul's condition when he wrote 2 Corinthians 12:9, concerning the tabernacle of the power of Christ. The care of all the churches

was upon him. He even said, “*Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?*” (11:29). When a brother was weak, he was weak. When a brother was stumbled, he burned with intense concern.

Brothers, just look at Paul’s life. What kind of life was it? What condition was his life? What quality was his life? He was in hunger and thirst. He was in fastings and in watchings. When he saw the situations of the churches, anxiety came upon him—not only for the churches, but even for each saint, one by one. Who was weak and he was not weak? Who was stumbled without his intense concern?

Dear brothers, let me ask you: How could Paul be strong in this situation? He could never be strong. Because there was always a weak one, he was always in weakness. In fact, Paul was strong himself, but he became weak for the sake of the saints. As a result, he boasted in his weaknesses. He suffered lashes and tribulations. He was in sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, in fastings, and in cold and nakedness. He didn’t have good news. All the news concerning the churches was bad—“this brother is weak, that brother fell....” It was here, in Paul’s weaknesses as he was standing for God’s testimony and economy, that the tabernacle of the power of Christ came upon him to give him strength to go on.



## ENJOYING THE TABERNACLE OF THE POWER OF CHRIST (2)

And He said to me,  
“My grace is sufficient for you,  
for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9a (NKJV)

While Paul was in his condition, the Lord did something special. Since Paul did so much for the Lord, the Lord did something in return. He gave Paul a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7).

This is beyond our thought. If we were the Lord, we would try our best to protect a faithful servant like Paul. But on the contrary, the Lord gave him a thorn! Was it an illness or a weakness? No one knows. Some Bible scholars say Paul had epilepsy. Others say he had a problem with his eyes. Personally, I think the thorn was a kind of illness that would erupt from time to time. Paul said it was a messenger of Satan to buffet him (2 Cor. 12:7). It didn't arise all the time. It came suddenly and went away. When the attack came, he was not able to do much, and he felt ashamed of it. Then he would recover.

According to Paul, the thorn was a messenger of Satan to buffet him, to keep him from exalting himself due to the greatness of the revelations given to him (v. 7). In response, Paul said, *“concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My*

*grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Cor. 12:8–9).

We wonder why we lack the experience of the power of Christ tabernacling over us. Brothers, it is because you are never weak. When you fall, you still try to improve yourself. When you fail, you still try to prove yourself. You will only enjoy the tabernacle of the power of Christ when you realize that nothing in the world, nothing in life, even nothing in the church life can give comfort or cheer. The saints make you weak, Satan attacks your body, and finally, you can do nothing but ask for the Lord’s mercy. At this time, the Lord will answer, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”*

If you have a good relationship with the Lord, this experience will eventually be manifested. Do you desire the Lord? Do you have a strong desire to serve the Lord? Are you able to forsake everything to serve Him? Are you willing to live in poverty for the Lord? Are you willing to be attacked by Satan? Are you willing to have a thorn in the flesh that makes you feel ashamed? Paul was like this! When he prayed, the Lord answered him, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”*

When Satan attacked Paul, the Lord didn’t save him. He didn’t protect Paul because he was such a good and faithful servant. Paul even asked the Lord three times to take the attacks away. In other words, these attacks were hard for Paul to take! I believe he told the Lord, “I cannot suffer this anymore! Please, save me!” The Lord’s answer was, “My grace is sufficient for you.” He seemed to tell Paul, “You can’t take it anymore? I am here! My strength is made perfect in weakness. If you go preach the gospel when you are strong and all sufficient, what do you need Me for? It is when you preach the gospel in weakness that you experience how wonderful My power is. My strength is made perfect in weakness!”

Brothers, how do you know you are joined to the Lord? It is because you live for Christ, for the church, and for the

saints. You are willing to accept everything from the Lord. As you live for Christ, for His testimony, for the church, and for the saints, and as you are willing to give everything for the Lord, you will feel, “Lord, how limited I am! How weak I am!” Then you will have the power of the Lord tabernacle over you. We need to tell the Lord, “Lord, I don’t have Paul’s experiences. However, I want to be one who loves You, who loves the church, who loves the saints, and who accepts everything from You.”

## LIVING IN THE LIGHT AND LOVING THE BROTHERS

The one who loves his brother abides in the Light  
and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

1 John 2:10

How do you know you are healthy before the Lord? It is because you love the brothers.

How do you know you love the brothers? It is because there is no cause for stumbling in you.

How do you know you have a good relationship with the Lord? It is because every brother is lovely in your eyes.

We all have our preferences. We like this person. We don't like that person. We like this kind of people. We don't like that kind of people. If someone gives you good comments, you love him more. If someone is kind to you, you love him more. If someone troubles you, you love him less or even return the trouble to make it even.

This verse says, "*the one who loves his brother abides in the Light.*" The proof you are in the Light is that there is no cause for stumbling in you. This means that to you, every brother is lovely. If you are very selective about who you love in the church life, it shows you are far away from the Lord. When you feel the Lord is near, when you abide in Christ, in the flowing out of Christ, and in the word of God, when you enjoy the riches of the hymns and have the Lord's speaking, you will have a feeling that all the brothers are lovely!

Once, a brother talked about how others had mistreated me. He was very angry. I told him, "Brother, I still love them." It is true. Loving brothers doesn't mean that I just follow whoever wants to lead, even if he is blind or muddleheaded. Loving brothers is one thing, and walking a certain way is another. You love your child but may not always like the way he takes. Yet even though you don't like the way, you still love him. There is no cause for stumbling in you.

Brothers, you know parents love their children and children love their parents. There is an organic love between them. How do you know you are abiding in Christ? It is because you are broad in love. You are able to love all the brothers and all kinds of people.

## BEING FIRMLY ATTACHED TO CHRIST WITH THE SAINTS (1)

But as God is faithful,  
our word to you is not yes and no.

2 Corinthians 1:18

Abiding in the resurrected Christ firmly attaches us to Christ and to His economy with the saints. Second Corinthians 1:21 says, *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.”* Verses 15–16 show us the background of this wonderful verse: *“In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.”* Paul had planned his trip to Corinth well. However, he received bad news from them. Some questioned his apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2–3), and the saints were divided into groups: some were of Paul, some of Peter, some of Apollos, and some of Christ (1 Cor. 1:11–12).

After receiving the bad news, Paul determined to visit them later in his trip, after they had a chance to respond to his letter. Yet some were upset at his change of plans. In response, he said, *“Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”* (2 Cor. 1:17). And he continued, *“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no”* (v. 18). Paul’s word was not

“yes and no.” He didn’t say one thing and mean another. *“For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him”* (v. 19). Paul’s word was powerful! He preached no one but Christ Jesus. His word was not yes and no. When he was among the saints, he exalted no one but the Son of God, Christ Jesus.

It is a pity that Christians are afraid that they would have only Christ Jesus! They always desire something or someone else besides Jesus. It feels safer to have such things. It is hard for Christians to say, “I need only Jesus. He is my assurance. He is my trust. He is my resources. He is my all.” Paul said his word was not yes and no. Jesus Christ, who was preached by him, was not yes and no. In other words, Jesus was the only topic that Paul preached. We, however, have too many topics besides Jesus Christ. We like to ask: “What material do you use? What book do you pursue? How many activities do you have? Do you follow so-and-so closely?” None of these things can be found in the Bible. We cannot use things that are not in the Bible as a constitution for the churches to follow. It is good to have materials to help the saints. However, it is a sin against the Lord if we use such material as a constitution to replace the Bible.

Many may laugh and wonder how such a thing could happen. It is because saints can live very happily without the Lord. In the Bible, what was the conflict between Paul and men from James? Paul insisted “only the Lord is all.” The men from James told the saints to keep the Sabbath, to be circumcised, to observe days, months, times, and years (see Gal. 4:10). The saints were so relieved that they didn’t need to pray, to pursue, to fast, or to ask the Lord anything. They thought they just needed to keep the Law and everything would be fine.

Dear brothers, when the Spirit begins to work, there is always someone who says that you just need to do this or that and that you don’t need to pay a price for the Lord. However, if we come to the Bible and read it carefully, you will find the

word is not yes and no. Paul said, “but is yes in Him” (2 Cor. 1:19). Hallelujah! In Him is yes!

Second Corinthians 1:18–19 shows us that Paul’s message had only one focus: the Son of God, Christ Jesus. Paul’s word was not yes and no. He only preached Christ Jesus. If Jesus was not yes and no, then what he preached and what he purposed was not yes and no. Paul was indeed a spiritual man!

A spiritual man like Paul could be forsaken by the churches. The churches might refuse him. The churches might look down on him. The churches might criticize him. However, he did what he purposed because his Lord was not “yes and no,” thus he was not “yes and no.” What he purposed was for the benefit of the saints and the churches. Paul seemed to be saying here, “What I served was according to the Lord. What I preached was focused on the Lord. He was not yes and no. In Him was yes.”



## BEING FIRMLY ATTACHED TO CHRIST WITH THE SAINTS (2)

Now He who establishes us with you  
in Christ and anointed us is God.

2 Corinthians 1:21

Paul had planned his trip well: *“In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea”* (2 Cor. 1:15–16). After hearing bad news from the church in Corinth, he could have wondered if he should still go to visit them. If anyone was thinking that, he said, *“Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”* (v. 17). Paul was clear with the Corinthians that from the very beginning, he had purposed according to the Lord. He didn’t plan his trip because of good news and then cancel the trip because of bad news.

By this point, Paul had heard many things from other churches—this church criticized him, that church abandoned him, this church tried to ruin him, and that church attacked him. Nonetheless, he said to the Corinthians, *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God”* (2 Cor. 1:21). We must realize that God is the One who anointed us so that we are joined in life and bear the testimony of the

church together. He has also attached us together to Christ. How good is this verse! How can you know you are in Christ? It is because you and the saints are firmly attached!

When I had just come to the United States and begun serving the Lord, I asked an older brother how good another servant of the Lord was. The older brother was very serious and said, "Asking this question is to give place to the devil!" I learned a lesson from him. Why did he say such a thing? He knew the fact that God firmly attaches the Lord's servants to Christ with us, and He has anointed us to fulfill His economy.

Consider the background of verse 21. Paul cared about the churches. His existence was for the saints. When he considered himself before the Lord, he did not consider his comfort or future, but what would be the greatest profit for the churches and the saints. He desired them to benefit from him. Sometimes, news could discourage him, trouble him, disturb him, even make him faint! At the time of writing 2 Corinthians, he was distressed, so he stayed in Macedonia. He left Troas even though the Lord had opened a great and effectual door unto him to preach the gospel. Why? He had no rest in his spirit, for he didn't see Titus, who had brought the first letter to the church in Corinth. Paul had no peace until hearing if they had received his letter and accepted his rebuke and exhortation.

Brothers, do you live for the brothers and sisters? Are you for their benefit? Do you have the interests of the churches and the saints as your first priority when you make plans or arrangements? Do you truly desire them to be helped in life? Their attitude may be negative. They may even be against you. However, your assurance is: *"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God."* If this is your experience, your existence is as high as Paul's. The saints may gossip. They may attack you. They may be against you. However, in the Lord's mercy, you are willing to serve them since you have God's anointing between you and the saints.

The realm in which Paul lived was indeed one with the Lord! He was occupied by the churches. His heart was for the churches. His existence and his labor were for the saints. All he had was for the Lord! How do you benefit the churches? You have to learn from Paul. When the churches misunderstood him, attacked him, and criticized him, he said, *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.”* Paul knew that he and the saints in Corinth had an organic relationship of life that couldn’t be severed. They lived together before the Lord. God had anointed them together in order to fulfill His economy, to manifest His work, and to make them live for His economy!

Brothers, how do you know you are healthy before the Lord? You have to ask yourself: “What occupies me? What is my assurance?” Although we don’t have Paul’s gift, are you willing to live a life like his? Without this, what is the meaning of your life? Some may have a PhD degree. Some may become a five-star general. Most of us are not that “successful.” However, we can all have a life that is one with the Lord. What a valuable life this is! Your value, then, is not determined by your knowledge, your position, your career, or your wealth. A man with the highest value of life is he who boldly says, *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.”* What a valuable and transcendent life this is!

## PARTAKING OF CHRIST AS THE REALITY

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,  
He will guide you into all the truth.

John 16:13a

In John 16:13–14, the Lord said, *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”* The Greek word for “truth” can also be translated “reality.” The Spirit of truth is the Spirit of reality. He speaks what He hears, and He declares it to us since He will glorify the Lord. The speaking of the Spirit has only one purpose: to glorify Jesus Christ!

Christ, the word of God, and the Spirit of reality come to guide us into all the reality. The reality is a living person—the Lord Jesus Christ! He is not like other things or people. He is not any theory or teaching. He is not any theology. He is not any religious practice. He is nothing but a living person. The Spirit of reality comes to guide us into the reality, Christ Himself. Now the question is: do you desire the reality? When you have the reality, you will glorify the Lord in the reality!

How do you know you live a life that is one with the Lord? You are surely one with the Lord if you are able to say, “I have nothing in my life but Jesus Christ. Besides Jesus, no

teaching, no theory, no one, and nothing is really valuable. What I want is Jesus.”

When the Spirit of reality comes, He will guide you into all the reality. As a result, you will glorify the Lord. When you enter into the reality, you abide in Him. What He has done, what He has accomplished, His divine attributes and human virtues, and His economy will control your life.

I like to repeat to you that Christians don’t want Christ Himself. It is very peculiar! Christians want to be saved, not because of Christ Himself but because they want to escape from Hell. Because of this unhealthy start, it is difficult for your focus to change from yourself to God. If you desire to be one with the Lord, you must be able to say, “I love Christ. I pursue Christ. I care about Christ. I enjoy Christ. I enjoy what He’s done, what He accomplished, and His divine attributes and human virtues. I also enjoy His position in God’s eternal plan and His execution of God’s economy!” These are the statements of those who abide in Christ. It is way beyond whether you feel good or bad. It is an elevated existence. The value of this existence is so high—the Spirit of reality comes to guide you into all the reality. Oh, praise the Lord! When you enter into the reality, the Lord is glorified. The reality is the Lord and He becomes your all!

Dear brothers, we should thank the Lord for everything He gave us. We should also thank Him for the difficulties. There is a hymn that says: “Thanks to Thy name for meaner things, but they are not my God.”

Amen—what we want is the Lord! We may not be as cloistered as the Amish or Franciscan monks, but the Spirit of reality still desires to lead us into the Lord Himself as the true reality. When we are joyful, we can tell the Lord, “Thank You, Lord. I am joyful because of You.” When the Lord blesses us, we should tell Him, “Lord, I like Your blessing, but I like You who bless me even more.”

## Section Three: Full of the Operation of the Word of Life

### Chapter 85

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## FULL OF THE OPERATION OF THE WORD OF LIFE

So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless  
and innocent, children of God above reproach in  
the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,  
among whom you appear as lights in the world,  
holding fast the word of life.

Philippians 2:15-16a

For those who abide in Christ, their position is unchangeable—it is “one with the Lord.” What they enjoy is resurrection. They partake of Christ in resurrection. They enjoy all the riches of the Triune God. When they partake of Christ, they have the word of God and are full of the operation of the word of life.

In Philippians 2:15–16, the word “lights” can also be translated “luminaries” and the phrase “holding fast the word of life” can be translated “holding forth the word of life.” The saints should be like luminaries in the world. The testimony of the churches in different localities should be bright and victorious, just like luminaries. These luminaries hold forth the word of life.

The word of God has to be held forth. To “hold forth” means to express it or to shine. The word of God is absolute and rich. It is full of the Triune God and His divine operation. The word of God speaks out God and His economy. The center of the word is God Himself and the word is expressed through

the church—the saints in grace. How wonderful this is! Those who come to the Lord know how to enjoy the riches of the word. When we come to the Lord and pray to Him, His word reveals Himself and speaks His desire to us. It brings us into oneness with Him and with His economy. The closer we are to the Lord and the more we enjoy Him and the more we abide in Him, then the more His word is expressed through us. As a result, we become the testimony of Christ, the expression of His being, and the manifestation of His operation.

Dear brothers, even though we are fallen, weak, unfit, and unworthy, God gains us as luminaries to hold forth His word. How blessed we are! It is so easy to forget about God and keep our distance from Him. Then, we grumble and dispute (Phil. 2:14), becoming one with the crooked and perverse generation. However, the Lord calls us to come to Him. He seems to be telling us, “Come! Come to Me! Abide in Me, enjoy Me, partake of Me, experience Me, and you will become luminaries who hold forth the word of life.” We worship Him! He commits those who come to Him with the divine commitment in the organic life.

Praise the Lord! The word of life has been held forth! We should be full of the operation of the word of life! Our position is in the heavenlies. And we have the operation of the word of life within us. There are five aspects of this operation:

1. Knowing the Lord more (John 5:39)
2. Having the assurance of the being and the work of Christ (2 Tim. 1:11–14)
3. Being willing to fill up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the church (Col. 1:24–25)
4. Clarity concerning spiritual things (Heb. 4:12)
5. Fruitfulness (John 15:7–8)

In other words, these aspects are about the Lord, the Lord’s work, the church, spiritual things, and lastly, our being fruitful to glorify the Lord.

## KNOWING THE LORD MORE

You search the Scriptures because  
you think that in them you have eternal life;  
it is these that testify about Me.

John 5:39

Dear brothers, the word of life helps us to know Christ more. When the word of life operates in us, it leads us to the Lord to know Him more. When we read the word of God, it gives us Christ and nothing else. It gives us Christ: who He is, what He has done, what He has achieved, and what He has accomplished.

The Lord said, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me.”* No matter which book, which chapter, or which verse you look at in the Bible, it should bring you to Christ. The Lord would tell us, “If your Bible reading brings you to Me, you read it right.” How do you know you have a healthy relationship with the Lord? You should answer, “Every time I read the word, I meet the Lord. Every time I read the word, I know the Lord more. Every time I read the word, I enjoy and gain the Lord more. The life in the word is the Lord Himself.”

I knew someone who read the Bible thirty minutes every day, and, after one year, he was completely transformed. I also knew someone who read the Bible thirty minutes every day, and, after one year, he became a strange man. What was



the difference? The difference was not time spent or even what they were reading. It was that one had much speaking of the Lord, and one did not. The Bible is focused on Christ Jesus. Every book, every chapter, and even every verse should bring you to the Lord to know Him more and to have a higher view of Him. Through the Bible, you are brought to the Lord and, in God's mercy, you may be healthy before the Lord.

Some read the Bible and become spiritual. Some read and don't become spiritual at all. What is wrong? It is because they don't have Christ, gain Christ, enjoy Christ, or get into the being and the accomplishment of Christ when they read. They just get a little help from the Bible according to their needs. Brothers, it is ok to get what you need from the Bible. However, if you just stay there, your reading will remain very shallow. You will not reach something high.

People are shallow. If you read the Bible according to who you are and what you want, the Bible will remain shallow to you. Dear brothers, if you can have Christ when you read the Bible, you will be elevated because Christ is high and unlimited. The healthy relationship between you and the Lord depends on whether you can have Christ from your reading of the Bible. You should say, "I don't want anything other than Christ Jesus. I care for nothing but Christ. What I want from the Bible is to gain Christ!"

## BEING FULL OF THE ASSURANCE OF CHRIST (1)

For I know whom I have believed and  
am persuaded that He is able to keep  
what I have committed to Him until that Day.

2 Timothy 1:12b (NKJV)

The word of life renders to us the assurance of the being and the work of Christ. When the word of God, the word of life, operates in us, we have the full assurance of the being and the work of the Lord. Second Timothy 1:12 tells us that He is able to keep, or to guard, what we have committed to Him. We can think of how we deposit money in a bank. The bank is committed with our deposit. However, our God will never go bankrupt! He is established forever. If we give ourselves as the deposit to Him, we will grow “interest.” As this interest grows, the Lord will not only have our commitment, but we will desire to give ourselves to Him even more.

According to this verse, you can tell the Lord, “I give my all to You. When I deposit myself to You, Lord, I want interest.” Have you ever told the Lord, “I give myself to You and I want good interest?” I am afraid not. I am afraid you have only opened a checking account without any interest rate. You give yourself to the Lord without hoping for anything in return. Gradually, your deposit runs out. You may wonder why you loved the Lord yet such love gradually disappeared. The reason is simple. You have the deposit but without the commitment.

Brothers and sisters, you will know you have a good relationship with the Lord when you are always joyful. How can you be joyful all the time? It is when you have a long term account. It is not due in one year or in two years, but after your whole life. As long as you deposit your capital into the account, the interest has unlimited growth. Such a relationship shows that you and the Lord have a mutual commitment. What is the mutual commitment? You commit yourself to the Lord, the Lord commits the interest to you, and you commit to Him even more. Every brother or sister has the right to tell the Lord, "Lord, I give everything to You. After one year, two years, three years, I am still a church goer. What kind of banker are You? Since I gave myself to You, You should give me interest. You should make me grow. You should make me produce spiritual things. You should make me mature."

You deposit and have commitment. The Lord has your deposit and He must earn interest for you. Otherwise, He is an unqualified banker. Dare you tell the Lord that He is an unqualified banker? It is good to tell the Lord this once. If you just say, "I praise You. I worship You," the Lord may ask, "But why do you praise Me? Why do you worship Me?" To just speak of praise and worship shows your relationship with the Lord is still religious, not organic.

Right before this verse, Paul said he was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles (2 Tim. 1:11). For this cause he also suffered, for he knew he committed himself to God and that God was able to guard the deposit and grow interest (2 Tim. 1:11–12). Now, let me ask, what about you? Do you suffer? If you don't, you still don't know what it is to commit yourself to God to grow interest. While He grows interest, you suffer. No Christian can grow without suffering. Some sufferings are from God's smiting, like a lost job or a car breakdown. Some sufferings are not God's smiting but simply a life under the principle of the cross. The principle of the cross is to lose and to die to self. If you are under this principle, God is able to grow interest for you.

Paul said, *“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed”* (2 Tim. 1:12). People may say, “You became unlucky after you believed in Jesus. Why are you so unfortunate after you began to love Jesus?” You need to answer, “I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that Day. Why do I suffer? It is because I give everything to God, including myself and the things that God has committed to me. He is growing interest for me! While He is doing so, I suffer.”

Of course, you don’t need to pray for sufferings. You don’t need to tell the Lord, “Everything is going so well. Make my car crash! Make my house burn down!” No, this is to give place to the devil. You don’t ask for sufferings, but you should know that you will have to suffer. If you love the Lord, you will suffer. The process of suffering is for you to gain Christ. When you suffer, do not feel ashamed. There is no need to complain. You don’t need to grumble. You don’t need to protest. When you protest, all that God commits to you leaks away.

“What I have committed to Him” can also be translated, “what He has entrusted to me.” Dear brothers, the Lord entrusts to you what you commit to Him. What you commit to the Lord, the Lord entrusts even more back to you. You must commit it to Him again and again so that it may grow even more. This is the reason a Christian’s life is so sweet. We are in sufferings, yet we are joyful. We have joy because our interest is growing. Why do we suffer? Our deposit grows more interest. The growth makes you joyful. Your life grows and grows. Your deposit increases and increases. Although you suffer, you know you have more abundant riches to commit to the Lord.

## BEING FULL OF THE ASSURANCE OF CHRIST (2)

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 1:13

Dear brothers, it is very sweet to be able to commit! This is the most joyful testimony of one who loves God and follows the Lord: “My Lord is the One to whom I can commit. He is able to guard what I deposit to Him, including my life, my being, my time, my gift, the development of my gift, the function of my gift, my ministry, and the operation of my ministry. I have committed my all unto Him and He, in turn, entrusts these things to me. We have such a sweet relationship until that Day!”

In 2 Timothy 1:12, “what I have committed to Him” can also be translated, “what He has entrusted to me.” According to Paul, God had entrusted to him, and he, in turn, committed it unto God. God entrusted Paul with a ministry, and Paul committed his ministering unto God. God entrusted Paul with preaching, and Paul committed the words, the process, and the result of his preaching back unto God. Paul knew whom he had believed, and he was persuaded that the Lord and he had a mutual commitment. The Lord was able to guard Paul’s deposit, and Paul was able to guard what the Lord had entrusted to him.

I really like the part: “[I] am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him.” To be honest, what can you commit to Him? What do you have that you may deposit with the Lord? You could try to deposit your PhD degree with Him, but He would say, “There are so many PhDs. I don’t want it.” You could try to deposit your youth with Him, but He would say, “Young people are everywhere.” You could try to deposit your whole life with Him, but He would say, “Everyone has a life.”

You may think giving your life to the Lord is a big deal. However, from the Lord’s point of view, what is your life compared with so many people on the earth? However, the Lord desires you to love Him. You should tell Him, “I am persuaded that You are able to guard this love. Please, make it grow. Lord, I am persuaded that You are able to guard the abundant life that You put in me. I am persuaded that You can guard the ministry that You gave me, even the operation of the ministry.” This is the beauty of the life of Christians!

Some say, “I am willing to die for the Lord!” Don’t believe it. In fact, many are killed against their will, but not so many have died willingly for the Lord. The spirit of martyrdom is carefully protected by God. Those with such a spirit are able to say, “Lord, I give my life to You. My deposit issues in Your commitment to me. That commitment leads me to give You a higher deposit. The higher deposit produces the more abundant commitment unto me. This is my life! I know whom I have believed, for I am persuaded that You are able to guard what You have entrusted to me. I am not trustworthy, but You are trustworthy. I fail all the time, but You are victorious. I often lose Your presence, but You are always firm. You will guard the commitment You entrusted to me!”

This deposit is both your commitment to the Lord and the Lord’s entrustment to you. When you believe in the Lord and give your life to Him, the Lord immediately gives you a commitment according to your consecration. He is willing to

work on you so that you love Him more abundantly. This love needs to be guarded by the Lord, or it will quickly dry up.

You may tell the Lord, “I love You. I want to pursue You.” The Lord would answer, “Then I give My riches to you.” The riches that He gives you need to be guarded by Him. You may tell Him, “I enjoy these riches, and I want to grow.” The Lord would answer, “Then I give a portion of the ministry of the New Testament to you.” This portion needs to be guarded by the Lord. Everything has to be guarded by the Lord.

Paul told Timothy, “*Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you*” (2 Tim. 1:13–14). Paul gave the Lord the deposit, and the Lord guarded what Paul had deposited with Him. Then the Lord entrusted Paul with more and guarded what He entrusted to him. What is the secret? These verses tell us that the secret is the sound, or healthy, words. There is a standard of sound words. You have to retain it, or hold it, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

The “treasure which has been entrusted” in verse 14 is the same Greek word as “what I have committed to Him” in verse 12. Here, in verse 14, God has deposited something in you, and you must guard it through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you. Dear brothers, the commitment that you possess and have given to the Lord is guarded by the Lord. As for yourself, do not depart from the standard of sound words and the divine commitment that you have received.

## FILLING UP THAT WHICH IS LACKING IN THE AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,  
and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of  
His body, which is the church, in filling up  
what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Colossians 1:24

The operation of the word of life makes us willing to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the church. Paul's suffering for the saints means he suffered for the church. What an excellent, buoyant, admirable utterance! In his flesh, Paul was willing to fill up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions for the church. The afflictions of Christ produced the church; the afflictions of Paul were for the building up of the church!

Paul continued, *"of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God"* (Col. 1:25, NKJV). J. N. Darby translated "to fulfill the word of God" as "to complete the word of God." What is the difference between "to complete" and "to fulfill?" To complete something is to finish it. To fulfill something is to produce the reality after it is finished. Some Bible scholars consider Paul's writings as the finishing of the word of God. However, according to my understanding, Paul not only wrote the word of God, but the word also became his reality. He allowed the word of God to be realized, fulfilled, in him.



Sometimes, Christians put too much attention on sufferings. They are sometimes afraid that they are not suffering enough, because they know the increase of sufferings means the increase of Christ. A young brother might say, "I suffer a lot. This brother is against me. That sister is against me. Even the elder is against me. I must be so spiritual!" However, the elder would probably say, "I am not against him. I dare not touch him. But because he gossips a lot and causes a lot of problems, I have to exhort him." This example is a young brother suffering without Christ. How can I say he suffers without Christ? It is because his answer reveals he is distant from the word of God. To fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions is to fulfill the word of God (see v. 25). When you have a foundation of God's word, sufferings themselves mean very little to you. Then, as you go through the sufferings, you must have the word of God. You must be in the word of God.

Dear brothers, do you have fellowship with the Lord? Do you abide in the Lord? Are you one with the Lord? Do you have the perfect enjoyment of Christ? To give a positive answer, you must be able to say, "Lord, Your word is fulfilled in me. Your word is completed through me." To fulfill it requires your experience. To complete it requires your vision. As for vision, the word of God needs to be completed. As for experience, the word of God needs to be fulfilled. Those who fulfill the word of God are joyful, motivated, and peaceful. They are motivated, because the word of God is powerful. They are peaceful, because in the word of God they know that God is Lord over everything.

Paul said, *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions."* Do not think this is too high to reach. When you are willing to pursue the Lord, to consecrate yourself, and to learn to enjoy His presence, to gain Christ, and to read the Bible, you will go through sufferings. You will realize your life has changed.

There are things you cannot enjoy any more. You cannot just live your old life. You now have a different life.

Why do you live a different life? This different life is for you to gain Christ. What is the result of gaining Christ? It is to bless the saints, to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ in your flesh.

Paul lived this life. Peter lived this life. The Lord's servants have all lived this life. Dear brothers, you can live this life, too. In the process, you must fulfill the word of God. Do not try to please God according to your religious sentiment. You must go through a process in the word of God so that you know the word more, enjoy the word more, and experience the word more. In the blueprint God gave you, you are clearer about the verses and the revelation, and you know how to partake of them. This is how you fulfill the word of God and speak forth the word of God.

## BEING CLEAR CONCERNING SPIRITUAL THINGS (1)

For the word of God is living and active  
and sharper than any two-edged sword, and  
piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit,  
of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the  
thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

The operation of the word of life also makes us clear concerning spiritual things. Dear brothers, you know you abide in Christ because you have the word of God. When the word of God comes, it will operate in you. Hebrews 4:12 says the word is able to judge, or discern, the thoughts and intentions of the heart. This discerning makes you clear and bright. In the beginning, you weren't clear. It was hard to tell whether you even loved the Lord or not. You paid a price to come to the meetings, but you only made one meeting per week. You consecrated yourself to come to the 10-month training, but you still had a lot of considerations of your own. You need the word of God. When the word comes, you become clear and peaceful.

This verse says the word of God is able to pierce. Why do we need such piercing? Please read verse 11: *"Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest."* We should be in rest, which means to be in peace. How can we be in peace? We need the word of God. When the word comes, our spirit and soul are

pierced. This doesn't mean that the word cuts our spirit and soul apart, so that one side is the soul and the other is the spirit. No! To "pierce" means that the function of the spirit can advance over the limitation of the soul. The disturbances of the soul can no longer limit the enjoyment of the spirit. In other words, the enjoyment, the partaking of Christ in our spirit, becomes stronger than any outward uproar.

Hebrews tells us to be diligent to enter into that rest. How do we enter into that rest? We know the word of God is quick and powerful. It can pierce even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and is a judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. When the word of God pierces, we come into the rest. When we are in the rest, our thoughts and intentions are revealed. When we abide in the word of God, life overcomes death and strength overcomes weakness. The function of the spirit is manifested. Our spirit becomes rich! The word of God helps us to have the Lord and to abide in Christ. Our thoughts and intentions are discerned.

Men are complicated. Men always say, "Yes, but..." All Christians like to say, "Yes, but..." When you encourage them to follow the Lord, they say, "Yes, but..." In other words, "Yes, I'd like to follow the Lord. But what shall I do in the future?" Dear brothers, do not forget that the word of God can pierce to the dividing of soul and spirit, magnifying the function of the spirit and helping us follow the Lord so that we can say "yes" to Him. It is a pity that in our experience we always have a "but." When we consecrate everything to the Lord, we ask, "But what shall I do?" Didn't you just consecrate to the Lord? Why do you ask what to do? Isn't it simple just to follow Him? Oh, thank the Lord for His piercing and discerning word!

## BEING CLEAR CONCERNING SPIRITUAL THINGS (2)

Since we have a great high priest  
who has passed through the heavens...

Hebrews 4:14a

Dear brothers, the thoughts and the intentions of those who abide in Christ require discerning. Unbelievers have a lot of thoughts and intentions. They desire to do this; they like to do that. Christians are the same. No matter how much they love the Lord and consecrate to Him, or even if they are merely saved, they also have many thoughts and intentions.

Once, someone advised a servant of the Lord who was rejected: “If you just retire, everyone will be in peace.” Not just one person said this, but even a second and a third! When the third one said so, the servant had to go to the Lord, asking, “Lord, what should I do in this situation?” What he needed at this time was the word of God to discern his thoughts and intentions. He needed to ask, “Am I clean before the Lord? Do I have the Lord as I fight? Am I sure my burden is from the Lord? Am I sure I am speaking from the Lord?” Without praying like this, without knowing how to discern his thoughts and intentions, it would become easy for him to abandon his ministry when people were against him. Even the apostle Paul would have abandoned his ministry without such discernment.

Think about Paul’s situation. There could have been many ways to escape from the persecutions. When people tried

to persecute and even kill him, he had at least three ways to go. First, he could have developed a school of theology. He could have stayed in Judaism and tried to bring Christ into it. He was a good teacher. He should have been able to change Judaism by doing so. Second, he could have focused on writing. He could have written many spiritual books, with titles like, “Christ in Genesis,” “The Church and Israel,” “Seeing Salvation from Noah,” etc. There would have been so many that he could write. Third, he could have retired. Since no one wanted him, he should have retired! He even called himself, “*Paul, the aged....*” However, he didn’t retire. What he said was, “*Yet for love’s sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ*” (Philem. 9). He didn’t choose the three easy ways, because his thoughts and intentions were presented before the Lord.

Praise the Lord! When the word of God pierces, the thoughts and intentions of the heart are discerned. Every servant of the Lord needs to pass this test. The Lord will show where your thoughts and intentions are not pure. Dear brothers, for your ministry, you should pray and consider before the Lord until your thoughts and intentions are discerned in His word. Then you can say, “Thank You, Lord. I know I am one with You. Even if the whole world is against me, I can still stand before You.”

How can you say this? It is because you are full of the enjoyment of the word of God. If you are still young in the Lord, you can also allow the word of God to manifest your thoughts and intentions. This is an unspeakable protection for you. Let me repeat, people are complicated. When the word of God manifests your thoughts and intentions, you realize that even your labor is not so pure. People are so complicated. There is always something behind everything we do and every decision we make.

On the one hand, the word of God strengthens your spirit and makes you restful and peaceful. On the other hand, the

word of God manifests who you are. If there are seventy different saints in this training, there are probably seventy different intentions behind being here. However, the word of God makes you restful. It strengthens your spirit, manifests your soul, and discerns your thoughts and intentions. Then, Hebrews 4:14 says, *"Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens."* When you are exposed and cannot believe who you really are, the Lord would tell you, "I am not a great high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of your weaknesses." Although you are weak, you have a high priest who sympathizes with you.

Dear brothers, God desires you to enter into rest. Where is the reality of the rest? It comes from the operation of the word of God. You must have the word of God. The word should be like a picture that controls you. You should partake of the details of the picture as your enjoyment. At such a time, the word becomes operative in you. It strengthens your spirit, makes you restful, and exposes the thoughts of your soul, so that you can say, "I have a high priest who is touched with the feeling of my weaknesses. I desire to come to Him and to tell Him everything. I desire to look upon Him and to wait for Him."

## BEARING MUCH FRUIT

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

John 15:8

Finally, the operation of the word of life in us makes us fruitful! In John 15:7 Jesus said, *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* Oh, He said *“whatever you wish!”* We have many wishes, but usually they are not from the word of God. Sometimes we have the word of God, but it is not what we wish. Either situation shows that we are not healthy. We ask for this and that, yet what we wish for is not supported by the word of God. The Lord didn’t ask us to pray for these things. Of course we can speak to Him about anything we want, but this kind of prayer is not high enough to be one with God.

When you abide in the word of God and His word abides in you, the word has many operations. In John 15:7, when the Lord’s words abide in you, He said, *“Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* He who abides in the word will have lots of observations. He who abides in the word will have lots of feelings. These observations and feelings will cause him to have a lot of prayers. Since he has the word of God, many of his prayers are one with the Lord.

Dear brothers, our prayers are usually so common. I hardly see anyone pray concerning the severe spiritual warfare we



face today. Our praying is ritual. It is just something to be done every day. What a pity! Why don't we have prayers that are one with the Lord? It is because we are short of the word of God. When the word of God is short in us, we don't have much feeling.

We usually pray for common things. Although the Lord likes to listen to the littlest thing we pray, He desires that our prayers could become higher, that they could be one with Him. Those who allow the Lord to work on them deeply can be one with Him. This work results in many prayers that are one with God's economy. What they ask will be done by the Lord, and they will bear much fruit, just as the verses say in John 15. To bear fruit not only indicates an increase of number or a greater living out of the divine attributes, but also being one with God's economy.

Dear brothers, when you pray because of the word of God, you bear much spiritual fruit. This is not a small thing! When you bear fruit, our Father is glorified! Those who abide in Christ and are one with Him have the word of God. The word is living and real to them, and thus they become one with God's economy.

Herein is our Father glorified! Many times the Lord answers our prayer. Both we and the Lord are joyful. However, we cannot say that the Father is glorified. How can the Father be glorified? When the word of God abides in us and we pray according to God's economy, the Lord answers the prayer. The result is that the Father is glorified. The Lord says, "So prove to be My disciples." How sweet is it to be His disciples!



## APPENDIX

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1. The Father is Working, and the Lord Also is Working.

In John 14:10, Jesus said, *“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.”* Dear brothers, our relationship with the Lord is like the Lord’s with the Father. What is their relationship? According to John 14:10, the Lord said, *“I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.”* We can also say, *“I am in Christ, and Christ is in me.”* The vine and the branch have the same organic relationship. Because of this relationship, the Lord was able to say, *“Everything I do and everything I speak is not from myself, but from the Father who dwells in me. He does the works.”* Because Christ and the Father had this organic relationship, the Father who dwelled in Him was able to do lots of works. In like manner, when we abide in Christ, He who lives in us also does many works.

How wonderful this is! We and the Lord have an organic relationship, an organic union. We live in the Lord, and the Lord lives in us. Since He is in us, He is able to do many works. When the Lord was on the earth, He healed, cast out demons, performed miracles, and preached. In reality, the most significant thing He did was to make people see God. *“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him”* (John 1:18).

When you see Jesus, you see the Father. The Lord Jesus did so many things and accomplished redemption. Even more—through Him, we can see God.

Brothers, we live in Christ and have an organic relationship with Him. When we enjoy this organic relationship, the Lord does many things from within: He constitutes His being into us, He constitutes His divine attributes in us, and He lives out the human virtues through us. When we enjoy our relationship with the Lord in this way, we are able to manifest Him.

## 2. The Resurrection is the Highest Point of the Flowing Out of God.

God's outflowing went through a process. Eventually, the Lord resurrected from the dead. In resurrection, all the types and shadows from the Old Testament were realized. He is the true tabernacle. He is the true lamb. Without resurrection, we could not partake of these riches. Therefore, the highest point of His flowing out is the resurrection. He brought humanity into divinity, so that man and God could be one.

There is a hymn that says, "There's a Man in the glory." How did a man enter into glory? It was in resurrection. When the Lord resurrected, He brought humanity to the throne. Now, He is God, and He is man. He is the complete God and the perfect man. He carries out God's economy in resurrection. If He is not the complete God, He could not carry out God's economy. If He is not the perfect man, we could not experience God's economy—God would be too powerful for us. No one can resist God. However, God works in the perfect humanity of Christ. No matter where we are and no matter what state we are in, He is able to reach us, to support us, and to elevate us according to who we are. Oh, He is the One in resurrection!

Romans 8:11 says, “*But ... He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*” One day, when the Lord comes, we will experience the resurrection of our bodies. Our mortal bodies will live again. As for today, we can partake of the resurrection as well. Although we have all kinds of bodily limitations, we can still say, “Lord, thank You for the Spirit that dwells in me. The Spirit is so wonderful! He is the Spirit of the One who raised Christ up from the dead.”

### 3. Examples of Nine Categories of Hymns

Let’s look at some examples of the first nine categories of hymns, mentioned in chapter 54.

#### (1) You love the Lord purely

The hymn “Whenever You Open up Your Bosom” is very pure. (Note: this hymn has no official English translation.) It can give you a lot of feelings. Verse three says:

*Lord, the love I express to You needs Your testing.  
May my heart be focused on You and to  
experience Your love  
To the very end, to the very end.*

Verse one says, “How can I express to the very end?” Verse two says, “I want to know Your heart’s love to the very end.” Verse three says, “to experience Your love to the very end.” This is an expression of the writer’s desire to know the Lord completely and to love Him purely. You should be familiar with this kind of basic hymn. It is good for you to memorize such hymns, so that you can sing them everywhere and in every situation. If you can sing to the Lord like this, you can touch Him and enjoy Him all the time.

(2) You desire to grow

When you desire to grow in the Lord, you should sing a hymn like “O Jesus Christ, Grow Thou in Me.” Although it is not deep enough, it is still pure. It is good to sing it when you desire to grow:

*O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,  
And all things else recede;  
My heart be daily nearer Thee,  
From sin be daily freed.*

*Chorus*  
*Each day let Thy supporting might  
My weakness still embrace;  
My darkness vanish in Thy light,  
Thy life my death efface.*

The writer realized a daily need to be nearer to the Lord and a daily need to be freed from sin. This feeling that sin is not easy to get rid of is a common experience for those who desire to grow.

The hymn “The God-Man” describes the condition of your growth. It speaks of growing from “union” to “mingling” and eventually to “incorporation.” The last verse says:

*What a mystery! God builds Himself in me.  
He constitutes into me and lives in me.  
I lived myself and tried to obey God’s law.  
Now I am in God with divinity and humanity.*

From the union to mingling to incorporating, you and God abide in each other. Verse one says, “I was away from God. My spirit was dead and empty.” Verse two says, “I was in the world to pursue vain dreams.” Verse three says, “I was struggling and fighting by myself.” The last verse is, “I lived

myself and tried to obey God's law." When you grow from union to mingling, and then to incorporation, you can stay away from the world. You were away from God; now you are in God. You pursued vain dreams; now you enjoy God's riches and the divine experiences. When you sing "O Jesus Christ, Grow Thou in Me," you feel you need to grow. When you sing "The God-Man," you feel you are enjoying the spiritual fact.

(3) You know you are not worthy

"Lord, May Thy Blood Now Cleanse Me" is a very good hymn. It surely makes you have a lot of feelings. Let's look at verses one and two (without the chorus):

*Lord, may Thy blood now cleanse me,  
Wash all my sins away,  
That with Thy Holy Spirit  
Thou may anoint, I pray.  
My service, I confess, Lord,  
Is failure-full and weak;  
The filling of Thy Spirit  
To live for Thee I seek.*

*Oh, Lord, how dry my heart is,  
It yearns and pants for Thee;  
The filling of Thy Spirit  
Is now my fervent plea.  
Within the smitten Rock, Lord,  
I would entirely hide;  
Pour through Thy living water,  
Till I am satisfied.*

When the writer came to the Lord, he saw his weakness and failure. He said, "Lord, may Thy blood now cleanse me, wash all my sins away." If you have never had such an unworthy

feeling, you are still far away from the Lord. When you follow Him, one day you will say, “Lord, wash all my sins away.” Why? “That with Thy Holy Spirit, Thou may anoint, I pray.”

This hymn is very pure. It describes how those who love the Lord find out how helpless and powerless they are. The second verse says, “Oh, Lord, how dry my heart is, it yearns and pants for Thee.” I am afraid we don’t often have this feeling. After you follow the Lord for three or five years, you should love this hymn very much. You gradually see who you are and who the Lord is. And you see how He works in you.

(4) You know you are weak

Take “I Don’t Have Strength, My Lord.” (Note: this hymn has no official English translation.) Verse one says:

*I don’t have strength, my Lord,  
I cannot stand by myself alone.  
My weakness is a blessing,  
If I rely on You completely.*

*Chorus*

*In everything and every day, I need Your grace.  
I am helpless; may you manifest Yourself to me.*

Sometimes, you feel weak to the point that you doubt you can continue this journey. Today, you may bargain with the Lord, “I give You my time. What will You give me in return?” Eventually, you’ll see how weak you are and will tell the Lord, “How I need Your grace!” Because of weakness, you can tell Him, “In everything and every day, I need Your grace.” It is impossible to grow to the point that you don’t need His grace any more. Our weakness follows us lifelong. As long as you live, your weakness will be with you. Verse four is very good:



*I am lonely, my Lord.  
Without Your sweet visiting  
And secret presence,  
I don't have joy and perseverance.*

Without the Lord's secret presence, we cannot follow Him faithfully. Only an experienced Christian can write a hymn like this. Yet, though he is experienced, he still needs grace in everything and every day. He is weak without the Lord's strengthening. He says, "I am helpless. May You manifest Yourself to me!"

(5) You desire to flow out life

When you desire to flow out life, "How I Praise Thee, Precious Savior" is a good hymn to sing. Verse five is excellent:

*Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit  
Hearts that full surrender know;  
That the streams of living water  
From our inner man may flow.*

When I was young, I really loved this thought: "That the streams of living water from our inner man may flow." How high the value is!

The hymn "Must I Go, and Empty-handed" is also good. A brother was about to die, and he regretted that he had not brought one person to the Lord. Another saint wrote this hymn for him. Verse one says:

*"Must I go, and empty-handed,"  
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?  
Not one day of service give Him,  
Lay no trophy at His feet?"*

No one could write a hymn like this without ever bringing

one person to the Lord. The hymn is full of feeling. We should sing it more often to encourage saints to preach the gospel.

(6) You desire to have life through the word of God

The hymn “Break Thou the Bread of Life” is special. You cannot tell exactly why it is good, but every time you sing it, you touch the Spirit. Your spirit simply flows out when you sing it. I think the hymn is touching because the writer didn’t use it to “preach.” He simply presented the Bible as the “bread of life.” Verse one says, “Break Thou the Bread of Life, dear Lord, to me.” He asked the Lord to open up the Bible for him “as Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea.” Verse two says, “Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me.” When we read the word of God, our thoughts are redeemed. “Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art Love.” Verse three says:

*Oh, send Thy Spirit, Lord,  
Now unto me,  
That He may touch my eyes,  
And make me see;  
Show me the truth concealed  
Within Thy Word,  
And in Thy Book revealed  
I see the Lord.*

This verse shows us the function of the Word. It is very touching. The writer didn’t simply preach doctrine: “When you read the Bible, you are enlightened. You will be transformed.” Instead, through the hymn, he expressed these thoughts in a very inspirational way. Verse four says:

*Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord,  
To me, to me,  
As Thou didst bless the bread*

*By Galilee;  
Then shall all bondage cease,  
All fetters fall,  
And I shall find my peace,  
My All in all.*

In other words, when the truth is being lived out through me, all my bondage ceases and all my fetters fall. “And I shall find my peace, my All in all.” It just gives you a lot of feelings. I don’t remember one time that I’ve sung this hymn without any feeling. Sometimes, a very good hymn won’t give you any feeling because of the state of the congregation singing it. However, this doesn’t happen with this hymn. It is always fresh and full of feeling.

(7) You desire to have a deeper consecration

“Via Bethlehem We Journey” is one of the classic hymns. It was written by Margaret E. Barber. The first verse begins: “Via Bethlehem we journey, we whose hearts on God are set.” The whole hymn describes the life of the Lord. Verse three says:

*Via Galilee, we see Him!  
Stones are hurled, and curses hissed  
By the men who gather round Him,  
Has He not the pathway missed?  
No! unharmed the Savior passes,  
And this rough bit of the way  
We must travel, since like Jesus,  
Nothing can our purpose stay.*

“And this rough bit of the way we must travel, since like Jesus....” It tells you that your way of following Jesus will not be easy. Stones and curses are waiting for you. Verse five says, “Then the Cross! for via Calvary Every royal soul must go.” Calvary is the place where the Lord was nailed to the cross.

Those who love the Lord cannot but go through Calvary.  
“Here we draw the veil, for Jesus Only can the pathway show.”  
Verse six says:

*Then the grave, with dear ones weeping,  
Knowing that all life has fled;  
(Fellow-pilgrims, art thou numbered  
With the men the world calls dead?)  
Thence we rise, and live with Jesus,  
Throned above the world's mad strife,  
Gladly forfeiting forever,  
All that worldlings count as life.*

When I first sang this hymn, I didn't understand what this verse meant. Later, I realized that everyone who loves the Lord is buried in the grave. When your parents and your family see you, they cry, “Dead! Dead!” They don't have hope in you. If they still feel you are hopeful, your consecration has problems. Of course, when you give yourself to the Lord, your family will eventually see value. However, in the process, they shouldn't have any hope in you. They know all life has fled. You have happily given up so-called riches and life in the world. I like the last verse of the hymn:

*Just a few more miles, beloved!  
And our feet shall ache no more;  
No more sin, and no more sorrow,  
Hush thee, Jesus went before;  
And I hear Him sweetly whispering,  
“Faint not, fear not, still press on,  
For it may be ere tomorrow,  
The long journey will be done.”*

I have been wondering why the Lord raised up so many servants before Watchman Nee at the end of 19th century. For example, the Lord raised up M. E. Barber who

perfected Brother Nee. Why wasn't the work of the Spirit so manifested after Brother Nee? There were many great servants of the Lord in the 18th and 19th century. Their writings affect us so much today. Miss Barber's hymns are very deep. You can see how pure this hymn is. There is no sympathy toward self. She just wanted to follow the Lord. The way to follow is a deeper consecration. May we all follow the Lord in this way!

"Once It Was the Blessing" is also a hymn to help you consecrate yourself to the Lord more. The writer was A. B. Simpson. His hymns usually focus on Christ, helping you to give more to the Lord. Verse one says:

*Once it was the blessing,  
Now it is the Lord;  
Once it was the feeling,  
Now it is His Word;  
Once His gift I wanted,  
Now, the Giver own;  
Once I sought for healing,  
Now Himself alone.*

*Chorus  
All in all forever,  
Only Christ I'll sing;  
Everything is in Christ,  
And Christ is everything.*

This is a very good hymn. If you enjoy hymns by Simpson, you will be stable before the Lord, and your spiritual understanding will be deep enough to prevent you from being carried about.

(8) You desire to abide in the light

Consider "Remove My Covering, Lord." Verse one says:

*Remove my covering, Lord,  
That I may see Thy light,  
And be deceived no more,  
But all things see aright.*

*Chorus  
Oh, may Thy living light, Lord,  
Scatter all my night, Lord,  
And everything make bright, Lord,  
For this I pray to Thee.*

It says, “And be deceived no more, but all things see aright.” Christians always enjoy a little self-worship. When they have a good prayer, preach a good message, or give a good testimony, immediately they feel they are “Apostle Paul the second.” No! You must learn to abide in the light to know yourself, the Lord, His life, His way, His will, and His church. You need to long to be unveiled, to be made clear in everything, to be no more deceived, and to no longer adhere to your pride.

Let’s look at another hymn, “When I Am in the Natural Man.” Verse nine says:

*Whether I stay or move along,  
Whate’er I say, I’m always wrong!  
So weak am I and never strong,  
Nothing I do is right.*

Consider these phrases—“I’m always wrong” and “Nothing I do is right.” If you preach the gospel, you feel you are wrong. If you don’t preach the gospel, you feel wrong, too. When you give a testimony, you don’t feel right. If you don’t give a testimony, you don’t feel right, either. Don’t use this verse, however, as an excuse for not giving testimonies or preaching the gospel. When brothers ask you why you didn’t share, don’t say, “Whate’er I say, I’m always wrong!” The truth is,

you just didn't have any feeling. This hymn is not for excuses, but to portray an experience after you are enlightened by the Lord. Verse ten says:

*I want to pray, but faith have not,  
I fain would seek Thee as Thou art.  
Oh, canst Thou e'er renew my heart,  
Have mercy, Lord, on me!*

This hymn was written by Watchman Nee. Most hymn writers, even including M. E. Barber, didn't write these kinds of hymns. If you know how to partake of it, it is useful. If you don't, it will make you overly introspective. Brother Nee had a book called *Self-Knowledge and God's Light*. You shouldn't be introspective according to knowledge. You will only really know yourself when God's light enlightens you.

These two hymns can help you to know the Lord. When you sing "Remove My Covering, Lord," you will feel it teaches you how to remove the covering and to see the light. When you sing "When I Am in the Natural Man," you realize it is all about the experience. It gives you lots of feelings.

(9) You desire to be broken by the Lord

Take "First the Blood, And Then the Ointment." Verse one says:

*First the blood, and then the ointment,  
Cleansing, then anointing comes;  
If we pass not thru Golgotha,  
Ne'er to Pentecost we'll come.  
If the blood has never cleansed us,  
Ne'er the Spirit's pow'r we'll know,  
If for Christ we'd truly witness,  
Self-life to the Cross must go.*

*Chorus*

*Through the Cross, O Lord, I pray,  
Put my soul-life all away;  
Make me any price to pay,  
Full anointing to receive.*

This hymn references some examples in the Bible to show that you can only be filled with the Holy Spirit after experiencing the cross. Dear brothers, the cross is able to break you. How does the Lord break you with His cross? First, you are cleansed by the Lord. Then, you are smitten as the rock. You need to put yourself on the altar. You need to empty yourself like a vessel. And you must fall to the earth and die like a seed. This hymn, written by Watchman Nee, is very practical. The last verse says:

*Since it must be thus, I pray, Lord,  
Help me go the narrow way;  
Deal with pride and make me willing  
Thus to suffer, Thee t'obey.  
I for greater power pray not,  
Deeper death is what I need;  
All the meaning of the Cross, Lord,  
Work in me—for this I plead.*

I believe no Christian likes this verse. We all like to follow the Lord in a grand and spectacular way. However, the hymn tells us we must “deal with pride” and asks the Lord to “make me willing thus to suffer, Thee t'obey.” Most of Brother Nee’s hymns were written according to an inspiration, which can often be found in the song. This hymn was written according to the last sentence. It could have been spoken by a forefather who knew the inner life.

His hymn is very deep. I really like the line: “I for greater power pray not, Deeper death is what I need.” People don’t want this kind of life. We all pray for greater power, and we



take all kinds of ways. It is so easy for us to forget to carry our cross. Therefore the hymn says, “All the meaning of the Cross, Lord, Work in me—for this I plead.”

Another good hymn is “Let Us Contemplate the Grape Vine.” This hymn has sixteen verses, all about the experience of a grape vine. Verse one says:

*Let us contemplate the grape vine,  
From its life now let us learn,  
How its growth is fraught with suff’ring,  
Midst environment so stern;  
How unlike the untamed flowers  
Growing in the wilderness  
In a maze of wild confusion,  
Making patterns numberless.*

The Lord said, “*I am the true vine*” (John 15:1). What is the vine like? It is not like the untamed flowers that grow in the wilderness. If you don’t follow the Lord faithfully, you may make numberless patterns and even call them “ministry.” If you do desire to follow the Lord, He is going to work on you. Verses two through fourteen describe this working. It is not an easy process for us. Verse four says:

*Oh, how beautiful its verdure,  
Which in spring spreads o’er the field.  
From life’s energy and fulness  
Growth abundant doth it yield.  
Till it’s full of tender branches  
Twining freely everywhere,  
Stretching ‘gainst the sky’s deep azure  
Tasting sweetly of the air.*

Look how well you’ve grown! You are manifested in the church. You are a responsible one, and the elders mention you a lot. Yet the Lord would say, “Now, it is time to prune.”

Verse five:

*But the master of the vineyard  
Not in lenience doth abide,  
But with knife and pruning scissors  
Then would strip it of its pride.  
Caring not the vine is tender,  
But with deep, precision stroke  
All the pretty, excess branches  
From the vine are neatly broke.*

Are you good at preaching? Do you have many gifts? Just wait for the master with His knife and pruning scissors. Verse nine:

*Hands will pick and feet will trample  
All the riches of the vine,  
Till from out the reddened wine-press  
Flows a river full of wine.  
All the day its flow continues,  
Bloody-red, without alloy,  
Gushing freely, richly, sweetly,  
Filling all the earth with joy.*

You say, “Hallelujah! Life is still joyful.” The hymn writer goes on to say, “Wait a minute. It is not that easy.” Verse ten:

*In appearance now the grape vine  
Barren is and pitiful;  
Having given all, it enters  
Into night inscrutable.  
No one offers to repay it  
For the cheering wine that’s drunk,  
But ‘tis stripped and cut e’en further  
To a bare and branchless trunk.*

After one year, the vine needs to be cut to a bare and branchless trunk. Verse twelve:

*Winter o'er, the vine prepareth  
Fruit again itself to bear;  
Budding forth and growing branches,  
Beauteous green again to wear;  
Never murmuring or complaining  
For the winter's sore abuse,  
Or for all its loss desiring  
Its fresh off'ring to reduce.*

How excellent is the writing! Verse fifteen:

*Not by gain our life is measured,  
But by what we've lost 'tis scored;  
'Tis not how much wine is drunken,  
But how much has been outpoured.  
For the strength of love e'er standeth  
In the sacrifice we bear;  
He who has the greatest suff'ring  
Ever has the most to share.*

We all like to ask, "How much did I gain?" The Lord would ask, "How much did you lose?" This is our life! Dear brothers, do you believe this is your life? "He who has the greatest suff'ring ever has the most to share." Verse sixteen:

*He who treats himself severely  
Is the best for God to gain;  
He who hurts himself most dearly  
Most can comfort those in pain.  
He who suffering never beareth  
Is but empty "sounding brass";  
He who self-life never spareth  
Has the joys which all surpass.*

This hymn is very deep and full of feelings. The writer related the growth of the grape vine to our life, a life of following the Lord.

Brothers, you need to learn to have some hymns that help you meet the Lord at many different times. It is good for you to sing the whole hymn or even just a verse so that you can see the Lord. I hope we can all spend half an hour every day to pray, to talk to the Lord, to sing, to read the Bible, or to pray-read. Every day, we must have time with the Lord to fellowship with Him, so that we may be one with Him.

#### 4. Enjoying the Tabernacle of the Power of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 11–12, Paul testified that the power of Christ rested upon him because of his weaknesses. Why was he weak? It was actually because he lived for God, for God's economy, and for God's church. He testified: *"Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren"* (11:23–26).

Among these dangers, false brethren were perhaps the most dangerous. It is hard to understand what Paul meant by "false brethren." It should refer to those who don't really believe—they are not truly brothers. Here, however, Paul seemed to be referring to those who believed, but whose focus was not Christ. This is why they were the most hazardous peril for Paul to face. They had the same belief, but their focus was

not Christ. Thus, they *acted* like false brethren. Because they followed Paul wherever he went, Paul's life was very hard.

Paul and Peter had an agreement that Paul would go to the Gentiles and Peter would go to the Jews (Gal. 2:7). However, Paul always violated this agreement. He liked to go to synagogues to preach the gospel. When he finished preaching somewhere, immediately those false brethren would come. They told the Jews who had just believed in Jesus that they still had to be circumcised, to keep the festivals, to go to Jerusalem three times a year, etc.

In eternity, I'd like to ask Paul why he violated the agreement and went to synagogues. Perhaps he will answer, "It was easier to preach the gospel in the synagogues. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah. They were educated. I only needed to tell them, 'The Messiah has come. He is Jesus Christ.'" We can see that when he went to the Gentiles, like in Ephesus, it was not easy for him to preach. People argued while he was preaching. The fruit was not manifested. Of course, Paul's reasoning is my speculation. In any case, he was in dangers among false brethren.

Paul continued, "*I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure*" (2 Cor. 11:27). What an astonishing statement! All servants of the Lord should be prepared to live like this. It is a pity that we are not like Paul. We don't have his buoyant spirit. This is the reason why our work is not influential. We can see how high Paul's existence was and the value of his life! He didn't have a place to stay. He didn't have appropriate food and clothes. However, these things didn't hinder him from serving the Lord. We may say, "Paul was so overcoming!" He would answer, "Those things were nothing compared to discharging my burden."

He continued, "*Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches*" (11:28). This is not a small thing! A church was blessed. A church was

attacked. A church was established. A church was quivering. Paul cared for them all, and even more, his care was for the brothers. He said, *"Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?"* (11:29). He didn't say, "Who is weak that I don't rebuke? Who is led into sin that I don't condemn?" Brothers, if you truly have this verse in your heart, you are truly a servant of the Lord. Finally, Paul said, *"If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness"* (11:30).

The Lord was indeed satisfied with Paul. He was a treasure in the Lord's eyes. As a result, He gave Paul a thorn. God's work is special! We think God should take special care of a good servant like Paul. To us, God should have said, "Without Paul, there is not much work being done. Peter's personality is not reliable. John's soul is not big enough. It is so good that I have gained Paul." But God didn't say this. On the contrary, because Paul was so good, He gave Paul a thorn.

The thorn in Paul's flesh was a messenger of Satan, that Satan might buffet him in order that he might not be exceedingly lifted up. It could have been an illness, a weakness, or a particular shame. Paul said, *"Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'"* (12:8–9a). The Lord seemed to be saying, "You feel you are weak, but you are following Me! You feel you are weak, but you love Me! You feel you cannot continue, but you are consecrated to Me! You feel there is no way to go on, but you are laboring. How? I'd like to tell you: My power, My strength, is made perfect in weakness."

I remember a brother once shared in a meeting, "Praise the Lord! I fell again, and I told the Lord: Come, strength, come, so that I won't fall! Come, strength, come, so that I can love You! Come, strength, come, so that I can work for You!" We usually ask for this kind of strength. However, the power, or strength, in this verse indicates the Lord and His servant have a perfect incorporation. His servant says, "I have

nothing.” The Lord says, “I have everything.” His servant says, “I can do nothing.” The Lord says, “I can do everything.” His servant says, “I can do nothing. I am not for myself. I am for the Lord.” The Lord says, “I can do everything. I am not for Myself. I am for My servant.”

Dear brothers, have you seen this sweet relationship? This is what is described in this verse: *“For power is perfected in weakness.”* Therefore, Paul said, *“Most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (12:9b, NKJV). When you read church history, you will find out that there are not many brothers like Paul. Not many spiritual brothers boasted in their weaknesses. Yet, if you asked Paul, he would tell you that he was weak. He was special. He said, *“I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*

How do you know you are abiding in Christ? If you have Paul’s experience, you are abiding in Christ. His life was focused on the Lord. He lived for the church. His heart’s desire was one with God. All the brothers and sisters were his burden. When he carried this burden to the Lord, he felt weak. At such a time, the power of Christ rested upon him!

Servants of the Lord often have this experience. They feel very tired when they think about the many works to be done. Gradually, you will realize that in you, there are only weaknesses and limitations. Therefore, it is not you who does anything, but His power resting upon you does everything. No matter how tired you are, you know the Lord’s grace is with you. His power is resting upon you. You will never be without limitation, but His supply always surpasses our limitations.

Those who serve the Lord and abide in the Lord always feel that they are short, but that the Lord is perfect. They always feel that they are limited, but that the Lord is limitless. We serve the Lord, His church, and the saints in His limitlessness. This is the enjoyment of the tabernacling of the power of Christ.

## 5. All In Christ Are Yes.

Paul said, *“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us”* (2 Cor. 1:20). God has many promises. Do you want these promises? You have to gain Christ. All the promises of God in Him are “yes.” Without Christ, God’s promises are merely theory and teaching.

God gave Abraham promises. He gave Moses promises. He gave the Israelites promises. He also gave us promises through Jesus. There are many promises in the Bible. However, we must remember that without Christ, there is no reality of the promises. The reality comes from Christ. Through Him, all the promises are “yes” and “Amen.” When God desires to bless you, it is only through Christ we can say, “Yes, Amen.”

Christians need to learn to say, “Yes, Amen.” When people tell you that you are blessed, you need to say, “Yes, Amen!” You are strong, “Yes, Amen!” You love the Lord, “Yes, Amen!” The Lord will perfect you, “Yes, Amen!” How can you say so? It is because in Christ, all are “yes,” and through Him is our “Amen.” When you say “Amen,” God is glorified.

## 6. The Sketching of the Healthy Words

Second Timothy 1:13 says, *“Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”* “Sound words” can also be translated as “healthy words.” Both are good translations. When we say you have sound physical health, it means you are healthy. Yet health is comparative. I am seventy years old now. I often pant when I walk, but doctors still say my health is good. If a young man were panting when he walked, doctors would say he doesn’t have sound health. There is no absolute standard for sound health. What are “sound words” or “healthy words?”



They are the words that feed you, encourage you, and help you grow in many different stages of your growth.

Timothy heard a standard of sound words from Paul. “Standard” can also be translated as “form,” “pattern,” or “outline.” This word indicates something like a sketch or a diagram. This whole phrase could therefore be understood as “a sketch of sound, healthy words.”

Dear brothers, have you ever thought that there is something in healthy words like a sketch? I think “sketch” is a good translation because it indicates that the words have become yours. For example, imagine I have been with a brother for ten years. In the beginning, I may know he has lots of virtues. Gradually, I would find out he also has lots of shortcomings. Then later, I would realize that his shortcomings are his virtues. This is a sketch. Ten years ago, I had a sketch of this brother. After these ten years, I know him more and more. The sketch becomes clearer and clearer. Many details have been added. Yet I believe ten years later, the sketch will be even richer!

Every time Paul spoke to Timothy, he sketched something into him. How wonderful this is! Not many of us allow the Lord to sketch His words in us. There is a saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The Bible should become a picture in us. Without this sketch in us as a resource, the time we serve the Lord is wasted.

Dear brothers, if I were you, I wouldn’t waste my life without such a sketch. If you keep on wasting your time, you will eventually stand up in a meeting to say something against a brother in order to survive. This is because you won’t have your own resources to stand through the storms. This is also the reason I keep advising brothers to develop their own ministry rather than just their preaching skill. If you only focus on preaching, you need a platform. Since you need a platform, you eventually have to take a stand against someone else; otherwise, you will lose the platform. Are you willing to lose your platform? How can you survive without a platform?

Brothers, we don't live for a platform. We follow the Lord. We cannot live a life for a platform. We should be restful to stand with others or to abandon our platform to go to another place. There shouldn't be compromise. Your compromise will simply sacrifice brothers and sisters. You shouldn't sacrifice them and argue that it is for the "general interest." We are not for general interest. We are only for the interest of Christ. If you compromise out of consideration of the general interest, you are playing politics. This is why we must learn to have the sketch of sound words in us.

What Paul said to Timothy became a picture in Timothy that controlled his life. We all should be controlled by such a picture. When you talk about the Lord and God's economy, you should have this picture in you. The picture is not from you yourself. It is constituted in you. It is not simply from one verse or one chapter of the Bible. It is from the whole Bible. The whole Bible becomes a picture, a sketch, in you.

Someone may ask you which Bible verse you like best. This is a strange question. It is just like asking which part of your wife you like best. If you ask what my wife is like, I could answer, "She is lovely." However, this word, "lovely," is actually a large picture with so many details I know and so many details to still fill in! We like to say which verse we like best. However, what is more important is that the words of God have become a picture in you. Do you have the sketch of the words of God? This picture controls your life!

Dear brothers, if you have the picture in you, you will say, "I have seen a picture. Because of this vision, I cannot help but to give my life to God." It does not matter if you call it a "form" or a "pattern" or an "outline." "The form of sound words" means Paul's words were a picture. Paul spoke the words of God, and Timothy received a picture that controlled him. This picture is what we call vision. Through the words of God, we see a vision. The vision controls our life.

Now, we know that the words we hear must become a picture to us. We must have a whole picture regarding

God, the Triune God, God's Son, His being, His doing, His achievement, His economy, His operation, His eternal purpose, and the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. With this picture, we will feel that the Christian life is so valuable!

More than that, this picture becomes our commitment. When people are in love, they have an inner picture of the one they love. When you think of the one you love, you feel that he or she is so lovely. However, if the two people are separated for too long, the picture will become blurry, and the commitment can be easily lost. An author once said that the best way to break up a young couple is to separate them. Such separation will cause the inner picture to disappear. Why do I tell you this? I'd like to advise you to continually enter into the picture that God gave you. If you depart from it, it will grow fuzzy and you will lose it. If a Christian doesn't pray or go to meetings, after half a year, he will lose the vision. However, the wonderful thing is that when he returns, the vision is also able to come back.

## 7. Guard the Treasure Which has been Entrusted to You.

Second Timothy 1:14 says, "*Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*" Paul had committed Timothy with the healthy, pure, excellent, transcendent, and perfect words. He asked Timothy to guard this treasure—the picture in him—by the Holy Spirit. The words that were sketched in him became his commitment. Brothers, the more you see, the higher becomes your commitment.

All spiritual servants of the Lord are burdened for the healthy and pure words. The words are a complete perfect picture in them. They cannot depart from the words of God. They must abide in the words because the words are committed to them by the Lord.

Their commitment is in the words. These words are the deposit in you, and you must grow interest out of it. How do you do it? First, you must abide in the Holy Spirit. Second, you must have a sweet relationship with the Lord. God to you is mercy and grace; you to Him are faith and love. Paul said that to guard the treasure, you must be in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:13–14).

How do you know you have a good relationship with the Lord? You must be able to answer, “The words of God are a picture in me.” Today, at least you should have a simple picture: “the blood of the Lord Jesus has cleansed all my sin; He died for me so that I can live for Him.” All Christians should at least have this picture. This is a basic picture, and it is your deposit so that you live for Him. Your living for the Lord is the deposit so that the Lord may grow interest. This is the mutual sweet relationship. You have a vision from the Lord, and you give it back to the Lord as the deposit so that He may bring you higher visions.

Dear brothers, you must tell the Lord, “I’d like to give my life to You, and You may use the deposit to grow interest. I will use the interest to deposit more so that You may grow even more interest. My life is for growing and expanding and deepening! I want to keep this wonderful picture from You in the faith and love which are in Christ, through the Spirit who dwells in me, so that I may live for You all my life!”

## 8. Full of Assurance of the Being and the Work of Christ.

The word of life fills us with assurance of the being and the work of Christ. Second Timothy 1:12 says, “*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*” How does He guard it? Verse 13 says, “*Retain the standard of sound words*

*which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*" We have said that the word "standard" can also be translated as "form," "pattern," or "outline."

Gaining such a picture takes some skill. He who follows the Lord can't depend on one verse or one book in the Bible alone. He must have the whole Bible as a picture. Paul told the Galatians, "*You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?*" (Gal. 3:1). When we see the picture of the Lord crucified, our life and our existence become controlled by this portrait. Paul told Timothy to retain the standard of sound words, like a picture, that he had heard from him.

Let me give you an illustration. A street in a city is like a verse in the Bible. A neighborhood is like a book in the Bible. Nonetheless, if you want to properly live in that city, you must have a picture of the whole city. This is what I mean, that the words of God must become a form, a pattern, a picture to you. When I mention a certain city, you may have a clear picture. You should know where the major highways are. If you don't, you will have a hard time getting around. If you have a clear picture of the city, you know where the museums, the libraries, the restaurants, and the parks are.

Dear brothers, God's words are a picture. On the one hand, God speaks to us day by day and little by little. He does speak through a verse or even a sentence. On the other hand, God also speaks through the whole Bible. What Paul spoke to Timothy were sound words. They were a sketch, a blueprint. Darby translated "standard" as "outline." The New King James translated it as "pattern." Our living, our walking, and our work should be according to the words of God. No one can abide in Christ without the words of God. No one can abide in Christ without familiarity with the words of God. No one can abide in Christ without allowing the words of God to live in him or her!

One time, there was a television show about Shanghai. It featured good restaurants with excellent food, good prices,

and wonderful atmospheres. However, I can't remember any of them. If the show had been about restaurants in Cleveland, however, for sure I would remember them. Why is that? I live in Cleveland. I have an inner picture of Cleveland, but I don't have such a picture of Shanghai. Brothers, we all need to have a spiritual picture. We all know that the Lord meets our needs, but most of us don't have a picture of the words of God. We don't have the true understanding, the true enjoyment, and the true partaking of the words of God. Most Christians only know there is a Bible and there are words of God in the Bible. However, these words are not functioning in them, just as I can't remember where the good restaurants in Shanghai are. The television show had no effect on me, and unfortunately, the Bible has no effect on so many Christians.

If the Bible doesn't have an effect on you, then you don't have a good relationship with the words of God. Paul told Timothy to retain, or hold fast, the sketch of the healthy words of God. For us, this picture will make it easy to abide in Christ and to follow Him. The Bible has painted the whole picture of God's words for us. We just need to enjoy it, partake of it, and hold fast to it!









