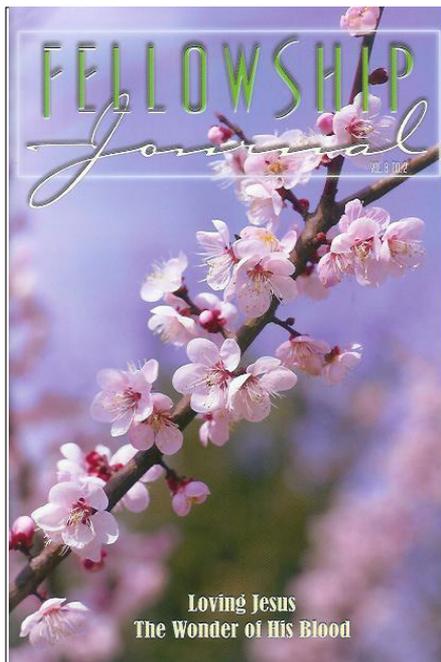


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Jesus Lovers
Training Messages

The Blood
of Christ

The Layers of
Covering Upon the
Tabernacle

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Report from the Recent Sisters' Conference at Ashland Woods

Earlier in the winter – when the snow was just beginning to fall – over 100 sisters from about 14 localities gathered at Ashland Woods for a weekend of blessing.

Following brother Titus' charge from the previous year to take responsibility for our own gatherings, several sisters acted on their heart-felt burden to plan such an event. A few gathered during the Labor Day conference to pray and fellowship about how to carry a weekend for sisters. As several sisters offered what they felt they could do, a basic design emerged. With several localities bearing various pieces of the responsibility, we realized the burden didn't have to rest on one or two sisters. What had been only a dream could become a reality as we all worked together.

The November weekend began Friday evening with the young sisters from the 10-month labor leading a time of singing. They also shared briefly from their experience in the labor. This was an encouragement to everyone as well as a reminder to pray for the young people in the labor.

Several sisters from Pittsburg shared on Saturday morning on how they find Christ in their daily life and in their church life. They began with a light-hearted song, "Getting to Know You," and then went deeper to share from their hearts the reality of the Lord in their lives. Saturday afternoon was a combination of free time – with opportunities for art, exercise, music or rest – followed by a time of fellowship led by Indianapolis and Columbus. Several sisters shared how God supplied them through rough storms, driving them to fight together in prayer. As a result, there has been growth as they have reached out in new ways. Saturday evening sisters from Cleveland led us to read several portions and share regarding the oneness of the Body. We were reminded that the basis of our oneness is Christ Himself. Our time together on the Lord's Day began with small groups meeting to consider several scriptures related to sisters – how they served in the New Testament. This was a precious reminder of our uniqueness in the body; our special portion which is needed for the body to function properly. This was followed by a corporate meeting led by sisters from Willoughby - a time full of praise, worship and testimonies which left everyone with a feeling of awe at what the Lord had done among us.

Mealtimes were joyously noisy – a wonderful buzz of conversation, laughter and fellowship. Several brothers blessed us by cooking for us and serving us in the kitchen, freeing every sister to enjoy the weekend with no kitchen responsibility. What a blessing!

It was a joy to experience the enlarged functioning of so many sisters. We hope there will be more gatherings – large and small – to strengthen and encourage sisters to pursue the Lord and care for His Body. - *D.S.*

Jesus Lovers Training

January 15 - 18, a number gathered at the Ashland Woods Fellowship Center near Sullivan, Ohio, to pursue the matter of becoming life-long lovers of the Lord. A number of brothers shared on various topics. These messages convey our brother Titus Chu's portion of that time on the matter of pursuing and gaining Christ in love.

MESSAGE ONE

JOHN'S DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

We may say we love Jesus and that we love God, but do we really know who He is? In the Bible we find many portions that tell us of God's doings, accomplishments and process, but verses that refer to who He really is are rare. The three succinct statements concerning who God is are all to be found in John's writings.

GOD IS SPIRIT

For the sake of those who need the gospel, John recorded Jesus' statement, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in reality" (John 4:24). In other words, if any human being wants to enter into the way by which he or she may meet, experience, enjoy or express God, that person must realize that there is no way to do so apart from the Spirit. Apart from the Spirit, there is no gospel. Apart from the Spirit, we have no way to have the reality of the Creator or of the Savior, for He is Spirit. God is Spirit!

This is a very simple statement, but extremely profound. We must realize that our entire Christian life is a matter of Spirit. Without Spirit, we lose everything. Without being in spirit, or without the move of the Spirit, or without the experience of the Spirit, we cannot have God, work with God, or walk with God. To such a person, God is distant.

We must realize that to love Jesus is not only a matter of the emotions—to love Jesus is primarily a spiritual matter, because we have a spirit. We have a regenerated spirit; God has made us alive in spirit. Now we must abide in spirit where we may be mingled one spirit with the Lord. "Spirit" is the reality and substance of all spiritual matters. We must live in spirit, walk

in spirit, and labor in spirit. When we are defeated, it is the Spirit that restores us. When we experience the Lord's presence, it is the Spirit that sustains it.

What is wrong with so many Christians today? And what is wrong with so many of us? It is that we take so many things as "things," rather than realizing everything related to Christ is a matter of spirit. What is the Bible? The Lord said, "The words I speak unto you are spirit..." (John 6:63). What is the church life? The church life is a spiritual life.

Among some cultures the church life becomes more complicated simply because the members love each other according to their "warm" culture rather than in spirit. In such places you may be impressed with how much the members seem to love each other, but at the same time you may feel discouraged due to the fact they are not in spirit. It is the Spirit that has poured out the love of God in our hearts. Apart from the Spirit, there is no reality of love. Thus as we speak on the topic of "Jesus lovers," we must be clear that this love is not an emotional love, but a spiritual one. It is way beyond natural love or anything we have ever sensed or enjoyed in the human realm. To love Jesus Christ is altogether a spiritual thing, for God is Spirit. God's essence is Spirit. Of what is God composed? Spirit. Who is God? Spirit.

GOD IS LOVE

The apostle John made a second statement, which was that God is love. God being Spirit has to do with His person; God being love has to do with His nature. If you do not enjoy His person, how could you have His nature? And, if you do not express God's nature, how can you say you have God's person? God is love and God is Spirit. If you say that you have the Spirit and thus have God, remember that there must be the experience of love. If you claim to have the spiritual element and yet are devoid of the nature, I would doubt whether your claim were genuine.

I have met those who practice tongue-speaking, and are possessed by it to the same degree that we seem to be possessed by truth. In other words, every time they see someone, they want to lay hands on that person so that person might be "filled in spirit" (Eph. 5:18), whereas every time many from among us see someone, they want to convince that person with our truth! (Has this not been the case among us? Many charismatics would say, "If you do not speak in tongues, you are not part of us," where many among us would say, "If you do not speak our truth, you are not part of us." How is this different?) When we declare we are of the Spirit, and yet are without love, can we truly say such a thing? If there is no love, there is no Spirit.

God's being Spirit has to do with His person; God's being love has to do with the nature of His person. Thus if you say, "I have God; I enjoy God; I

receive God” and so on, you also have to be able to testify that as you have God, enjoy God, and receive God, that love has become your substance, for when you enjoy God, love becomes your reality. Love and Spirit are expressions of one thing in two aspects. God is Spirit and God is love. His person is Spirit and His nature is love. When you say, “Lord, I receive You!” the Spirit comes. When you say, “Lord, I have You!” love comes. Thus, whenever someone says, “I have the Lord,” and yet has not love, you know something is wrong. And, if someone says, “I have received the Lord,” and yet has not the Spirit, you likewise know something is wrong.

GOD IS LIGHT

John provides one more statement concerning God, and that is that God is light (1 John 1:5). There are many things related to the divine attributes, but the vast majority are adjectives. For instance, God is holy; God is righteous; God is mighty and so on. These all are attributes that point to His person. There are only three statements in the Bible that explain God by way of apposition: God is spirit; God is love; and God is light. These are succinct statements that define our one God in three aspects. When you have God, you have Spirit. When God’s nature is experienced by you, you have love. When God operates in you, light comes forth.

EXPERIENCING GOD AS SPIRIT, LOVE AND LIGHT

God’s person is Spirit; God’s nature is love; and God’s expression in operation is light. When God works, He is light. When you enjoy Him, He is love. When you take Him in, He is Spirit. A healthy Christian can never be divorced from these three things. You receive the Lord as Spirit, then you begin to enjoy how marvelous His love is, and you begin to live in light. When you say you really enjoy the Lord and that your spirit is filled with Christ, love comes. When you say you really enjoy love and abide in love, light comes. This is our experience. When you are somewhat dead, you need the Spirit; when you are somewhat alive, love comes; and when you really enjoy love, you often have to confess due to the shining of the Lord as light. As you contact the Lord, firstly the Spirit comes, which means God Himself is coming in and becoming real to you. As He becomes real to you, you begin to enjoy His riches and His great love to you. As this goes on, light comes in and causes us to realize many things about ourselves and about the Lord.

When you are in the enjoyment of love, your arguments evaporate, and you feel you are right with everyone. As the light comes in, you realize your own shortcomings, and that it is you yourself who is wrong, if anyone is wrong. When light comes, it kills as well as exposes. Love nourishes, while light kills. The more you abide in love, the more you are nurtured and nourished by Christ. You just sense that the Lord is unspeakably marvelous. When light comes, there is no accusation, but only exposing. The shining

light then takes care of what it exposes.

Many people who smoke want to give up cigarettes after they are saved, but that is not necessarily due to the Lord's shining; it may be due to their sense of what is ethical. It is not until light comes that something really happens. It is not that you have to give up cigarettes; it is that the power of cigarettes is done away with. Something called light comes in to kill whatever is not one with the Lord.

Remember that, when you love the Lord Jesus, you must know who this person is! This person is the complete God, who is Spirit for you to be saved and for you to enter into all the time. This very Spirit becomes a realm for you to live in, abide in, walk in, fight in, and strive within for your own growth and for you to strive for the Lord's testimony. These are all matters in the realm of the Spirit.

If someone were to ask, "What is the content of this realm?" you would have to answer, the content of this realm is love. As we, day by day, abide in love and live in love, so that our life is a life of love among all our brothers and sisters, the issue of this content will be light. On the one hand, light kills all the negative matters, and on the other hand, it becomes an element that cannot be hidden! The Lord told us, "You are the light of the world" and "A man who kindles a light does not hide it under a small vessel. He then says a city set upon a hill cannot be hidden. The Lord doesn't want to hide you. He wants the light of this city to shine forth. How shall this happen? By all the lamps being placed upon a lampstand. When the Lord enlightens you, you become the light element of the brothers and sisters. The Lord continued by saying, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Thus the light kills all the darkness. When light comes, all the dark elements have to disappear. At the same time, the light shouldn't be contained or restricted, but rather it should shine forth on the lampstand. In other words, once we become light, we should not allow the matter of our living to occupy us; rather we should put ourselves into the church life, where anything of light we possess becomes a help to others. In this way, the church eventually becomes that city that is built upon a mountain.

THE PLACE OF JOHN'S MINISTRY

John was very interesting. He spoke of the veterans in the church life. He was possibly born around 10 AD and grew up with Jesus. He probably didn't really know who Jesus was, other than that He was very special. Then, one day, he heard John the Baptist say, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) At that point he certainly became clear that Jesus was the Savior. John was someone whom the Lord loved, and he loved the Lord. At the last supper, he was the only one who was so

privileged to lay his head on Jesus' bosom. He was also the only one of Jesus' disciples who was present at the cross. Perhaps others became jealous of John for this seemingly preferential treatment! Peter even asked about him when Jesus met them by the sea, to which Jesus replied, "If he remains until I come, what is that to you?" Thus the word went around that John would not die, and indeed he did live beyond the other apostles, including Paul. He became an elder in Ephesus, where Paul had labored. That church must have been in existence for thirty or forty years by that time, so it was an "old" church. Ephesus must have seen many servants come and go since the days Paul had raised it up. No doubt Barnabas and others had been there, and possibly Peter as well. James' influence was also surely exerted there. The situation in Ephesus must have been very complicated. The generation that had been raised up had passed through all kinds of things. This was what John faced in Ephesus.

A Jesus-lover must be very careful to treasure the great two things Peter and Paul represented while not being possessed by them. Peter's ministry was a ministry of giving birth and revival. Great things happened when Peter preached in the early days of the church life. Thousands were saved as Peter preached! That had to be something wonderful to remember. There was a lack in the matter of truth, however, and that allowed James to reintroduce what the saints had been freed from. James was Jesus' own brother, which surely must have helped him gain his status! James took over the situation in Jerusalem, but Paul rose up and said, "Let's look at the truth!"

Thus the second great servant after Pentecost was the apostle Paul. He released the clear and high truth of God's new covenant. He was the one who understood the mysteries of God and who revealed to the saints the fact that they, too, were in the heavenlies! How rich Paul was in revelation, in experience, and in labor! No one is able to compare to him when it comes to revelations and labors. These two great servants, along with James, preceded John, and John was surely clear about their labor and influence.

In Ephesus, a number of the saints had probably been saved for thirty years by the time John came to labor there. Some may have even moved there from Jerusalem after having seen the great things that happened when the church was first established there. Others would have known Paul and would have been captured by the high truths he imparted.

John's word was, "We are not for reviving a great gospel work, nor are we merely for high truth. We are for the reality of Christ!" This is why John sweetly began his first epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled...the Word of life."

He does not speak about a great work or high truths; he writes, "How real is your Christ to you? I have handled Him. He is not a theory or a

movement to me. I have Christ in such a real way, and that is what I want for you also. My only concern is how I might help you to have such a Christ as I have discovered and possess.” This is how he introduces his epistle. Paul never introduced any of his epistles in such a way. While he could boast in the honor of being one sent out by Christ with a ministry for the Lord’s testimony, John could write, “Well, you have gone through a lot. You have experienced the ‘good old days’ and you say you love Christ and the church. Let me ask you just one thing, though. How real is your Christ to you?” John could announce that he himself had experienced Christ firsthand, and that he still was! This experience was what he sought to bring the saints into.

JOHN WAS ONE WHO HAD HEARD, SEEN, LOOKED UPON AND HANDLED THE WORD OF LIFE

In this one verse we actually find four stages of growth in life. First of all, growth comes by hearing. Secondly, it comes by seeing. Third, it comes by focusing! If you were to come up to me on the street and gaze at me intensely, I would feel embarrassed and wonder what was wrong! You always focus, however, upon the one you love. To gaze intently at him or her is not something improper, for you can never gaze enough at the object of your love. No matter how much you look, you never feel you have “finished”. Parents look upon their children with such a gaze, for their children *are* their focus.

When you say, “I love Jesus,” are you merely hearing Him, are you seeing Him, or are you looking upon Him? If you do not look upon Him, no matter how much you love Him, you can only love Him that much. It is when you look upon Him that you realize, “O my! My Lord really possesses unsearchable riches!” From every angle you look at Him, you will be surprised. You will wonder how you could ever suitably express His preciousness. Considering His person, His process, His work, His salvation, His operation.... each is so marvelous! All this, however, must come from your focusing.

Many Christians, after many years, only “just” love Jesus, and nothing more, because they have never truly looked upon Him. They only have heard Him and in their heart have seen something, but they don’t see who Jesus really is, because they never really looked upon Him.

John could say that not only he had heard, seen, and looked upon Jesus as the Word of life—he had even *handled* Him. To look upon someone is to take in that person’s beauty. To handle that person is to become part of that person’s operation and work. Jesus says to us, “If you really love Me, don’t just hear of Me; don’t just see Me. Look upon Me, and even handle Me! How can we handle Him? He is the Word of life. He is life. When you handle Him, you handle life.

This life is a purposeful element. This life has in view a goal it is seeking to obtain. As the Word of life, Christ has the life-operation. When you have life-element with life-operation, you are a person full of purpose. He has His economy, His purpose, His way, His dispensing, His doing... all this is for us to look upon and to handle.

We can all say we love the Lord, and that we are His lovers. But can we really say who He is? This is why John sought to take the saints out of the sphere of developing a work. (In his writing, it seems he doesn't care at all for doing a work; it only seems he cares for the saints.) Not only does John seek to bring the saints out of a work; he even seeks to get the saints out of a lot of teaching. John actually gives us the most profound teaching, yet without giving out teaching! God is love; God is light; love one another... are these teachings? Paul could write, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Is there not a difference between Paul's teaching and John's? Paul was dispensing all kinds of teachings, while John made it simpler. John simply talked about the One he loved as someone he heard, saw, looked upon, and handled. Surely John knew what He was doing, because He was not only life, but even the Word of life to John. (Life denotes who He is from the beginning; Word of life denotes what He desires to accomplish, and His process.)

John didn't want to get the saints excited by bringing them into a great work, and he did not want to impress them with high revelations. His only concern was whether or not the saints had such a marvelous Christ as he had. He had Christ as someone he heard, saw, looked upon, and handled, even as the Word of life. Knowing Christ in such a way granted John so much rest as he witnessed all Christ's doing. These things provide the base for a healthy Jesus-lover. Jesus-lovers love Jesus, not His work or the teachings concerning Him. They love Jesus Himself. John made it very clear that if we want to love Jesus, then we must not only hear Him and only somewhat see Him; we must look upon Him and handle Him, realizing the life-element in Him and the operation in the life-element. This is how the Jesus-lover advances.

MESSAGE TWO

By the time the apostle John's ministry came to the fore—which we may say represents the present stage of our own Christian experience—the stages of the initial mighty works (represented by Peter) and the truth's unveiling (represented by Paul) had passed. John recognized at that point that what was needed was not to engage the saints again in great works of power or in the teachings, but rather into substantiating the Christ they had received and loved in their experience.

John made it clear from the beginning of his epistle that he was telling them something with eternal value when he wrote, "That which was from the beginning..." This eternally valuable thing John wrote of was actually a Person he referred to as the Word of life, someone he had heard, seen, looked upon, and even handled with his own hands.

To handle with the hands indicates to be joined with in interactions. You never end up marrying someone you never held hands with! After initially hearing and seeing that person, and then looking upon him or her, you will eventually want to become involved with that person in whatever that person is doing. That is what is represented by the hand's handling. When speaking of the Lord, it spiritually means that whatever the Lord is after, you are also after, and whatever the Lord desires to do, you also desire to do. The term "Word of life" has to do with the economy of that life, so to handle the Word of life means to become deeply involved with that life-economy. The Lord's purpose, eternal goal, operation, dispensing and economy are in life.

John's statement that God is love is found in 1 John 4:7. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." The love we have to the brothers is of God, and it is a proof that we have God. In verse 8 and 10-11, it states, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ... we also ought to love one another."

The Spirit Is God's Person and Love is the Nature of His Person

First John 4:13 states, "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." Recall that John records Jesus' word that God is Spirit, and he also writes that God is love. The Spirit is the beginning and the Spirit is the substance, because God is Spirit. Love is His nature. When you enjoy God as the Spirit, the nature comes out so that you begin to love the brothers. As this Spirit abides in you, you show love, and there is a testimony that God abides in us and that His love is perfected in us.

There is no spiritual matter in which you can by-pass the Spirit, for apart from the Spirit we have no God. If we have the Spirit, however, who God is becomes manifested, and that is love. And when you are really exercised in such a love, it is a proof that God is very much with you. This is why verse 12 says, that no one has seen God at any time, but if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. "Here we know that we abide in Him and He in us because He has given us His Spirit." He is repetitious to remind us that apart from the Spirit, there is no spiritual thing. Secondly, when you have the Spirit, the nature of the Spirit will come to you, which is love, and you will love your brothers. When you love your brothers, that is testimony that you are abiding in Him and He becomes your abode, and

God's love is perfected in you. It seems John is saying that all the success, truth, and work are not as crucial as loving the brother beside you. It seems that what He cares about is very different from what we think.

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:14-16). John here is talking about the same thing from different angles.

THE SECRET OF ABIDING: TO PRACTICE ALONG FOUR LINES

1. PRAYING, INTERCEDING, GIVING THANKS

I want to share with you the secret of abiding, how you can practice a life of abiding. There are four lines: One is prayer; one is the hymns; one is the Word, and one is the line of your self-exercise. Formerly, prayer was the only line. Paul wrote, “In nothing be anxious, but in... prayer and supplication with thanksgiving” (Phil 4:6). Then God will give you peace beyond your understanding. The first rule given to us by Paul is prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving. In turn, you will have a rich experience of the Lord's presence, which Paul refers to as “peace”. The term Paul uses indicates that your experience of peace will be such that you cannot believe it.

Prayer is not intercession, based on Paul's use of the words in this verse. When we ask someone to pray for us, it usually means that we want them to remember us in prayer by way of intercession. Paul, however, makes a distinction between prayer and supplication, or intercession. Prayer is to simply speak to the Lord. The Lord upon the mountain prayed the entire night to God. I do not believe that prayer involved intercession regarding specific people such as Peter, Judas, and so on. I believe it was fellowship. He spent a good time with God so He could be so one with God in carrying out what God had in His heart. If we do not eventually establish such a life of intimacy with the Lord in which you enjoy the Lord's presence, your Christian life will be very limited. It is not something difficult, however. I would like to show you how anything that happens to you, pleasing or difficult, is a base for the development of your fellowship. If you can spend some real time before the Lord with so much you want to tell Him concerning yourself, your family, your schooling, your labor... if you can spend so much time before the Lord in all these things, you will receive so much nourishment!

Usually prayer leads to supplication. A good time of prayer should lead to intercession, or supplication. The more you are with the Lord, the more sensitive or delicate you become. You begin to realize that the Lord needs this or that. Thus, interceding comes forth. And, of course, you thank the Lord eventually, for even though the result is not yet seen, you know that the

Lord has been with you in your prayer.

Thus, you have a thankfulness for the Lord's person, His presence, His leading, the environment, and even all the things the Lord has allowed to happen to you, or that you are going through. Those three things—prayer, intercession, and giving thanks—should bring you a real joyfulness. All Christians should learn to be this joyful by practicing these three things!

2. MEMORIZING, READ-PRAYING, AND PRAY-READING THE BIBLE

Furthermore, we have the Bible. The Lord told us that the words He spoke to us were Spirit and were life. The Bible is a book of truth, not in the way of doctrine or imagination, but in the way of Spirit and life.

China had Confucius. His teachings were really very good, and helped China to survive four thousand years as a country. Prior to him, China didn't have much in the way of civilization. Those who came later to conquer China were eventually swallowed up by his teaching. There was another person named Lao Tze, which means "old man". His teaching was very obscure. He taught that anything that could be spoken didn't have much value. When he spoke of creation, he said that nothing was the beginning of everything, and existence came in to produce everything. Out of his teaching came the Tao, which is very mystical. The Lord is very practical, however. He didn't teach people ethics like Confucius, and He did not give people mystical teachings that made them wild in their imagination. The words He spoke to mankind were Spirit and were life.

How precious thus is the Bible! Among all the books that you can hold in your hand, only of this one can you say, "What I am holding is Spirit, and what I am holding is life." You are not merely holding something called a Bible, for the Bible is Spirit and the Bible is life. Thus if you come to the Bible without receiving Spirit and life, you have missed the mark. If someone speaks from the Word and you have not received Spirit and life, it likely was due to the fact that person did not take the Bible as Spirit and life, but rather as some material for a lecture, or perhaps for a kind of inspirational talk.

When you come to the Bible, try not to merely read it, but memorize it! Memorizing is the best means to exercise your spirit over the Word. When you memorize any portion of the Word, you will be surprised how much life fills you.

Secondly, learn to read-pray the Word. This is to simply read the Word, and whenever you touch anything as you read, whether a word or a phrase or a verse or a section, you turn it to prayer. Different people will pray differently based upon what touches them as they read. There is nothing of religious effort, it is simply a matter of praying whatever leaps out at you as you read. As you touch the Lord's presence, gradually you will know how to

advance into another realm as the Lord leads you in your prayer. In such experiences, you grow.

The third way to handle the Word as Spirit and as life is to pray-read. We are told that all Scripture is God-breathed. Therefore any verse you come to contains life. This is based upon the principle of exercise. As you exercise your spirit and use the Bible to release yourself, by taking its words as the substance of your releasing, you “pray-read”. Simply strongly speak the Word and amen it!

So, as you come to the Word, learn to memorize, learn to read-pray, and learn to pray-read. Exercise yourself in these practices.

3. CALLING, SIGHING AND GROANING

Thirdly, besides prayer/interceding/thanksgiving and memorizing/read-praying/pray-reading, you must learn to call, to sigh, and to groan. A. B. Simpson has a hymn that refers to the believer’s breathing out and breathing in, for he was very clear that the spiritual life was related to how a person exercised properly before the Lord.

Paul, when he was Saul, went forth to arrest whoever called upon the name of the Lord. You do not have to be very loud; you can also be very tender. Such a calling establishes a very good relationship between you and the Lord. Secondly, sighing, or groaning, is another means of exercising. (In Greek, these refer to the same word.) Sighing before the Lord is often simply a matter of breathing something out before the Lord. While calling brings healthy things in, sighing allows what is heavy within you to come out before the Lord.

I knew a brother who spent much time groaning as he lay prostrate before the Lord. Afterwards, he would rise up and his face would be glowing, for everything in him had been poured out. Learn to groan from the deepest part of your being, even if just for a minute or so.

I encourage you all to practice these things. Spend time in the hymns, in speaking to the Lord, in the Word, and in breathing Him. No one’s life will be smooth. You will confront many things. Will you be able to go through them and still maintain your relationship with the Lord? I believe these exercises will be of great help.

MESSAGE THREE

THE FOURTH LINE: OUR EXERCISE TO ABIDE IN LOVE

Today we come to the matter of abiding in love, which we began in the previous message in 1 John 4:16...”And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love...” Right after he wrote this, that God is

love, he wrote that “he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him..” In other words, to know that God is love is one thing, but to apply this loving God is another.

To know God is love can become theoretical and doctrinal; to apply God as love requires your practice and exercise so that you might abide in this God who is love itself.

To love God, humanly speaking, is impossible. This is why all the world’s religions teach people to worship rather than to love God. Buddhists worship an idol, but they do not love that idol, because they know it is an idol! If anything, the idol is viewed as a super-power to whom a person should pray, because as a super-power that “god” might do something for him. Therefore he will offer money or paint the idol with gold. Thus it is an exchange: “If you take care of me, I will use part of the money to repaint your golden body.” Religion emphasizes that we must recognize that God is a super-power, and therefore we ought to fear Him and worship Him. Christians alone hear the Lord saying, “Please love Me, because I love you.”

Aren’t you surprised that within us there is such a love for a God we have never seen nor touched, and who is seemingly far off from us? There are so many verses of love in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, but the reality can only come by means of three things.

LOVE IS A MATTER OF LIFE

In the Old Testament, God tells His people how He loves them. In the New Testament, in John 8:42, Jesus says, “If God were your Father, you would love Me...” That indicates God was not their Father, and that was why they did not love Him. This proves that our love to God is not a matter primarily a matter of emotion, but of life.

Once the life-relationship is established properly, love is generated. So as we come to all these points of how to enjoy the love, we must realize it is all a matter of life. Apart from life, there is no love. When you have a life-relationship with God, you will love the Lord.

LOVE IS A MATTER OF RESURRECTION

Secondly, the Lord began to speak strongly about love in John 14:21-31, where He speaks of how He was to die and come to them in resurrection. In His coming in resurrection, He would substantiate the matter of love. This portion begins, “He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” When the Word is applied to you and becomes subjective to you, it becomes a commandment. The Lord continues, “And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to

him....If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make our home with him.” In resurrection, the Lord was able to come into His believers and abide with them. These are those who are able to truly love the Lord. Therefore, only those who are saved and who have received Jesus into them are able to love the Lord. And when you are saved and begin to love the Lord, you enjoy resurrection. In that experience, your love is expected of the Lord, for in resurrection He becomes the reality for us to enjoy.

LOVE IS A MATTER OF SPIRIT AND THE WORD

In Romans 5:5, Paul writes, “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” From this verse we can see that it is the Spirit that substantiates this love.

In John 15:10 we read, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” Jesus is saying He is able to love God all the time because He is in God’s living Word, and that if we are in God’s living Word, we will have the reality of love.

I give you three things to remember if you desire to love the Lord. First of all, this love is a life-matter. Only when the Father becomes your Father, can you love Jesus Christ. Therefore, when the life-element is not there, love will not be there. Second, this love is a matter of resurrection. The Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are willing to come to you and make an abode with you, to bring you into something deeper and more profound. Third, to love the Lord is a matter of Spirit and the Word. When the Spirit comes, it pours out the divine love to you, and when the Word comes, it substantiates such a love.

I simply wish to emphasize these three as being very crucial to the Christian life. Remember that all religions have an object to worship, to bribe and to fear. Only Christians are so blessed with the fact they can love Jesus Christ, based on the life-relationship they have with Him, based upon resurrection, and based upon His Spirit operating within them and the Word spoken to them. These are the matters that enable us to become lovers of Jesus. Thus, pay attention to life, abide in resurrection, and pay attention to your spirit and the Word. Then you will realize how marvelous the Lord’s love is as you find yourself abiding in it.

THREE FURTHER REALIZATIONS: GOD BEING LOVE; HIS PROVISIONS FOR THIS LOVE; AND OUR NEED TO GROW UNTIL WE BECOME LOVE

We may consider three further sections regarding the matter of abiding

in love. First of all, God is to be loved, for He is love. Second, for us to love Him, He has made rich provisions. Third, for us to love Him, we must grow. The more mature we become, the deeper our appreciation for the Lord's love becomes. Our appreciation for His love increases as we grow.

For instance, your enjoyment of this love and my enjoyment of this love are undoubtedly very different. Yours is nearly one hundred percent sensational, while mine has a certain amount of substance. This corresponds to marriage life. As you age, you love your spouse more even as others appreciate them less due to the loss of the outward beauty. You have no idea how much I love and appreciate my wife, having been married to her now for fifty years. As our relationship has progressed, our mutual appreciation for each other has grown.

As you grow in life and your appreciation for the love of the Lord grows along with it, your testimony will also grow.

For us to enjoy such a love, the Lord has rich provisions. As we enjoy these provisions we are able to grow and become the testimony of the rich provision until we ourselves become love.

In Hymn 264, the first stanza contains the lines, "Jesus, Thine all-victorious love shed in my soul abroad; then shall my heart no longer rove, rooted and fixed in God," and in the last verse, "My steadfast soul, from falling free, shall then no longer move, while Christ is all the world to me, and all my heart is love." (Watchman Nee translated, "All my being is love.") Eventually, your entire person becomes love. Peter, in the first chapter of his second epistle, made it clear that we grow into brotherly love, in which brotherly love we supply love. Thus our entire person will become love. Our entire journey in life is a journey in love.

Everything God does for us is in the principle of love, for God is love. Every inch of growth we gain in Christ is growth in love. Eventually your growth in life will cause you to become so mature that your entire person becomes love.

Brothers, I long for this, because I get upset so easily with others. The more I am enjoying Christ, however, the more I find I cannot get so easily upset. I cannot be critical of others. How can I, when I am enjoying this person called Love? As Peter writes in 2 Peter 1, our entire being eventually becomes love.

First John 4:16 has, "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." Love and God cannot be separated. When you abide in love, you abide in God, and God abides in you.

THREE EMPHASES IN KNOWING GOD

So to the beginners, John would say, "God is Spirit." To those in the church life, he would say, "God is light," for us to have fellowship. Then, for us to be truly together as we should be, John tells us, "God is love." God's person, His being, is spirit. You touch the Spirit, you touch God. You touch God, you touch the Spirit. God's nature, God's heart, is love. That is why love becomes the source in creation, in redemption, and in all His work with us. Love becomes everything to the Christian life, because God is love. Eventually, the manifestation of this person is light. Thus, in person, God is Spirit; in nature, God is love; in manifestation, God is light. In experience, we begin with knowing God as Spirit. When we believe, the Spirit comes into us. The Spirit brings with it the divine nature, which causes us to be brought into a life-relationship with God. Eventually we somewhat enjoy resurrection, and in resurrection we enjoy love. Then, a person who has the Spirit and who is filled with love brings light wherever he or she goes.

GOD'S LOVE BEING EVERLASTING AND HIS DRAWING US IN HIS LOVING-KINDNESS

On this there are two points. First, God loves us with His everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). In this love, He Himself becomes very much related to us. It is not that He gives us this and that, such as a good career or family, because He loves us. No. He, realizing Himself to be the most precious one in the universe, draws us with His loving-kindness, having loved us with an eternal love.

With this love, we begin to see the Lord, and as we see Him, our entire person becomes different. We realize how precious our Lord is, and we are drawn by this very Christ.

When we say we love our parents, who gave birth to us, what we really are saying is that we are drawn by their loving-kindness. If they did not demonstrate any love towards us, it would be difficult for us to feel any love towards them. It is their affection for us that causes us to feel so close to them. It should be this way between us and the Lord as well. Since He loves us in this life-relationship, He draws us with His loving-kindness.

It may be that your Jesus is very remote. When He becomes so close to you in experience, you can testify of how marvelous He is. As He draws us with His loving-kindness, we are able to praise and thank Him more.

It is worthwhile for us to invest all we have just to enjoy this love. The Song of Songs (which really *is* the song of songs) begins with "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine." ("Better than wine" means "better than the enjoyments in the world.") "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is ointment poured forth."

(Ointment refers to His accomplishment, which is so high. Every time we call His name, we sense how fragrant it is.) Verse 4 states, “Draw me, we will run after you.” (In other words, “Please become very attractive to me, for as You become so attractive in my sight, I run after You.”)

TO ABIDE IN THE LORD, WE MUST HAVE THE LORD HIMSELF,
HIS ACCOMPLISHMENT, A LIFE-RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM,
AND THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS

How can a Christian abide in love properly? You must have the Lord Himself, the Lord’s accomplishment, a life-relationship with the Lord, and, eventually, you must have the brothers and sisters, which is signified when the seeker cries, “Draw me, we will run after You.”

I have a sweet mixed-feeling when I consider some of you. I cannot agree with what some of you have done in your practice serving the young people, but I cannot argue with the fact that you are loving Jesus in what you do. This gives me much encouragement. Regardless what you do, as long as you are a lover of Jesus, those with you can become lovers of Jesus too.

THE NEED TO BE UNVEILED

What causes us to really become a lover of Jesus is when He becomes unveiled to our vision. Until we see Him unveiled, we cannot love Him much no matter how much we are urged to do so. But once we see Him as He is, we cannot help but love Him.

What grants us the experience of unveiling? It may be due to the fact that we have really entered into our spirit. It may be due to the fact we are with a group of lovely saints who are really pursuing Christ as His lovers. When you see Him, you say, “That’s right! The Lord is indeed so precious!” and you pray, “Lord, I want to give my life to You!”

I hope none of you are merely church-goers, or even simply zealous young people. If, however, all you have is a life of going to the church “of your choice” and then coming home to the world “of your choice,” then what possibility is left for you but to continue on as before? There is no dominant figure in your life other than yourself. The Lord wants to draw you to Himself by revealing Himself to you, as the One who possesses so much that is wonderful for us to appreciate. If we are attracted by all that the Lord is and has, then we shall be very happy to give ourselves to Him.

Only one who pursues the Lord in consecration can gain the very love of the Lord. I have served the Lord these many years. I am very happy I can say that I am a lover of Jesus more than I am a worker for Jesus. If I should ever have to choose between the Lord and His work, I would choose the Lord without hesitation. I love the Lord!

This is why my life has become quite “good,” in spite of all I have gone through. I may be tired. I may have hated many things, but I have never hated Jesus. I hope many of you will discover that the love you declare for the Lord today will have become as real as you now say. If during this time you should touch something real of the Lord, you will come to treasure Him more. The more you touch Him, the more you treasure Him, and the more you find there is a sustaining strength that enables you to love the Lord through many things.

In your life, you will go through many things. The stronger the desire you have to love the Lord, the stranger will be the things that will happen, because you are in the midst of a group of “oddballs.” Christians are peculiar people whom Jesus loves.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF GROWTH OF LOVE FOR THE LORD

When I first was saved, I preached the gospel and was very fruitful. I was happy, but I never loved the Lord really. I preached the gospel because that was something a Christian was supposed to do. It did not last even one year. I was saved January 1, 1953. Anyone who has loved the Lord this many years should have grown more, I feel. You may say, “Well, Titus, you didn’t do too bad,” but that is only because you are worse! We all play around, because we don’t realize how much we could have in the Lord.

Within a year after my salvation, I led my group of friends in the church life out of the church life. We even went and hid in the bathrooms when it was time to meet. Everyone seemed to give us up, but one brother, an older uneducated soldier, came to me. He didn’t know what to say, and I didn’t know what he wanted to say, but after a period of time he simply said, “You better make the meetings.” I said “OK,” and that was that. You know, even after all these years, I have never forgotten what that brother did, and how the Lord used it to bring me back. I never can forget his face, or how he was sweating from coming such a way. I didn’t return right away, but I could not forget his face. In the church life, even though people don’t know how to care for you, they care for you.

Because I didn’t return right away, it may have seemed to him that he had failed, but he didn’t! Please know that your labor in the Lord is never in vain. You may not see the fruit immediately, but the fruit will be there.

Sometimes when I am laboring beyond my strength and ability to labor, that brother’s face comes back to me. He was not a spiritual or educated man, and he had no social status, but he impressed me with, “I know it doesn’t work and I don’t know how to make it work, but I want to do it.” That caused me to realize that the church life is a life of diligence.

In September 1954, I began to experience being restored. My first sense

was that I owed the Lord. Then I began to enjoy some spiritual things. At that time I began to understand the verse, “Draw me, we will run after you.” The Lord Jesus became so precious! I began to memorize the Word and began speaking to the Lord all the time. I asked Him to keep me loving Him all my life through, and He has answered that prayer.

I tried not to depart from the Lord’s presence, so whatever I did, I would ask, “Lord, what should I do?” It may not make any sense, but as I was praying I had the sense to turn right at a certain corner, and was just peaceful about it. Eventually nothing happened from that right turn, but I followed. Because I was so much before the Lord’s presence, the value of such things became very high, even though they may seem baby-ish today. At that time I could testify that I had a deep love relationship with my Lord, Jesus Christ.

ENJOY THE ECONOMY OF GOD AS SOMETHING IN LOVE

Then we should enjoy the economy of God in love for us. Ephesians chapter 1, for instance, tells us that God’s economy is also lovely. We are so blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, and we have been chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before Him, in love. Sometimes when we think about God, we have no understanding that this mighty, grand, universal personage, who is self-existing and ever-existing, possessing the power to create things from nothing, knowing all and being everywhere—has an economy. To me it is to be expected, for all great men had their economy, so why should not our omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God? He doesn’t just exist to bask in His potential. He doesn’t simply praise Himself. No one has His capital, and yet look at what human beings try to develop!

Amazingly, God’s economy does not involve simply utilizing us for some plan of His. His economy is an economy in love! How great a matter is this!

We may have our economy to accomplish something in our lives, but is it an economy of love? Or is it just an economy to get something done? Ultimately, an economy that is not in love has no value. Like Paul wrote, if there is no love involved, whatever we can do is simply like the empty sounding of cymbals, or “sounding brass.”

We worship the Lord that His economy is so much higher than ours! We may feel we have something, and that we can “make it.” But make what? What is the value of what you desire to accomplish (or your “economy”)? Suppose you can accomplish the thing you desire. Even should you “make it,” you will be cheated. While many people have great affection for their “economy,” the base of the economy our great God is involved with *is* love. This is beyond comprehension!

Consider how vast the universe is. No one can conceptualize it, and yet

God says, "It is merely the setting for My economy." And consider how marvelous earth is, with all variety of life, and its changing seasons and other marvels. It all must be maintained in such a fine balance! We see the beauty of creation, but God says to us, "I don't love this. I only love *you*."

God says, "I will draw you, in My eternal love, with My loving-kindness, and My person will become so precious to you that you will become so willing to give your whole life to Me and feel it is worth it. In the fifty years I have served Him, I have found that He has never changed, and that His love has never changed. How wonderful is this discovery I have been privileged to make! I have been granted to know that His loving-kindness never changes, and that His person never changes.

What has attracted me the most about the Lord is that, as He has exercised His economy, that exercise as something in love has never changed. We may feel sometimes God is punishing us, but that is still a matter in love, being a matter of His discipline, having our best profit in view.

Even before the foundation of the world we were chosen to be holy and without blame. He knew man would fall, and yet He chose us to be as He is, regardless. (To be holy means more than simply partaking of His divine nature; to be holy means to be just as He is.) He knew we would fail, therefore even before the foundation of the world He predestinated us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love. What a loving economy!

Too often when we speak of God's economy, we view it in utilitarian terms. We use words like "accomplishment," or "something for His satisfaction." Rarely do we realize that His economy is something of love. His operation, leading, and work with us are all matters of love. If we see this, we will tell the Lord that we surely desire to love Him. He attracts us in love, and molds us in love. All is a matter of love to bring us to the point we become as He is. All this is in love. May we thank Him for this!

MESSAGE FOUR

GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR US TO KNOW HIM IN LOVE

God is love, and God must have rich provisions for us to enjoy such a love. In a previous message I explained how prayer is simply fellowship with the Lord. We may fellowship with the Lord in prayer in a genuine manner, but if we do not have the riches of the Lord within to back up our speaking, our words to the Lord may be lacking in value.

For instance, I once told one of my schoolmates, "Tell the Lord, 'Unveil Yourself to me. I cannot find You, but You can find me, so please make me believe in You.'" He got down on his knees and began to pray, "God I want to

see You. Make me see You.” But it didn’t work as I expected, because his heart was occupied with a way to do it that I had given to him. He followed the way I told him, yet I told him, “You can’t play with God.” He protested that he wasn’t playing with God, but was being genuine about it. But if you want to speak to the Lord, you need something to back up your prayer. I can speak for hours to the Lord, because I have so much to say to Him about Him, about myself, about the churches, about individuals, and so on. You need a lot of backing, and this backing has so much to do with His provision; the more you see His provision, the richer will be your prayer. Otherwise, your prayer will be confined by your simplistic statements.

THE MEANING OF JOHN 3:16

For instance, to some, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son” is a simple statement. If you are a father of a son, however, you know what having a son means, and if you have only one son, you know what having one son means. That one son is basically just you! You live for this son; you exist for this son; you care for this son...everything with you is focused on this son, just as God the Father cared about His Son. Christ has been God’s focus through all time and creation.

One day, however, the Father said, “I love this fallen man, and I will give him My only begotten Son, so that whosoever has the Son will not perish, but instead will have eternal life.”

This is the most famous verse among Christians, yet few realize that this verse refers to our existence, for it says when we receive Jesus Christ, we will not perish, and we shall have eternal life. This means that in our Christian life we can never depart from the person of Jesus Christ, the Son. The problem with Christians is, however, that they love everything except having Jesus Christ. They enjoy the enthusiasm of being with others in the name of Christ, even though Jesus Christ may not be present. They enjoy the Lord’s presence, it seems, even though the Lord Himself may not be present! Christians are peculiar. They are so peculiar, in fact, that only Jesus Christ could love them.

In many cases I would even trust a Gentile more than a Christian, and yet what can a person do but love Christians, even though they are what they are? I love them and can give my life to them, but I cannot trust them. Why? The most forgetful, unappreciative and lost people are Christians, for they forget Christ, lack appreciation for Christ, and are lost from Christ. For some reason Christians, even though they know they are to love Jesus and live by Him, when a test comes, the exam comes first; when shopping, the sale comes first; when a meeting comes, what kind of song should be sung comes first; when it is time to give a message, how to do so impressively comes first, and so on.

Yet if you were to ask God, "What is it You have provided me with?" or "What have You given me?" or "What is the most precious thing that You will give me that might totally satisfy me?" or even "By what may I make You totally satisfied?" His answer will always be "My Son." Yet it seems Christians like everything *except* Jesus. When they pray and tell Him they love Him, He may laugh and say, "I will try to believe in your lie, for as soon as anything happens, you depart from Me."

God considered what gift He might give to man that would be most precious. Eventually John 3:16 tells us that He loved us so much that He gave us His only-begotten Son, and we must believe in Him, for believing is receiving. We must receive Him. When we believe, we receive Him, and shall not perish, but have eternal life, *which is the Son*.

I hope after this fellowship, many might be able to tell the Lord, "Please, for my life, do not give me anything other than Yourself. Help me to love no one and nothing else other than You. Work with me that I might gain nothing other than You. You must be the realm, the focus, the substance, the reality of my living. As I read the word, preach the gospel, serve, pray, fellowship, in all that I do, I only desire to care for You." This is what John 3:16 means.

HAVING CHRIST EQUALS HAVING DIVINE LIFE

Too often we say Jesus died for you, but it is much deeper than that, for when you believe in Jesus, you will have eternal life, which means you will have Christ, for John clearly said, "He who has the Son has the life" (1 John 5:12). When you have Christ, you have life, and if you have the divine life, you have Christ; you cannot separate the two. Christ is the unique provision God has granted us. What is in God's heart that He knows will meet all our needs? Christ. What can God provide us that will insure that He will be totally satisfied with us? Christ.

John also wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). In what way can this gift, this person, become our reality? This person came and died for our sins. He loved us and gave Himself up for us. Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). When you take the blood, it is not the blood alone. You actually are taking Christ in, for when you receive forgiveness, you are receiving Christ in at the same time.

GOD IS AFTER A RELATIONSHIP IN LOVE, NOT AFTER SOME "DEAL"

These are not "deals" as in a TV game show, yet we like to make deals with Christ. In other words, we ask, "Lord, if I confess my sins, You will

forgive me, right?” The Lord replies, “Yes.” So immediately you slap your hand down on the table and cry out, “Done!” And it becomes to you a “done deal.” The Lord has no interest in making any deal with us, unless in the transaction He can dispense something of Himself into us.

We treat forgiveness as a “deal” that requires something on our part, but the Lord does not view it like that. He died for us so that we might receive Him, not merely that our sins might be taken out of the way. If our need for forgiveness brings us to the Lord, and causes us to contact Him and spend time before Him, then surely our confession is not merely something of a “deal”; instead it is a matter of contacting Christ and taking Him in.

He wants to have fellowship with us, not merely to do something for us. When my children were young, and would pray before eating something they liked to eat, it was as if their thanks were in exchange for the treat. Many times that is how Christians carry out things with the Lord. Yet the Lord did not come to merely take care of our problems or even to give us some “treats”... He sacrificed His entire person and gave up His whole being for us so that we might know and gain *Him!*

Therefore I hope we might see the two parts. First, according to John 3:16, God gave Christ to die for us. Then, according to Galatians 2:20, Christ as the Son, came and went to the cross and gave Himself up for our sakes. The thought with the Father and the thought with the Son is by no means merely that of a transaction. It was for us to receive, to gain, to take in, to enjoy, and to participate in the riches of the Son. The Son must become a living person to us to meet all our needs.

How may Christians be saved from all the “deals” into a life-relationship with Christ? We should pray, “Lord, You gave Yourself up for my sake, and God gave You to me for me to have life. I desire to possess You as You desire to be possessed, and I desire to have You as my reality.”

REDEMPTION, CONFESSION AND WALKING IN THE LIGHT

As those who have sinned, we need to be redeemed. We never belonged to Satan, so we never need to be redeemed from him (Gal 3:13), but we have offended God’s law, and according to its requirement we must be punished and go to eternal death. Therefore God paid the price to die in our place so that we could be redeemed from the judgment of God’s law. God’s righteousness demanded something if we were to be saved, and His love caused Him to supply what His righteousness required, so He died for us. Thus we were redeemed from God’s own wrath through His blood.

Now, we need to learn how to confess our sins. This is really how to touch the Lord. For “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Now that we are saved, the Lord will forgive us; He has no choice but to forgive us, for He is just.

As you ask the Lord to forgive you for something, you will know you have been forgiven, but eventually, as you come before the Lord, you may also realize that something you have done seems worse than anything you have done before. Still, the Lord forgives you. And yet you may sin in a way that is even worse than that sin that seemed so terrible earlier. You find you are worse than you ever realized, and you may wonder, "Is this sin really even forgivable?" Perhaps you first lied to your father, and then talked behind his back in a disrespectful way, and then stole his money, and finally one day perhaps you even struck him in your anger. (Human beings are capable of doing anything, so don't be too shocked.) Sooner or later we should realize that the Lord must be faithful to forgive, even if we feel He may not want to! He is bound by His righteousness to do so. He must be just to forgive us, for if He does not, He is not just!

If anyone has indeed struck his father in anger, he should kneel down before the Lord for many hours. I am not excusing any such behavior, but as we grow older, we begin to realize just how depraved we are. There are things that come forth from us that may cause us to wonder how the Lord could still tolerate us. And yet, we know He forgives us, for He is faithful and just to do so.

Then, as we take the blood, we walk in the light. Thus we have Christ, the death of Christ, and the blood of Christ. Yet this verse tells us that as we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. There is no "deal" here. That is why I love this verse.

If we walk in the light, there is a life-element generated that demands fellowship. What is fellowship? It is very hard to define, but it equals communion, but communion in life. That is fellowship. It is not discussing things in the church life or in the work. (Sometimes such "fellowship" is more devilish than divine, as when some consider the Lord's sheep as "capital" to be utilized for their own "spiritual" work.) Our talking together in the church life can be fellowship, or it can be some sort of "deal."

Fellowship produces no "deal." Fellowship is the flow of life being communicated from one saint to another. Fellowship is something that takes place in spirit. In fact, just being with the brothers in life causes us to become so cleansed. We sense, as we enjoy fellowshiping with the saints, that everything with us becomes so clean and bright. This is the result of fellowship.

You may feel as though you need to confess all your sins in order to be forgiven, but our memory simply isn't sufficient for such a thing. God has therefore given us this great gift. We are full of forgiveness to ourselves, while we are very good at remembering the sins of others. You may have

had an argument with your wife or husband, and yet when you come to the meeting, you forget about it, while you remember how another saints argued with his or her spouse! If the Lord required that we confess every sin we ever committed, and brought them all to our mind, we would simply break down and die. God therefore has granted us to forget many improper things we have done. (Unfortunately, we do not seem as capable of forgetting *other* people's sins!)

For instance, I may borrow some onion from you, and you may borrow some soy sauce from me, but eventually I forget I borrowed your onion, but I don't forget you borrowed my soy sauce! Thus when everyone comes to the meeting, so many problems come into the hall with them! Everyone has seen so many things that other people have done, even though they have done just as much, and yet are not troubled by it a bit! This is because no one dares think on their own sins, or else they would be under too heavy a load of condemnation.

As we enjoy the Lord together, however, something marvelous happens... we all become so clean! It is not something of a "deal"; it is a matter of the dispensing of life!

On the one hand, we need to confess our sins, and realize He is faithful and righteous to forgive us all our sins. On the other hand, we must realize that we are in the organic Body, and must fellowship with one another. As we fellowship with one another, something surprising happens! The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from every sin!

We are not aware of many sins in ourselves. The Lord told us even a thought can equal a sinful deed. Even as I am speaking here, some may love me to the point that they think I am just as wonderful as Jesus. That is a sin. Others may despise me. That is a sin as well. But the blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin: the sins that bother you, and the sins you don't even realize you have committed. In fellowship, they all are cleansed, because it is not a "deal," but rather a dispensing of life. How good that is! If we want to abide in the Lord, treasure the brotherly love, the fellowship with one another, and the church meetings. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, even including all the sins we are not aware of and do not confess.

Here we are in a room loaded with problems. Even those who say they love Jesus cannot be trusted. Yet by the Lord's mercy we are here together, and the blood cleanses us as we are fellowshiping together. Then we can see that it is His love that constrains us. It is love that God gave Jesus to us, that Jesus died for us on the cross, that He becomes our propitiation, and that we can walk in the light as He is in the light. The love of Christ eventually constrains us, or restricts and confines us, as we thus judge that if One died for all, then all died (2 Cor. 5:14).

“He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and has been raised” (2 Cor. 5:15). As those the Lord died for, we live to Him. And Christ became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection as the last Adam. What is in the Spirit that you receive? In the Spirit there is God, incarnation, human living, crucifixion, the death and burial of Christ, resurrection, ascension and enthronement? Where is God? God is in Spirit. Where is incarnation? Now it is in that Spirit. Where is the human living of Christ? It is in that Spirit. Where is the crucifixion and death and burial of Christ? It is also in the Spirit. Where is the resurrection? The Spirit actually is the Spirit of resurrection. We say He is a life-giving Spirit, for in reality He is the Spirit of resurrection.

This verse is in 1 Corinthians 15, which speaks of resurrection. This Spirit we have received is the Spirit of resurrection. Therefore we almost cannot afford to touch the Spirit, for when we do, we enjoy resurrection and have the reality of resurrection. How can we have resurrection? Right in our spirit through His Spirit.

Even more, we have His ascension with His enthronement! In this Spirit there are all these elements. All the problems we have occur only if we do not have the Spirit, for in the Spirit we have all these riches.

THE HOLY SPIRIT POURING OUT GOD’S LOVE IN OUR HEARTS

The Holy Spirit pours out God’s love in our hearts. When we received this Spirit on the day of our regeneration, the Spirit began to operate. One of the most important things that took place was that the Spirit poured out God’s love in our hearts. We began to enjoy God’s love, and knew the fact of God being love, for God was no longer remote from us, for the love of God had been poured out in our hearts. When the Spirit functions, it brings us to the rich realization of how God loves us.

It is easy for me to have tears sometimes as I share, for my spirit is so touched by something I have shared about. There have been times, as I realize how loved I am by the Lord, that I break out in tears. I just realize that if I can give myself to the Lord it is such a privilege, and those who do not are foolish to the uttermost. When I was in high school, even when I would think about Christ I would begin to cry. I was so joyful in my spirit; I was weeping for joy. I really experienced Romans 5:5. I became so tender towards the Lord and His move. I felt that the Lord’s preciousness was beyond all I might offer. After my initial consecration, I wept often. Even as I would pray-read I would weep at times. To have certain kinds of tears for the Lord is a joyful thing.

Brother Nee said these tears would be collected in a bottle and kept in eternity (Psa. 56:8). Therefore we should ask that the Lord grant us the

experience of His love being poured out in our hearts. We should not tolerate feeling as if the Lord were remote from us. We should not be as those who date via email! Let the Spirit pour out God's love in you! This is something beyond sensation. It is something real for us to experience. Through the Spirit God gives us the substance of such a love.

RAISED UP AND STRENGTHENED INTO OUR INNER MAN

God's great love caused Him to make us alive with Christ and to raise us up together with Christ and seat us together in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:4-6). Christ's love is no longer objective to us, for we enjoy it in our hearts. Even more than that, however, God's great love moved Him to make us alive and even to seat us together with Christ in the heavenlies. Today, we are in the heavenlies! We should not believe our sensation, but what God's word tells us, for the word of God we read in the Bible is more real than what we see! Physically we may be in this building, but in reality we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ! This is the reality.

God's Spirit strengthens us into our inner man so that we may be able to apprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ and be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:16-18). All the Lord's work with us is in the principle of love. What is the breadth, the length, the depth and the height? With everything there is a limit, but when you come to the love of Christ, you must apprehend with all the other believers what the breadth, length, depth and height are, and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. There is no way to understand this, but by being strengthened into the inner man, for then your inner man operates in resurrection, and in resurrection you operate in the principle of self-existing, ever-existing (even though you are not the self-existing, ever-existing One).

Thus you are beyond every limitation. When you are strengthened into the inner man in love, you begin to understand that no matter how much you know Him, there is still so much more to enjoy! Then you live within the scope that there is no limitation. This is not a life of "deal," this is a life where He Himself strengthens you into your inner man, your spirit. Then your inner man begins to possess the person of Christ, and your spirit becomes more than just an organ or a sensation to you...it becomes a person, and when this person operates, He operates from eternity to eternity. This is the Christian life.

Sometimes we tell the Lord, "I am going to give ten months to the Lord." That is a foolish statement. We are in the scope that belongs to eternity! This very Christ in us is in resurrection, and this very resurrection brings us out of the limit of time and space into something that belongs to eternity, and this experience of eternity can be experienced today!

I have loved the Lord fifty-some years. When I was young, I thought I knew so much. I felt I knew what was going on, and could anticipate what was going on. Now I feel I am in something I cannot understand, but I have it! I live in the realm of resurrection, and in this realm nothing confines us. We can be totally free in oneness with the Lord.

MESSAGE FIVE

In Ephesians we are told that, in order to apprehend the limitlessness of the love of Christ, we must be strengthened into our inner man (Ephesians 3:16-18). What is it to be strengthened into the inner man? Christ is not merely power; Christ is also a person.

FROM SENSATION TO SUBSTANCE TO PERSON

To most, their experience of Christ is in three stages. First of all, He is something of sensation. We feel wonderful in His presence after we are saved. In the second stage, Christ is encouragement, strengthening, and enlightenment. He is the One who operates as His attributes are manifested to us through His human virtues. We begin to realize so many aspects regarding Him. Eventually, we realize, however, that Christ must become who we are. He must invade and penetrate our being. And who we are must express the person of Christ. What He loves, we must love. What He desires, we also should desire. What He labors after, we also should be laboring after. Eventually, we must move beyond Christ being merely a sensation. We must even move beyond Christ only being a rich supply to us. We must arrive at the stage where Christ's person occupies our being. That is what is meant to be strengthened into our inner man. He is no longer something outward, and He is not even only something being supplied to us. He becomes our very person.

CHRIST MUST BECOME OUR PERSON

When we are strengthened into our inner man, we can be so one with Christ to enjoy all the riches. This is why Paul tells us we can apprehend with all the saints Christ in His limitlessness. That is when you are able to understand to what degree God loves you. It is something beyond human apprehension.

Your person determines what your life is for and where your interest lies. Yo-yo Ma said that how one pulls the bow over the strings is determined by one's life. That is why, after learning technique, he went where his person could develop more, rather than his technique. This is why those of one culture, even though they may excel in technique, eventually become limited, for the culture they develop in does not allow the fullest development of their person, while those in another culture eventually often do better

because their culture allows for more freedom, even though it may initially seem less disciplined. This is because such cultures educate those within it more with their person in view than merely the matter of skill.

The vision you possess is not a skill, but something according to your person. When your person is saturated with something heavenly, then everything you see and desire is heavenly. When your person is base, low, and common, no matter how well you do something, you can only be a craftsman, for you will always be “boxed in.” Instead of being a “craftsman,” become a “scholar,” or very broad and inclusive. The Lord hates that we would become merely a craftsman. He doesn’t want us to merely be “skillful.” He desires that we would become very broad and inclusive, even to the point that we could help many others to know and enjoy Him according to who He really is.

I encouraged one brother to go to college and study world history, for if a person can grasp that subject, it can change your person, and your testimony becomes very different. Jesus is the greatest person! He is universal. He has no limit to what He includes. And it is HE who desires to be our person! Therefore we must be granted to be strengthened into our inner man!

Paul had no real utterance to portray Christ’s vast dimensions, so all he could write was “that you may know the breadth, and length, and height and depth.” How wide is wide? How high is high? And yet Christ is this!

Sometimes I am asked how I can bear all the hard things that seem to surround me. To my feeling, however, I am not experiencing any hard times, for Christ as the person in us has already suffered everything. Therefore, shouldn’t we suffer something? And since He as the person in us is in resurrection, shall we not also be in resurrection? If you are someone strengthened into your inner man, that is, if Christ is the person in you, then where is your limitation?

In a hymn we find the words, “What limit is there to this love? Thy flight, where wilt thou stay?” Where is the boundary? When Christ makes home in you and you are strengthened into the inner man, you discover how spacious and glorious is your life! You simply feel that your life has become so buoyant!

GOD WORKS ALL THINGS TOGETHER
FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM

In love, God works all things together for those of us who love Him. God works all things together in love, but only when we love Him are we able to recognize and appreciate this.

Your parents, who love you, try to give you what is best, but when you don't want it, you may win, and end up forfeiting what was best for you to what you wanted.

Those who seek to arrive at the top level in their area of interest pay a price in terms of time and resources. They are able to bear this kind of discipline because love is involved; they love what they do, even though it involves sacrifice. It is a rare thing, however, to find a Christian who is willing to make such sacrifice to arrive at the top level of being a son of God. Nearly every Christian does whatever he or she wishes and selects their own way. This is why God works all things together for them who love Him.

NO FEAR IN LOVE, FOR PERFECT LOVE
CASTS OUT FEAR

Furthermore, there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear. This verse by John refers to the same matter Paul speaks of in Romans 8:28. Paul says God works all things together, but how do you apply this? By acknowledging it.

When you have a hard time, you thank the Lord for giving you that hard time, just as you would thank Him for giving you something that makes you happy. Whether things become encouraging or frustrating, are you able to recognize that whatever it may be, it has been measured to you by God for good?

All things work together, however, only when you love Him. If you do not love Him, your life will simply be a life of complaining and bitterness. (Americans like to say, "Why me?" to which I reply, "Why not you?") God causes all things to work together for good, but if you do not recognize it, you will only have thoughts such as, "Will this be the final blow? How far will this go?" In I John 4:18, John tells us there is no fear in love. If you are someone who loves the Lord, you will realize there is no need to fear anything. You need never think, "Maybe God is punishing me!" God may be disciplining or warning you, but there is nothing to be afraid of, because you love Your Lord and your Lord loves you.

A love that is perfected, or a perfect love, casts out fear. Instead of living in fear of the Lord's punishment, you will appreciate how He uses all things to transform you until you are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Might you have a "bad" environment? You may. But there should be no fear, for if you love God, there is no fear in love.

Even when something seems like punishment, there is no fear in love. When our love to the Lord is absolute, we realize His love to us is perfect. Between the Lord and we, there is nothing like a "deal," such as when

someone is punished for something. There is only love and desire for what is best for us. Even if you work against what God is trying to do for you, He will not abandon you. He will still do His best for you. That is not punishment; that is something out of His love for you and His desire to see you grow.

God does not punish us, but God does discipline us, because He loves us (Heb. 12:6). The word punishment implies fear, but if we love the Lord, such fear is cast out. Punishment is in response to behavior, whereas discipline has the perfecting of the person in view. There is the principle of reaping what we sow (Gal. 6:7), but the Lord is not interested in making such “deals.” If He does discipline, it is not in the way of reward or punishment, but out of love because He wants us to grow.

Thus we as His children can be so bold before the Lord, for He is so precious to us, and we are so precious to Him.

LOVING THE BEGETTER
AND THOSE BEGOTTEN OF HIM

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1). Whoever loves God, loves those who are begotten of God. We love not only the One who sits enthroned in the heavenlies, but also the One who lives within us, since we have been born of God. When I love God, I really love this Jesus Christ in me, and when I really love this Jesus who is in me, I also really love all the others who have Jesus in them as well.

In our time with the Lord, we must tell Him that we love Him, especially as the One who lives within us. As I love this One who is born of God, I also realize I love so many others who have also been born of God.

To be with you saints is really my joy. I cannot say how many mean business with the Lord, but when I see you, I see hope. I realize so many other things are competing with the Lord in your hearts, but those things are not born of God! You must value what is born of God more than what is not! I hope you can pick up whatever you may value and say, “This is not born of God. I love what is born of God.” The Lord may use other things in your life, but always be aware of what is born of God, and what is not. Then you will be able to love those who even seem to be backsliding, for they are also our brothers.

This is totally something applicable in our Christian life. These things I have shared with you are not doctrinal matters. They really have to do with our pursuing the Lord. I believe what has been shared has been very practical. May the Lord bless this word and have mercy upon us. -*Titus Chu*

WATCHMAN NEE
ON
THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Primarily the blood is for God, not for man. It is required by God, but if we do not realize the value of the blood to God, we will not realize its value to us. In the Old Testament the blood is mentioned over four hundred times, and in each case, it is always for God Himself...In Egypt the blood was smeared on the outside of the door for *God* to see; those who were in the house could not see it....Sometimes we feel our sins are more real than the blood, yet we have to accept God's valuation. We have to believe that the blood is precious to God. If God accepts it for our redemption, then we can believe that the debt is paid. First John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." ...If God says the blood is enough to satisfy His requirements, then it must be....If our conscience condemns us, faith leaks out. The temptation to man is to think they must live up to what they regard as God's standard before they can come to confidence to God. But the blood is the way of access, and our approach is always with boldness because it has nothing to do with our attainment or holiness. The blood is the only thing that is needed; it is absolutely sufficient. The first time we came to the Lord, we were made near by the blood, and every subsequent time that we come to Him, we are made near by the blood...The blood is our only plea. Since our conscience is cleansed before God we have "no more conscience of sins." From this ground we can face the enemy and all of his efforts to bring us under condemnation. The blood puts God on our side, and we can be fearless. The fall brought in something which gave Satan some footing. Furthermore, man was put outside the garden, and God was outside of man. The blood restores us to God and God to us.

The blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses us not only from sin but from *every* sin. As He is in the light, we can walk in the light, and the blood will cleanse us from every sin—those which we think are unforgivable and even those which we are not conscious of. It is only as our conscience is clear that we can overcome Satan. His attacks are based upon on his accusations, and if we accept these accusations we will go down. Why do we come under his accusations and believe them? It is because we still hope to have some righteousness of our own. We often may be disappointed in ourselves, but God is never disappointed with us because He expects *nothing* from us! If we accept God's verdict that *no* good thing dwells in us, and judge ourselves to be worthy of nothing but death, and if we see that the blood more than pays every time, Satan will have no ground to attack. Our attitude only will be, "Lord, I cannot hope to be any better, but Your blood is always sufficient." (Watchman Nee, *Collected Works*, Vol 46, pp. 1258-1260, Living Stream Ministry)

Book Excerpt: from *The Tabernacle*

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE COVERING OF THE TABERNACLE -

THE ENJOYMENT OF THE PROTECTION FROM THE DIVINE LIFE

Exodus 26:7~14

And you shall make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains you shall make. The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain, four cubits; the eleven curtains shall have the same measurement. And you shall join five of the curtains by themselves, and six of the curtains by themselves; and you shall double the sixth curtain over at the front of the tent. And you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outermost in the set, and fifty loops upon the edge of the curtain which is outermost in the second set. And you shall make fifty clasps of bronze and put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together, so that it may become one. And the overlapping part that is left over of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that is left over, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. And the cubit on the one side and the cubit on the other side, of what is left over in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and on that side, to cover it. And you shall make a covering for the tent, of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of porpoise skins above it."

ENJOYING THE PROTECTION FROM THE DIVINE LIFE

Having experienced the altar of the burnt offering and the laver, the priest will now head for the main body of the tabernacle, wherein God meets with man. At this spot, because of the screen of the entrance to the tent, he cannot see what a romantic and rich life experience is awaiting him. However, he is really attracted by the Lord, and has become a consecrated person living in the

washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Brothers, within us there should always be an indescribable appreciation of the Lord. We need to tell the Lord, “So many things we don’t quite understand. How could it be possible that we love You? Why would we consecrate ourselves to You? How come You have such a great impact on us? What enables us to invest all that we have in what is unseen, unknown and undefinable to the world? But Lord, one thing we do know, and that is, though we have not seen You, we love You, and not seeing You at present yet believing, we exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8). Such a joy sustains us to run the race ahead of us.” From this point onward, we begin to experience union with God, which in turn leads us to experience being mingled with God. That’s how the process of growth begins. Growth does not come easily. It is very personal, and during the growth process we need protection. We need to enjoy the heavenly protection from the divine life. The protection, the covering and surrounding care, comes from above and from four layers. Therefore, this means that the protection comes from every direction.

ENJOYING THE PROTECTION THAT COMES FROM CHRIST AND THE MATURE SAINTS

THE FOUR-LAYERED COVERING OF THE TABERNACLE

The four layers of the covering of the main body of the tabernacle (the tent) depict four layers of protection. We need to enjoy the protection that comes from Christ and the more mature saints. In other words, not merely does Christ protect you; the experienced brothers and the more mature saints also protect you.

This four-layered covering is, from the innermost to the outermost, as follows: curtains of fine linen; curtains of goats’ hair as the tent over the tabernacle; the covering of rams’ skins dyed red for the tent; and lastly, a covering of porpoise skins over all.

When God revealed the pattern of the tabernacle to Moses, He started with the Ark of Testimony; yet when we experience the tabernacle, we start with the entrance to the outer court. The same principle is true of the four-layered covering. While God’s revelation begins with the innermost curtains of fine linen, our experience begins with the outermost layer of porpoise skins. God’s revelation is centered on Himself, but our experience begins from our perspective. So the two sides—God’s revelation and man’s experience—always come from opposite directions. The more God reveals something from His inner part, the more deeply we experience it from our outer part. Therefore, when it

comes to the four layers of the covering, experientially it doesn't go in the order of the divine revelation from the inner to the outer; instead, it goes from the outer to the inner: porpoise skins, rams' skins dyed red, goats' hair, and then, lastly, fine linen.

Porpoise Skins as the Top Layer

"... and a covering of porpoise skins above it." (Exodus 26:14)

The outermost layer of the covering is made of porpoise skins. This is what people could see from the exterior.

According to revelation: This covering signifies that Christ firmly withstands the enemy to protect His dwelling place.

According to experience: It signifies that, as we experience our own ugliness, the Lord in His love will never let us go. It also indicates that a Christian should never expect to be held in admiration, and that the testimony of the church will never have anything to do with a grand, magnificent appearance.

An Ugly, Unappealing Skin

Porpoise skins are ugly in appearance. This matches our experience. Ever since we began to follow the Lord, we have increasingly seen that we are nothing but ugly "porpoise skins." Yet, in spite of our ugliness, in His love the Lord never lets us go. Strictly speaking, porpoise skins typify the Lord. They are, however, also our experience.

Throughout our entire Christian life, as we are held in His love, we will never possess anything to be admired outwardly. Hence, we should all take the name Porpoise Skin. When I was young, I told the Lord, "I would like to take Your way. On earth You had no attractive form nor majesty that we should look upon You, no beautiful appearance that we should desire You (Isa. 53:2). How I want to lead such a life!" After that, the Lord answered my prayer. I no longer cared about whether others liked me or disliked me. He drew away my attention from whether I had evil report or good report, or from caring about what others might admire.

Our Whole Christian Life is a Life of Porpoise Skins

Whenever we go to a new place to serve, a co-worker should give others the feeling that a "porpoise skin" is coming! The Lord's servants are

“porpoise skins” just like Paul. When he got to Thessalonica, people there shouted, “These men who have upset the world have come here also” (Acts 17:6). This is what it is to be a porpoise skin.

In addition to the co-workers, all the consecrated Christians should be ready to be seen as porpoise skins. No matter how much work the Lord has done upon us, as to our being, we are totally ugly. As to our outer form, we are unattractive as well. When on earth, Jesus had no outwardly attractive form or majesty. Paul also was said to have weak bodily presence and contemptible speech. He often wandered about in cold and nakedness and was regarded as the offscouring of the world and the scum of all things (1 Cor. 4:13). Then how about us? Should we be in a higher status than Jesus or Paul? Sometimes when I hear some Christian complain that someone else has scolded him, I think to myself, “Such a thing is fitting for a porpoise skin. Where else could people place blame other than on the porpoise skins?” Don’t get upset or threaten to sue each other. Never forget that we are just porpoise skins. If we want to experience this aspect, we should not expect to be loved by all saints in the church life.

The Appearance of the Church is Porpoise Skins

In like manner, the whole church should have the appearance of porpoise skins. Do not build a meeting hall in the manner of Saint Peter’s Cathedral in Rome. Such an edifice is absolutely not porpoise skin. Such a cathedral is meant to be admired but not to minister Christ. Let’s remember one thing: the simpler and more ordinary the style of the meeting hall, the better. A meeting hall magnificent in style is not at all a blessing. Concerning this point, the Brethren had a very clear view. Their meeting halls are very much like ours—with no item or furniture especially attractive. We must realize that the outer appearance of the church is to be porpoise skin.

Experiencing Our Own Ugliness

I hope that we brothers might acquire a higher realization. Don’t appreciate the grand appearance of someone’s meeting place. On the contrary, we should ask ourselves, “Isn’t it enough that we have the Lord? Isn’t it enough that we have the saints?” Again I would like to remind you, it is enough to have the Lord and the saints.

About fifty years ago, there was a time when Brother Watchman Nee trusted about \$60,000 to a brother for the gospel work in Taiwan. However, that brother appropriated the total sum of the money to his own use. And what’s worse, he told others that it was the money Brother Nee owed him!

On hearing the news, Brother Nee responded with merely two sentences: “Thank the Lord, that for \$60,000 we got to know this brother. Jesus appointed Judas as the treasurer among the disciples, knowing he was a thief.”

It’s true that money seems to be nothing to the Lord; yet, it may be as important as life to us. Why is this our case? Because none of us likes to be porpoise skin. What we like to see is a grand meeting hall with several very tall pines standing at the gate. Alongside the driveway we expect thick trees giving comfortable shade. Entering the hall, we should face a wall displaying pictures of the so-called saints, while the other walls feature beautiful windows. At the height of the ceiling should be a certain kind of illumination... No, on the contrary, we have to love and respect porpoise skin, and feel proud of it because the top layer of the tent covering is porpoise skin.

The Toughness of Porpoise Skins

Although terrible-looking, porpoise skins are tough enough to resist any storm. According to spiritual significance, porpoise skin is able to withstand the enemy’s attacks. The Lord Jesus was the first porpoise skin in the New Testament, Paul was another, and so was Peter, as was John, exiled to the Isle of Patmos. They have become the protection to countless saints over the generations. How different this is from our natural concept! Our concept is if a certain brother is gifted, full of life supply and operation, and knows how to lead, then such a one with his charisma is to be admired. Actually, we should not think like this. A genuine serving one in the church ought to be a porpoise skin. Only from brothers as tough as porpoise skins can we gain the protection we need, for they are able to resist any attack of the enemy and any hardship so that we may grow and mature under their covering.

The life of following the Lord is a life of experiencing the porpoise skin. The testimony we produce in each locality may be very rich inwardly, but it should give others on the outside a feeling that we are nothing but porpoise skins. Furthermore, our life of following the Lord is also the life of experiencing the protection of porpoise skins. In the church of each locality, there are certain covering brothers who have the rough appearance and the tough quality of the porpoise skins so as to resist whatever attack Satan may make and thus persist on working with the Lord for the blessing of God’s children. Because of them, we are blessed, safe and secure to pursue, to grow, to minister and to be properly built up.

Rams' Skins Dyed Red as the Covering of the Tent

The third layer of covering of the tent was made of rams' skins, dyed red.

“ And you shall make a covering for the tent, of rams' skins dyed red” (Exodus 26:14).

According to revelation: The perfect and complete redemption of Christ is our covering.

According to experience: We are those who live under the Lord's redemption and enjoy His salvation. We are not able to live apart from the Lord's salvation for even a single moment, nor can we exist apart from the Lord Himself.

Rams' skins dyed red illustrate our need to experience the complete covering of the Lord's precious blood. Every inch of our being must be covered with the effectiveness of His precious blood. Therefore, as those who enjoy the protection of the Lord's redemption, we cannot live a moment without His salvation, nor can we exist for a moment apart from Him.

We are dyed red. We testify that the Lord's precious blood is upon us— we give testimony that under the Lord's mercy we are cleansed in His blood. Hence, experientially we are the rams' skins dyed red. We are in need of the Lord's precious blood at every time and in every place. Don't ever think we may do without His blood at a certain point; instead, we need it at all places and all times. Giving a message, we need the precious blood; giving a testimony, we need the precious blood; preaching the gospel, we need the precious blood; and prophesying in the meeting, we need the precious blood. Even going to the meeting, we need the Lord's precious blood. Of course, after committing sin, going out shopping, or losing our temper, we need the blood...but eventually we will realize that our entire being needs to be covered with the Lord's precious blood so as to be cleansed, for we are those always in need of redemption.

Today, in order to grow in the church life, we need to experience everything the tabernacle typifies. Therefore, for us, there is no departing from the protection from the precious blood of Christ. The Blood has not merely sprinkled our hearts from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22); it also allows us to live a healthy church life.

The Tent Covering Made of Goats' Hair

“ And you shall make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle.... And you shall make fifty clasps of bronze and put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together, so that it may become one.” (Exodus 26:7,11)

The second layer of covering was made of goats' hair.

According to revelation: Christ was made sin in order to bear our sins. What He did was far beyond what was reasonable, yet He accomplished it for our sake.

According to experience: During our entire Christian life, we can never forget our fallen nature, which causes us to testify that our status is that of sinners saved by grace.

We are Sinners Saved by Grace

How wonderful! The top covering of the Tent is of porpoise skins; the third layer, of rams' skins dyed red; and the second layer, a tent of goat's hair.

According to the Law, goats are unclean animals. The goats' hair covering reveals that we are unclean. On one hand, Christ was made sin for our protection; on the other hand, we are born sinners, living in sin and living out sin. Why wasn't the goats' hair dyed red? Because the Lord wants to have us covered under His precious blood for our refuge as well as for our cleansing.

As those who have received the Lord's redemptive work, we should know that we are nothing but goats' hair. Throughout our Christian life, it's impossible for us to escape our fallen nature. Our fallen nature is a part of who we are. We are fallen sinners, no matter what we achieve or how many secrets to victory we discover.

What we are in our own eyes is often different from what we are in the Lord's eyes. We regard ourselves as nearly perfect: glorious, attractive, loving, diligent and capable of serving and giving messages. Nevertheless, the Lord looks upon us as goats' hair from every angle. Hence, whoever realizes that he is only goat's hair is blessed. He won't feel shocked when he is defeated, commits sins or finds his flesh still operating, for he knows he is by nature goats' hair.

Those Who Know Goats' Hair Will Know Fine Linen

When we experience the outer layers of porpoise skins and rams' skins dyed red and then of goats' hair, which signifies our person, then we are able to know what fine linen is. Fine linen denotes the perfect humanity of Christ. As long as one hasn't yet seen he is truly goats' hair—a fallen sinner saved by grace—he is not likely to be able to experience the perfect humanity of Christ.

The Number Eleven Typifying that the Lord is in Charge of Our Salvation and Growth

There are altogether eleven curtains of goats' hair. Eleven equals five plus six. Five refers to the Lord bearing responsibility, and six refers to us, the created beings. Five plus six means that the Lord is responsible for our growth. In other words, it is the Lord who takes charge of the salvation that we, as the blessed people, will experience throughout the rest of our existence.

Fifty Clasps of Bronze

The tent was joined with fifty clasps of bronze. Fifty bronze clasps signify that when living responsibly to the Lord, a blessed Christian is living in the judging light. Here he dares not allow his natural man to be activated. The two sets of curtains joined to each other refer to both the Lord and to us. The two sets are joined with the clasps of bronze, which signifies that the Lord joins us to Himself through His judgment, leaving no room for the natural man to walk freely and willfully.

Those who realize they themselves are goats' hair are indeed blessed, because they are no longer under the heavy burden of sin. Suppose one day a preacher is defeated. At that very moment Satan will surely come accusing him, saying, "See? Just a while ago, you gave a message as if everything was true, and even had the congregation believing so. But now, look at yourself. There is nothing in your life that matches your words." But if he has seen this picture, he is able to reply, "Satan, you think I am lousy? Listen, I am much worse than you can describe. But thank the Lord, in my experience I have the rams' skins dyed red above me and the fine twined linen under me. While being fallen, weak and defeated goats' hair, I also have my Lord who is the fifty bronze clasps." This is what clasps of bronze signify.

Curtains of Fine Linen

"Now the tabernacle you shall make with ten curtains of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet strands; you shall make them with

cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.... And you shall make loops of blue strands... and you shall make fifty loops.... And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may become one.” (Exodus 26: 1, 4~6)

The first layer is made of fine linen with blue, purple and scarlet strands, which signifies that the human virtues of Christ are constituted into us through all the previous experiences, and that such a constitution is heavenly and kingly in His redemption.

It is by means of experiencing the covering of porpoise skins, the rams' skins dyed red and goats' hair that we are constituted with the human virtues of Christ. With this heavenly, kingly constitution in Christ's redemption, we live out not only Christ, but also God's glory.

With Cherubim Embroidered by a Skillful Workman on the Curtains of Fine Linen

According to revelation: Christ manifests God's glory through His humanity.

According to experience: It is through His servants (the skillful workmen) that Christ works in us so that we will not only live out the perfect humanity of Christ (fine linen) but also the human virtue manifesting the glory of the divine attributes (cherubim).

Ten Curtains

According to revelation: Being a perfect and complete man, Christ went through thorough testing.

According to experience: While experiencing the perfect salvation of Christ, we can testify that Christ has taken full responsibility for God's work in us and our work for Him.

In this sense, ten refers to responsibility in responsibility, or perfect perfection. As we are experiencing the perfect salvation in Christ, He is the One taking charge of the work in us so that we may testify with Him and manifest Him. Even if we remain disobedient after many years, instead of deserting us, the Lord remains responsible for our taking responsibility and for working upon us. This is what the ten curtains mean.

Each of the Two Sets of Curtains Has Fifty Loops of Blue Strands and is Joined to Each Other with Fifty Clasps of Gold

Five of the ten curtains are joined as one set, and so are the other five. On each set are fifty loops of blue strands, so altogether there are one hundred loops joined to one another with fifty clasps of gold. The loops of blue strands portray that the curtains of fine linen are heavenly. The joining clasps of gold illustrate that the union between the Lord and us must be something in His divinity. Before this, there has been only bronze, but now gold appears. Though it is a small clasp, it is of gold. The joining golden clasps do tell us something.

Fifty clasps of gold

According to revelation: Christ, after being judged by God's law of righteousness, is still intact.

According to experience: The co-testimony we give with the Lord is something of heaven and the union of the testimony has to be in His divinity.

It is in God's divinity that we testify to God because, without God, there would be no testimony. No matter how much work Christ might do in us, without God there could be no clasps of gold, and there would be no testimony.

No Mention of the Measurements Concerning the Third and Fourth Layers

No mention is made when it comes to the third and fourth layers of the covering, which indicates that our experience of the Lord is measureless.

How great is the salvation we are experiencing? The answer is that our entire Christian existence cannot describe it. As for the third and fourth layers of the covering, the measurements are not mentioned, for our knowing Christ becomes deeper and higher to the extent that no measurement can be used to convey it. It is limitless. Such are the experiences of the rams' skins dyed red and porpoise skins.

The rams' skins dyed red signify that we still need salvation, no matter how mature we may become. Even though some day we may become very experienced and spiritual, the truth is that we still need the Lord's salvation. Even Paul, with his level of maturity and spirituality, had times of

weakness, and even a servant of the Lord such as James seemed to eventually frustrate the Lord's work. All this reveals that no matter how experienced, mature or spiritual we may be, we always will need the Lord's redemption.

The porpoise skin illustrates that we should never forget our own ugliness, nor should we try to be appealing with what we are or seek any earthly glory. Outwardly speaking, there is no exception: every God-created man is beautiful, whereas inwardly we are all ugly porpoise skins. We are nothing but porpoise skins, so we need to be like the curtains of fine linen embroidered with cherubim, which are a constitution of Christ. Only with Christ can we manifest God's glory through uplifted and fine human virtues.

The Experience of the Covering

Experiencing Protection and Constitution

The covering portrays what we will experience in the future as well as what protection we need from Christ and the mature saints. For example, what Brother Watchman Nee experienced we will experience; what Madame Guyon experienced we will also experience. We will experience all that A.B. Simpson, J.N. Darby and brother Witness Lee experienced. Whatever the Lord's servants experienced, we are blessed to experience as well.

What a sweet story! For two thousand years, the story hasn't changed nor ended. It started with the Lord Jesus, and it was followed by Peter, James, Paul, John and then many other servants of the Lord. From the second half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the number of those the Lord raised up was far larger than man could have expected. All are a covering to us. In addition, in each locality, there are today many older brothers who also function as a covering to us.

The sweetness of the story is far beyond words, and we look forward to becoming such a covering ourselves one day. Someday we will say, "Thank the Lord, not only have they been such a covering, but I also have been constituted to be a covering. When I first came into the church life, it was others who protected me. Now that I have been in the church life for a period of time, I can be the protection to those I am serving." This is not a matter of zeal, status, or duty, just as the eldership in the church is not something of zeal, status, or duty, but rather a divine commitment. Such a

divine commitment is manifested according to the testimony of the being of the elder. Suppose a brother becomes an elder merely because of his seniority. This is damaging to the church. Suppose a brother is made an elder just because of his old age. This is oppressive to the younger ones. However, if along with his seniority and qualifications, he is full of Christ, the young saints will be kept under his protection. What a blessing if a church has such good elders as a covering! Therefore, we have to pray for our senior brothers who are our covering, for without them the young ones lose their protection.

Experiencing Not Being Known and Being Saved

The tent covering has porpoise skins as the fourth layer and the rams' skins dyed red as the third layer. One day, I heard a statistic that in the Great Lakes area we have one thousand six hundred Chinese-speaking saints participating in the Lord's Table meetings. Upon hearing it, we might have one of two feelings. First, we might respond, "Only 1600? But we have labored for ten years!" Or, we might respond, "Wow! We have 1600!" They seem to be two contradictory feelings, but man is contradictory. Whether it's good enough or not, as long as we are constantly talking about the increase of numbers, the feeling among us will be peculiar. When numbers become your testimony, you can hardly expect to experience the porpoise skins and rams' skins dyed red.

Experiencing the Saving Grace

In a healthy testimony what is seen? On one hand, outsiders will feel that these people are just ordinary; on the other hand, they would sense that these people have no confidence in themselves, or in their own work. Rather, they will discover that these people are under the precious blood of the Lord. Furthermore, they are a covering of goats' hair redeemed by the Lord. As the well-known hymn declares, "This is my story, to God be the glory, I'm only a sinner saved by grace!" (Hymns #311)

Experiencing the Perfect Humanity of Christ

In typology, on one hand, one who is the covering must be porpoise skin, rams' skin dyed red and goats' hair; on the other hand, when contacting such a one, people will find inside him there is fine twined linen, portraying a constitution of Christ's perfect humanity. That is exactly what the apostle Paul exhibited. From the biographies of many spiritual persons, such as A.B. Simpson and C.T. Studd, you may also observe such could be found in their lives.

Some Examples

A.B. Simpson was physically a rather sick man, yet he persisted in acknowledging Christ in all things, and lived a life of being crucified and resurrected with the Lord. Outwardly, his severely weak body was like porpoise skin, but in actuality he became a protection and supply to numerous saints. Thanks to him, many were saved, revived and brought into a deeper and higher experience of Christ. Such an “ugly” man was the author of such hymns as “Jesus only, Jesus ever” (Hymns #511). More than this, he had rich experiences of rams’ skins dyed red and goats’ hair. That’s why, except for the Lord and His salvation, Simpson acknowledged nothing and no one else. Eventually, when people contacted him, what they contacted was the fine twined linen and what they saw was the cherubim embroidery. It was evident that he possessed the perfect humanity of Christ as part of his constitution and that something of God’s glory was manifested through him.

This was also true of C. T. Studd. At the age of fifty, due to his poor health, his doctor advised him to remain at home. But he insisted on fighting for God’s interests regardless of any difficulty. For over twenty years, he was completely engaged in proclaiming the gospel in central Africa and eventually raised up a very strong testimony in that region for the Lord. In appearance, he was porpoise skin; in substance, he was the fine twined linen. He was filled with the constitution of Christ’s humanity, embroidered with the cherubim and thus he manifested God’s glory.

We can continue recalling the life story of God’s useful servants one by one, and we may find each of them portrayed the same pattern: Martin Luther, Brother Lawrence, J.N. Darby, George Muller, Watchman Nee, Witness Lee... and today, the Lord has an expectation that we would also grow to be servants such as this.

We Need the Covering and We Need to Be the Covering

The church needs more saints to become such a covering. The church needs good brothers to protect the saints as the covering and also to bring them into the experience of the covering. In a healthy church, every three to five years some brothers should be produced to be the covering protecting the church in that locality. That way, saints in the church will be able to experience the organic growth.

Today what we need in the church is not an idol made of gold, but an elder like porpoise skin. Our elders don't need to have an attracting form or a grand manner. In appearance, they may be very ordinary, and even seem ugly in some way. However, when you touch their inner element, you will find that they have fine linen, that is, the human virtues of Christ, upon which cherubim are embroidered, manifesting God's glory. With such a covering, a church will be very much blessed. - *Titus Chu*

A GOSPEL STORY

[*To a group of Motilone tribesmen in Colombia, Bruce Olson said:*]

“Do you remember,” I said, “how after a hunt for wild boars the leader cuts the skin from the animal and puts it over his head, to cover his ears and keep the evil spirits of the jungle out?”

They nodded, listening closely. “Jesus Christ was murdered,” I said, “But just as you pull the skin over the chieftain's head to hide his ears, so Jesus—when he died—pulled his blood over your deception and hides it from the sight of God.” ...I told them Jesus was buried. A wave of grief swept over them....It was the first time I had ever seen a Motilone cry. ...[I told them,] “The Bible says Jesus came to life...It is proof that He is really God's Son.”...

[*Later, Bobby, one of the Motilone, asked Bruce Olson about how he could follow Jesus. Olson replied:*]

“You have to be suspended. That is how it is when you follow Jesus, Bobby. No man can tell you how to walk His trail. Only Jesus can. But to find out you have to tie your hammock strings into Him, and be suspended in God.” ...

The next day he came to me. “Bruchko,” he said, “I want to tie my hammock strings into Jesus Christ. But how can I? I can't see Him or touch Him.”

“You've talked to spirits, haven't you?”

“Oh,” he said. “I see now.”

The next day he had a big grin on his face. “Bruchko, I've tied my hammock strings into Jesus. Now I speak a new language.”...

“Jesus Christ has risen from the dead! Bobby shouted, so that the sound filtered far off into the jungle. “He has walked our trails! I have met Him!”

(from *Bruchko* by Bruce E. Olson, pp. 143-144, Creation House)