LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE ONE

THE BACKGROUND AND SUBJECT OF THE BOOK

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:1-18, 27-30; 2:1-5, 12-16; 3:2-11; 4:2-3, 14-19

In the Bible there are two books which are concerned with experience rather than with doctrine. These books are Song of Songs and Philippians. Apparently these books have no relation to each other. But if we get into the depths of these books, we shall find that they are sister books and that both are concerned with the experience of Christ. For this reason, it would be helpful to study the Song of Songs along with the book of Philippians.

We have pointed out that four New Testament books make up the heart of the divine revelation. These books are Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians all have a similar pattern of composition. In these books Paul first presents doctrines, then experience. After setting forth a certain doctrine, Paul encourages us to walk according to that doctrine. Ephesians, for example, is written in two main parts. The first part, chapters one through three, sets forth the doctrine regarding the church, the Body of Christ. But the second section, composed of chapters four through six, is concerned with our walk according to the doctrine unfolded in the first three chapters. Since Ephesians is composed in this way, it is a book of both doctrine and experience. In principle, the same is true of Galatians and Colossians.

The book of Philippians, however, is different in this regard. It is not Paul's intention in writing this book to convey doctrine. This does not mean that there is no doctrinal element in this book. All the New Testament

writings have a doctrinal ingredient. But strictly speaking, Philippians is not concerned with doctrine; it is concerned with the experience of Christ.

In 1:20 Paul says, "Christ shall be magnified in my body," and in 1:21 he declares, "To me to live is Christ." These two statements represent the basic concept of the whole book. In this book we are charged to magnify Christ and to live Him. To magnify Christ is not only to express Him; it is to express Christ by causing Him to be enlarged. We should magnify Christ by living Him in a practical way day by day. Our daily living should be a living that lives Christ. Certain ethical teachings encourage people to live by particular virtues. The book of Philippians, however, does not charge 4us to live according to ethics or virtues; it charges us to live according to Christ. Christ must be everything in our daily living. He must be even such virtues as humility and kindness.

Before Paul was saved, his life was centered around the law, and he lived the law. But after he was converted to Christ and was regenerated, he began to live Christ. Christ became not only Paul's life, but also his living. Eventually, according to his experience, Paul could declare that to him to live was Christ.

I. THE BACKGROUND

In this message we shall consider the background and subject of Philippians. Every book in the Bible has both a background and a subject. Since the book of Philippians is concerned with the experience of Christ, some may think that there is no need to consider the background. However, even this book on the experience of Christ was written with a certain kind of background. This background is the reason the book was written. In order to get into the depths of the significance of this book, we must know its background.

The book of Philippians does not say explicitly what the background is. But as we consider Paul's statements and exhortations in this book, we detect certain hints regarding

the background. If we read the four chapters of this book carefully, we shall find four elements related to the background.

A. The Judaizers Exercising Their Influence over the Believers in Christ

At the time the book of Philippians was written, the Judaizers were exercising their influence over the believers in Christ (3:2-4). The Judaizers were very strong for the Jewish religion. They not only practiced their religion, but they promoted it and even fought for it. The most zealous of the Judaizers were the Pharisees, those who were most orthodox in the religion of their fathers. As a result of the Jewish dispersion, these Judaizers were spread over the Mediterranean region. Wherever Jews were found, there would always be some Judaizers. No other group of people could match the zeal with which the Judaizers promoted their religion. Even in Philippi, a city in Macedonia, they were exercising their influence over the believers.

In 3:1 Paul says, "For the rest, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, and for you it is safe." This word indicates that to rejoice in the Lord is a safeguard, a security. When we rejoice in Him, we are safe. Rejoicing protects us.

When Paul wrote the book of Philippians, certain believers in Philippi were not rejoicing in the Lord, for they were being troubled or distracted by those described in verse 2. In this verse Paul says, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision." On the one hand, Paul tells us to rejoice; on the other hand, he tells us to beware of the dogs. As we shall see, the "dogs" here refer to the Judaizers.

Today there are also "dogs" of which we need to beware. In fact, in Paul's time there was just one group of "dogs,"

the Judaizers, but today there are many different kinds of "dogs." Whenever these "dogs" exercise their influence, perhaps by spreading evil rumors about the Lord's recovery, we may find it difficult to rejoice. Thus, we need Paul's exhortation to rejoice and to beware of "dogs." According to the construction of 3:2, the dogs, the evil workers, and the concision all refer to the same people. The fact that the "dogs" are associated with the evil workers and the concision indicates that the "dogs" are religious people. The evil workers mentioned here were not thieves. They were those who advocated circumcision. But as they zealously promoted circumcision, they were like barking dogs. For this reason, Paul uses the terms "evil workers" and "the concision," as expressions of extreme contempt. As religious "dogs," the Judaizers were not only barking ones, but also biting ones. Wherever the gospel was preached and churches were established, the Judaizers came as barking, biting, religious "dogs" to trouble the saints. The barking and biting of the Judaizers was one aspect of the background against which the book of Philippians was written.

Today there are a number of different groups of barking religious "dogs." Wherever we may go, we are troubled by the different religious parties. In principle, our situation is the same as that of the Philippians when Paul wrote to them. Like the believers at Philippi, we urgently need the experience of Christ. If the Philippians were in need of the experience of Christ because of their background, how much more do we need to experience Him because of the situation in which we find ourselves today! The Philippians had to deal with only one ism, but we must deal with many isms, with many groups of barking religious "dogs." When we rise up to speak concerning the experience of Christ, these "dogs" come to bark and to bite. The writings of the opposers, in which many false accusations are made against us, may be regarded as the "barking" of religious "dogs."

Because of the influence the Judaizers were exerting

over the saints, Paul was compelled to warn the saints at Philippi to beware of "dogs." It was not easy for him to utter such a word, for these barking "dogs" were his countrymen. Paul was very patriotic, and he had a deep love for the Jewish nation. This made it difficult for him to refer to certain of his countrymen as "dogs." But the situation forced him to use such a strong expression. Even though the Judaizers were among Paul's countrymen, his kinsmen according to the flesh, he could not refrain from calling them "dogs," "evil workers," "the concision." The influence of these "dogs" was an important part of the background of the book of Philippians. Since, in principle, our situation is the same today, we must consider that Philippians was written for us also. In their situation, the Philippian believers needed the experience of Christ, and in our situation today we need all the more to experience Him.

B. The Judaistic Believers Preaching Christ because of Envy and Strife in Rivalry with the Apostle Paul

According to 1:15-18, some were preaching Christ "because of envy and strife" and "out of rivalry." In particular, they were in rivalry with Paul. Those who preached Christ in this way were the Judaistic believers, believers in Christ who held to the Jewish religion and who were bringing certain aspects of Judaism into the church life. Their holding on to the things of Judaism caused them to preach Christ in rivalry with Paul, who renounced Judaism with its law, rituals, traditions, and practice of circumcision. Since the Judaistic believers still held to these religious things, they were preaching Christ out of envy and strife. Nevertheless in 1:18 Paul could say, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice." Paul admitted that even those who preached

because of envy and strife and out of rivalry were still preaching Christ. He could rejoice in the fact that Christ was announced. Whereas Paul preached Christ with God's economy, others preached Christ with Judaism. Thus, there were two different ways of preaching Christ.

The same is true today. Many Christians are preaching Christ, but they are not preaching Christ with God's economy concerning the church. In Paul's time, the Judaistic believers preached Christ out of a concern for Judaism, not out of a concern for the church. In a sense, they even preached Christ for Judaism. Paul, however, preached Christ for the church, the Body of Christ.

Paul was persecuted not mainly for simply preaching the gospel, but in particular for defending the gospel and confirming it. In 1:7 he speaks of "the defense and confirmation of the gospel" and in 1:16 he says that he was "set for the defense of the gospel." The Judaistic believers, on the contrary, were perverting the gospel and distorting it. The gospel is not for Judaism, and it should not be preached for the purpose of bringing unbelievers under the law and to the practice of circumcision. To preach the gospel in this way is a perversion and distortion of the gospel. In his defense of the gospel, Paul made it clear that the goal of the gospel is to bring forth the Body of Christ, not to cause anyone to bear the mark of circumcision. As Paul preached the gospel in a positive, divine way, he also defended it and confirmed it. Paul's way of preaching the gospel was very different from that of the Judaistic believers. Therefore, at the time the book of Philippians was written, the gospel was preached in two different ways.

Today we are also preaching the gospel in a way that is different from that followed by many in organized religion. Many are preaching the gospel, but not in the way that is in line with God's economy. Whenever we preach the gospel according to God's economy, as Paul did, we are opposed by the religionists. Because of the different ways of preaching Christ, persecution comes from the religious "dogs."

C. The Philippian Believers Participating with the Apostle Paul in the Furtherance of the Gospel

Another aspect of the background of this book concerns a matter that is very positive, the participation of the Philippian believers with the Apostle Paul in the furtherance of the gospel (1:5-7; 4:14-19).

I am concerned that some among us still hold to an understanding of the gospel which is not adequate. The preaching of the gospel includes more than the fact that Christ is our Savior and that by believing in Him we shall have forgiveness of sins, salvation from hell to heaven, and regeneration. Actually, the whole book of Philippians is a definition of the gospel. The gospel is the proclamation of the move of God on earth according to His economy. This means that the gospel is the preaching of God's economy. Thus, the gospel includes the matter of magnifying Christ and living Christ. It includes every aspect of the experience of Christ covered in this book. For the Philippian believers to participate with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel meant that they were partaking in the move of God's economy on earth.

God's economy is not simply to have a group of people who are forgiven of their sins, justified, washed by the blood of Christ, regenerated, saved from hell, and destined for heaven. Such things are just part of God's salvation for the carrying out of His economy. The gospel includes the economy of God in its entirety. We should not try to define the gospel by taking a few phrases from Paul's writings out of context. We need to consider the whole book of Philippians with all the major points. If we put these points together, we shall have the totality of the gospel, and we shall see that the gospel involves God's move according to His economy. How blessed were the Philippian believers to participate in the furtherance of such a gospel! The gospel in which they had a share was not the low, narrow, superficial gospel preached by many Christians today. The Philippian believers had the privilege of sharing in the spread and furtherance of the gospel that is according to God's economy.

D. Dissension Existing among the Philippian Believers

Even though the Philippian believers participated with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel, there was still at least some amount of dissension among them (1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2-3). As we shall see, the reason for this dissension lay in the fact that they were not one in soul. They had been regenerated in the spirit, but they had not yet been transformed in soul. They had no problem in the spirit, but there were at least some problems in the soul, particularly in the mind. Some among them had different concepts, and these different concepts were causing dissension.

II. THE SUBJECT--THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

As we have already indicated, the subject of Philippians is the experience of Christ. Concerning the experience of Christ, each chapter of Philippians covers a major point. First in chapter one we have the magnification of Christ. No matter what the circumstances are in which we find ourselves, we need to express Christ in such a way that we magnify Him.

In chapter two Paul presents Christ as our pattern. In everything we do, we need a pattern, a model, an example. Even in the experience of Christ and the enjoyment of Christ, we need a pattern. This pattern is Christ Himself.

Chapter three indicates that Christ should be our goal, our aim. We who love the Lord and seek Him are not aimless. Our aim is Christ Himself. He is the goal toward which we press.

Finally, in chapter four, Christ is our strength. In 4:13 Paul says, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me." Christ is not only the pattern and the goal; He is also the strength, the power, the dynamo. As the dynamo within us, He empowers us to live Him, to magnify Him, and to press on toward Him as the goal.

In the four chapters of Philippians we see Christ as the One lived out and magnified, Christ as the pattern, Christ as the goal, and Christ as our inward strength. This book on the experience of Christ covers four major points: the expression, the pattern, the goal, and the strength. We all need to experience Christ in this fourfold way.

A. For the Overcoming of the Influence of the Judaizers

It was necessary for the Philippians to experience Christ in order to overcome the influence of the Judaizers. We also need to experience Christ if we would overcome the opposition we face today. We cannot overcome the "barking" of religious "dogs" by anything we have in ourselves. The opposition is too severe to be overcome by our own efforts. For this, we need the adequate experience of Christ. We need to experience Christ in such a way that we live Him, and take Him as our pattern, goal, and power. Such an experience of Christ will enable us to overcome all opposition.

The more we are opposed, the more we should live Christ. We should be like a ball full of air: the more we are suppressed, the higher we rise up. In a sense, we should be thankful for all the opposition. Because of it, we are being stirred up. However, it is not sufficient merely to be awakened and stirred up to stand against the opposition; we must go on to live Christ and to magnify Him. As we experience Christ, we shall overcome the negative influence of today's religionists.

B. For the Discernment of the Preaching of Christ in Rivalry

Through the experience of Christ, we shall also acquire discernment concerning the different ways of preaching Christ, in particular concerning the preaching of Christ in rivalry (1:9-11). The more we experience Christ, the more discernment we shall have. In fact, Christ Himself will become our discernment, our sensitive perception, our

moral tact. By experiencing Christ we become sensitive and tactful. Such tact is neither natural nor that gained by education. It comes only through the experience of Christ. As we experience Christ, He becomes our perception and tact, the discernment by which we see through the intentions of others. With Christ as our x ray, no one can hide from our perception. We all need such discernment.

C. For the Participation in the Furtherance of the Gospel

We also need to experience Christ so that we may participate in the furtherance of the gospel (1:27-30). Through the experience of Christ, we are able to share in God's move in His economy.

D. For the Abolishing of Dissension

Finally, the experience of Christ is for the abolishing of dissension (2:5, 12-16). Dissension can be abolished only through the experience of Christ. The more experience of Christ we have, the less dissension there will be.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWO

THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:1-11, 19, 27; 2:1-2; 4:2, 14-18

In this message we shall consider certain features of the church in Philippi. Philippi was the chief city in the province of Macedonia of the old Roman Empire (Acts 16:12). Through Paul's first ministry journey to Europe (Acts 16:10-12), a church was raised up in this city, the first church in Europe.

I. ESTABLISHED IN GOOD ORDER

In Philippians 1:1 Paul says, "Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons." This verse indicates that the church in Philippi was established in good order. Notice that Paul speaks of "the saints...with the overseers and deacons." This is the only place in the New Testament where such an expression is found. It is significant that Paul speaks of the saints *with* the overseers and deacons. In every local church the unique group consists of the saints. The saints are the components of a local church. Among the saints there are leading ones, which the New Testament describes as elders or overseers. Overseers are the elders in a local church (Acts 20:17, 28). "Elder" denotes the person, whereas "overseer" denotes the function. When an elder functions, he exercises oversight. Hence, he is an overseer. Here overseers are mentioned instead of elders to indicate that the elders were proper in their responsibility.

In the second century, Ignatius taught that the overseers, or bishops, are higher than the elders. He

claimed that the elders are local and that the overseers, bishops, exercise authority in an area greater than a locality. Ignatius' concept, however, is altogether contrary to the Scriptures. The New Testament indicates clearly that the elders are the overseers and that the overseers are elders. Both titles refer to the same people. When an elder is carrying out his responsibility in the church, he is functioning as an overseer. The overseers, therefore, are not a group of people different from the elders.

In 1:1 Paul also mentions the deacons. Deacons are the serving ones in a local church under the direction of the overseers (1 Tim. 3:8). The English word *deacon* is an anglicized form of the Greek word *diakonos*, which means a serving one.

Philippians 1:1, which shows that a local church is composed of the saints with overseers to take the lead and deacons to serve, indicates that the church in Philippi was in good order. Paul did not say "to all the saints and the overseers and deacons"; he said "all the saints with the overseers and deacons." The Greek preposition rendered "with" actually means together with. If Paul had used the conjunction "and" instead of the preposition "with," this would indicate that in a local church there should be three groups of people--the saints, the overseers, and the deacons. But his use of "with" indicates that there are not three such groups in the church.

The concept of today's organized Christianity is to have various distinct classes of people within the church. It is against the Bible, however, to have different classes of believers in a local assembly. The New Testament reveals that in a local church there is a unique group, and this group is composed of all the saints.

Writing under the leading of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote in a deliberate, cautious way, using the preposition "with" and not the conjunction "and." Paul's use of the preposition instead of the conjunction is very significant. It indicates that in any locality there should be just one church, which must include all the saints in that locality. We thank the

Lord that in spite of all the divisions, we have been recovered to the original standing of the church: that of one church in a locality including all the saints as the unique group of people.

II. FELLOWSHIPPING IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

The church in Philippi also had fellowship with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel. In 1:5 Paul speaks of "your fellowship unto the gospel from the first day until now." Fellowship here means participation, communication. The same Greek word is translated contribution in Romans 15:26 and sharing in Hebrews 13:16. The saints in Philippi had fellowship unto the gospel, participating in the furtherance of the gospel through the Apostle Paul's ministry. This participation included their financial contributions to the apostle (4:10, 15-16), which issued in the furtherance of the gospel. This kind of fellowship, which kept them from being individualistic and diversely minded, implies their oneness with the Apostle Paul and with one another. This gave them the ground for their experience and enjoyment of Christ, which is the main point of this book. The Christ-experiencing-and-enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life, not individualistic but corporate. Hence, there is "the fellowship unto the gospel." The more fellowship we have in the furtherance of the gospel, the more Christ we experience and enjoy. This kills our self, ambition, preference, and choice.

As the Philippian believers were sharing in the furtherance of the gospel, in the furtherance of God's move on earth according to His economy, they were partakers with Paul of grace. Those who partake of grace are those who share and enjoy the processed Triune God as grace. The apostle was such a one in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and the saints at Philippi were joint-partakers with him in this grace. Grace is the Triune God processed to be our enjoyment. By having fellowship unto

the gospel with Paul, the Philippians enjoyed this grace. According to the expression in Greek, they became partakers of Paul's grace, of the very grace he enjoyed.

The church in Philippi also prayed for Paul (1:19), made his joy full and caused him to rejoice (2:1-2), and supplied his material need. There is no doubt that this church was very good.

III. HAVING DISSENSIONS AMONG THEMSELVES

Although the church in Philippi was established in good order and had fellowship with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel, there was nevertheless dissension among them. By this we see that it is very difficult to avoid dissension. It can exist anywhere and at any time. The source of dissension is our opinions. Opinions come from the mind, the main part of the soul. In the book of Philippians Paul speaks often of the soul, the mind, and thinking. In 1:27 he uses the expression "with one soul," and in 2:2, the expression "joined in soul." In 2:20 he uses the term "like-souled."

We in the church life today need to be one in the soul. Christians frequently speak of being one in the Lord or one in the Spirit, but have you ever heard believers speak of being one in the soul? Until we are one in soul, there is no practicality to our oneness. Our oneness will be that of shaking hands over the fence. Christians talk about oneness, but they still hold to their dissenting opinions. Paul's concept of oneness was different. In Philippians he makes it clear that we need to be one in soul.

In order to be one in soul, we need to be transformed and renewed in our mind. Romans 12:2 speaks of being transformed by the renewing of the mind. It is quite possible that your mind is very old. This may even be true of young people. But if your mind has been renewed, it will be new and fresh, even though you may be an elderly person. I can testify that Christ has never bent my mind in any way, but He certainly has been renewing it.

One reason for oldness in our mind is that we remember past offenses. Years ago a certain thing may have happened to you, but you are still not willing to forget it. This means that in this particular matter you do not show forgiveness, for genuine forgiveness implies forgetting the offense. Because certain saints remember offenses from the past, their mind is old. If our mind is old, it will cause us problems and lead to dissension. Therefore, it is crucial for us all to have a renewed mind.

The only defect in the church in Philippi was the dissension caused by different opinions. In 4:2 Paul said, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord." These two leading sisters were co-workers with Paul. However, they were not one in their thinking. The differences in their thinking were probably not concerning secular matters, but concerning God's move on earth. Concerning this, they had different opinions in the soul. Because they were still one in spirit, these sisters were not divided. But in practice there was dissension between them because of their different concepts. This dissension was a shortcoming in that very good church at Philippi. As a result of the dissension among them, the Philippian saints were not one soul in preaching the gospel (1:27).

In 2:2 and 4:2 we see that the Philippian saints were not thinking the same thing, not having the same love, not joined in soul, and not thinking the one thing. The situation of certain ones in the Lord's recovery today is the same. These ones have been caught by the Lord for His recovery. They know the ground of the church and honor this ground of oneness. However, they do not think the same thing as the rest of the saints, they do not have the same love, and they are not joined in soul. They can truthfully say that they are one in spirit with all the saints, but they cannot say that they are one in the soul, thinking the same thing and even the one thing.

What does it mean to think the same thing and to think the one thing? Both expressions are found in 2:2. In 4:2

Paul besought Euodias and Syntyche to think the same thing. The same thing is Christ Himself, and the one thing is the pursuing of Christ to gain Him, lay hold of Him, and possess Him. We should not regard anything other than Christ as the "same thing" spoken of by Paul. Many Christian groups have something that they consider to be the "same thing." But according to Paul, the "same thing" is Christ, and the "one thing" is the seeking after Christ to possess Him. The context of Philippians makes this very clear.

To think the same thing--Christ--and the one thing--the seeking after Christ to gain Him--causes our mind to be dealt with and renewed. To be renewed in our mind is to have a metabolic change in which the old element is discharged and a new element is supplied. Something of Christ is infused into our being to discharge the old element and to replace it. This process causes our minds to be renewed. Even young people have many old things which need to be discharged and replaced by the element of Christ.

We need to allow Christ to become those positive elements in us which cause our minds to be renewed. Whereas many use their natural cleverness in a negative way, perhaps using it to focus on offenses or other negative things, we should be encouraged to set our minds on Christ and to allow our minds to be occupied by Christ. If our mind is not renewed, there will be dissension among us as there was among certain of the Philippian saints. Because they held to the natural mind with its oldness, this defect existed among them.

IV. NEEDING MORE KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT

A. In Love that Abounds

The excellence of Paul's writing is shown in the way he did not directly point out the defect of the Philippian saints. He did not say, "Dear Philippians, I want you to know that you are short of love." Instead, in 1:9 he said, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and

more in full knowledge and all discernment." These words indicate that their love was not adequate, not sufficient. Paul admitted that the Philippian believers had a certain amount of love, but there was still the need for their love to abound more and more.

It is significant that Paul prayed that their love would abound "in full knowledge and all discernment." The Philippian believers had much love. Yet their love needed to abound, to overflow more and more, not foolishly, but in full knowledge; not in ignorance, but in all discernment, that they might prove by testing the things which differed. This should include discernment of the different preachings of the gospel in 1:15-18 and of the different peoples in 3:2-3.

Paul did not pray that the Philippians' love would abound in zeal or in the affection of a good heart. As we all know, love is related to emotion. However, Paul prayed that their love would abound in full knowledge and all discernment, both of which are related to the mind. According to common human experience, love is blind. When a person exercises himself to have a sober mind, when he is calm, clear, and knowledgeable, love is gone. It seems that being loving and having a sober mind cannot exist together. Either a brother loves his wife foolishly, or, being clear in his understanding and sober in his mind, he becomes cold in his love for her.

Paul prayed that our love would abound more and more in full knowledge and all discernment. The Greek word for discernment means sensitive perception, moral tact. Discernment is the ability to sense things. Paul did not want the Philippians to love in a foolish way. On the contrary, he encouraged them to love with a mind full of knowledge and discernment, sensitive perception, and moral tact.

The knowledge and discernment about which Paul speaks in 1:9 are actually Christ Himself. When we experience Christ, He becomes our knowledge and discernment. The reason we lack the knowledge and the

discernment to differentiate between the different kinds of preaching is that we are short of the experience of Christ.

B. To Discern the Different Preachings of Christ and the Different Peoples

According to the context of 1:9, Paul's meaning was that the Philippians needed knowledge and discernment to distinguish between Paul's preaching and that of the Judaistic believers. We today also need to discern between the many different kinds of preaching. Among Christians today, there are many different ways of preaching Christ. With all these ways, there are certain good points. If there were no good points at all in a particular way of preaching, no one would pay attention to it. But although the different ways of preaching Christ have certain positive features, we must ask whether or not such preaching is for God's economy, for His move on the earth today. Deep within, Paul realized that some of the Philippians had been distracted by the preaching of the Judaistic believers. In these verses Paul seemed to be saying, "Philippians, certain of you have been distracted from God's economy by the preaching of the Judaistic believers. I agree that you need to love these people. However, your love should abound in full knowledge and all discernment. Don't love others foolishly--love them soberly, with knowledge and sensitive perception."

Discernment is the power of perception, the ability to perceive matters in a sensitive way. Certain famous preachers may be knowledgeable and eloquent. But if we have discernment, we shall realize that the goal of their preaching is the furtherance of their own work, not the advancement of God's economy. In order to discern the preaching of others in this way, we need more experience of Christ. Only the experience of Christ can cause love to abound in us in full knowledge and all discernment. Supplied with such a love, we shall love others, but not foolishly.

No doubt, certain of the Philippian saints appreciated the preaching of the Judaistic believers. For this reason, Paul prayed that their love for such ones would abound in full knowledge and all discernment. He encouraged the Philippians to love, but to love in knowledge and discernment, not in foolishness and in blindness.

C. Testing by Purity and without Offense

Paul also prayed that the Philippians would "prove by testing the things which differ" and "be pure and without offense unto the day of Christ." The Greek word rendered pure means judged by sunlight, that is, tested as genuine; hence, pure, sincere. To be without offense means not to be offending, not to cause others to stumble. In discerning things, we need to be pure. In particular, the motives in our heart must be pure. Otherwise, we shall offend others. It is not easy to be discerning in a way that is pure and without offense. This depends very much on our motive.

D. By Experiencing Christ Issuing in the Fruit of Righteousness

In verses 9 and 10 Paul prayed three things on behalf of the Philippians: that their love would abound in full knowledge and all discernment; that they would prove by testing the things which differ; and that they would be pure and without offense unto the day of Christ. The secret to these three matters is found in verse 11, where Paul speaks of being "filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." According to grammar, verse 11 is a modifier related to the three items for which Paul prayed. Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness, the Philippians could abound in love, prove by testing all things, and be pure and without offense. This indicates that being filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ is a necessary condition for these three matters. In order for our love to abound, to prove by testing the things which differ, and to

be pure and without offense, we must first be filled with the fruit of righteousness which is through Jesus Christ.

Verse 11 actually refers to the experience of Christ. Once again we see that the key is the experience of Christ. We know that verse 11 refers to the experience of Christ because of the phrase "through Jesus Christ." The fruit of righteousness is through Christ. It comes to us through our experience of Christ. From the Christ we enjoy and experience, we have the fruit of righteousness. The more we experience Christ, the more this experience will issue in the fruit of righteousness. The fruit of righteousness is the living product of a proper life with a righteous standing before God and man. This could not come about by the believers' natural man for their boast, but through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Our love, therefore, should abound in a way that is according to God's economy. If we experience Christ, our love will abound, we shall prove things by testing, and we shall be pure and without offense.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THREE

PAUL'S SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL AND HIS ENJOYMENT OF GRACE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:7-8, 12-14, 16-17, 28-30

In this message we shall consider Paul's suffering for the gospel and his enjoyment of grace. It is easy to understand the matter of suffering for the gospel and of enjoying grace in a natural way. However, in approaching spiritual things, we need to go beyond the natural or traditional understanding. According to the book of Philippians, to suffer for the gospel and to enjoy grace are both deep matters.

To suffer for the gospel means that you are on earth solely for the interest of God's economy. To suffer for the gospel is to care for the accomplishment of God's economy. The gospel includes God's economy, and suffering for the gospel requires that we participate in God's economy. Thus, to suffer for the gospel actually means to share in the carrying out of God's economy.

Paul's writings indicate that he suffered for the gospel. However, the gospel for which he suffered was not low or superficial. He suffered for the gospel in the sense that he was on earth for the carrying out of God's economy. He did not simply preach that people should believe in Jesus as their Savior so that they might go to heaven. The preaching of such a limited gospel does not entail suffering. In preaching the gospel according to God's economy, Paul renounced religion, law, culture, ordinances, customs, habits, and every kind of ism. The gospel Paul preached slaughtered everything that was apart from God's economy. It slaughtered religion, politics, and culture. In a sense, Paul's gospel slaughters even us. Because Paul

preached such a gospel, he was regarded as a troublemaker, a pestilent fellow (Acts 24:5).

Even though his preaching of the gospel slaughtered everything contrary to God's economy, Paul referred to the gospel as the gospel of peace (Eph. 2:17; 6:15). In Ephesians 2:17 Paul points out that Christ, after His crucifixion and resurrection, came to the Gentiles preaching the gospel of peace. Peace is possible only when everything contrary to the gospel has been slaughtered. In order for there to be peace between us and God and with one another, religion, politics, culture, ordinances, and the law had to be terminated. Because Paul preached a gospel that involves the slaughter of so many things, his preaching was not pleasing to men. He could please neither the Jews nor the Gentiles. Paul could please only God Himself. His preaching was an offense to religion, politics, culture, and every kind of ism.

If we preach the gospel in the way Paul did, we also shall suffer. But if we preach the gospel in a sugar-coated way, we shall be universally welcomed. In such a case, we shall not be those who suffer for God's economy.

Do not understand suffering for the gospel according to the natural concept. To suffer for the gospel, as we have pointed out, is to stand for the interest of God's economy. As long as we remain in the Lord's recovery, caring for the accomplishment of God's economy, our destiny is to suffer for the gospel.

The gospel we preach in the Lord's recovery is opposed to today's religion. In our Life-study of Revelation we pointed out that, according to Revelation 2 and 3, Judaism is satanic, Catholicism is demonic, and Protestantism is Christless. How could such a word be pleasing to those in religion? To utter this kind of word, however, is simply to agree with the terms used by the Lord Jesus in Revelation. He was the One to use the expression "the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9). Does not such an expression indicate that, in the eyes of the Lord, Judaism has become a satanic system? Furthermore, concerning Thyatira, which signifies

Catholicism, the Lord speaks of "the deep things of Satan" (Rev. 2:24). This expression refers to deep, satanic mysteries. Such things certainly are demonic. Concerning Laodicea, we see that Christ is standing outside the door of the church (Rev. 3:20). This is the reason we say that, in a very real sense, Protestantism is Christless, for Christ is outside the door. A similar sentiment was expressed by A. W. Tozer in an article entitled "The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches." Even Tozer's writing indicated that Protestantism is Christless. If we preach the gospel in this way, we should expect to be opposed. In preaching the gospel, our aim is neither to please people nor to offend them. It is simply to sound forth the truth of God. However, God's truth will slaughter many things. Therefore, those who preach the gospel for the carrying out of God's economy on earth will suffer for the sake of the gospel.

Along with suffering for the gospel, there is always the enjoyment of grace. If you suffer for God's economy, you will have this enjoyment. I can testify that in the midst of all the opposition we face, I truly enjoy the Lord's grace. Suffering for God's economy brings in the supply of grace. This enjoyment of grace is related to suffering on behalf of the gospel.

To enjoy grace is to have the genuine experience of Christ, for the grace we enjoy is Christ Himself. I do not believe that those who preach the gospel in a way that pleases men know anything of the enjoyment of grace. To be sure, those Judaistic believers who preached the gospel in rivalry with Paul did not have the enjoyment of Christ as grace. Their preaching could not bring in Christ as grace for their enjoyment. Elsewhere we have pointed out that grace is nothing less than the Triune God processed for our enjoyment. Some may question this understanding of grace, wondering whether it is true to say that grace is the Triune God processed for our enjoyment. Consider Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (Gk.). Here we see the Triune God

for our enjoyment. Grace, therefore, is the experience of the indwelling Christ, who is the processed God as our enjoyment. The more we suffer for God's economy on earth, the more we enjoy such a Christ.

If I did not speak the Lord's word in Revelation 2 and 3 concerning Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, I could no doubt gain many friends through my preaching of the gospel. However, I would lose the enjoyment of Christ, the unique Friend. In my attempt to please people, I would displease Him. I do not care to trade Christ's favor for man's. Like Paul in Philippians 3, I am willing to count everything loss on account of Christ. I am also willing to suffer the loss of all things on account of the enjoyment of grace. I have not been commissioned by the Lord to please men. When it comes to the matter of God's economy, there is no room for compromise. Everything contrary to God's economy must be slain by the truth of God. Like Paul, we have no choice in this matter.

According to the book of Philippians, Paul suffered not simply because he preached the gospel, but in particular because he defended the gospel and confirmed it. We have seen that the gospel is related to God's economy, to His move on earth for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, certain preachers were perverting this gospel of God's economy and distorting it. Paul rose up to declare that in the gospel of God there was no place for Judaism or for Greek philosophy. He was set for the defense of the gospel (1:16). Furthermore, Paul confirmed the gospel by preaching two mysteries: Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ. Although others were preaching Christ, they were not for the carrying out of these mysteries. The same is true among Christians today. There is a great deal of mission work and gospel preaching, but not many preachers care adequately for Christ as the mystery of God, much less for the church as the mystery of Christ. Many prefer to avoid talk concerning the church. Therefore, there is not much confirmation of the gospel

today. The Lord has burdened us not only with the defense of the gospel, but also for the confirmation of the gospel. This means that we care for the carrying out of the two mysteries. For this, we are opposed.

If you simply preach the gospel in a superficial way without defending it or confirming it, you will be warmly welcomed. In the early years of my ministry, I was told by an elderly pastor that if I would preach in their way, all the Christians in town would welcome me and be happy with me. However, if I persisted in the way I was taking, he said, many would be offended. He advised me out of a good heart. But I had to tell him that I had no choice in the matter. From that day until now, I have had my share of suffering for the gospel. But along with the suffering I have had a rich enjoyment of Christ. He has truly been grace to me for my enjoyment.

Many of us can testify that before we came into the church life, we knew very little of the enjoyment of Christ. Did you have the rich enjoyment of Christ when you were in the denominations? Outside the church life, there is no place where we can have the proper enjoyment of Christ. If you do not believe my word, I would encourage you to travel and search for a place where we can enjoy Christ more than we do in the church life. In 1948 I encouraged a certain brother who was full of complaints about the church to find a better place and then, having done so, to inform me so that I might go there with him. However, he never reported that he found a place where there was more enjoyment of Christ than in the church. Yes, in the church life we experience suffering for the gospel, but we also have grace, the processed Triune God for our enjoyment. What we enjoy is much better than any of those things which are slaughtered by the preaching of the truth of God.

I. PAUL'S SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL

A. In Bonds

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was suffering

for the gospel. In 1:7, 13, 14 and 17 he refers to his bonds, that is, his imprisonment. This indicates clearly that the book of Philippians was written from prison. Although Paul was a prisoner, his prison became a house of wine, a banqueting house, for there Paul was enjoying the Lord. Verse 7, in which Paul speaks of partaking of grace, indicates this. Paul was in bonds, but he was enjoying grace. This verse indicates clearly and strongly that for Paul prison was a place of feasting and not merely of suffering.

B. Due to the Defense and Confirmation of the Gospel

In particular Paul's imprisonment was due to the defense and confirmation of the gospel (1:7).

1. Defending the Gospel on the Negative Side from Perverting and Distorting Heresies

The defense of the gospel is related, on the negative side, to the perverting and distorting heresies, like Judaism dealt with in Galatians and Gnosticism dealt with in Colossians. Judaism was perverting the gospel, whereas Gnosticism and Greek philosophy were distorting it. Paul defended the gospel against all heretical perversion and distortion. Consider his experience with Peter at Antioch. Although Peter had received the vision concerning the Gentiles in Acts 10, he withdrew from eating with the Gentile believers in Antioch. In this matter, Peter did not stand for the truth of the gospel. On the contrary, he perverted this truth. Therefore, Paul withstood Peter to his face and rebuked him.

In defending the gospel against perversion and distortion, Paul was unique. According to the record of the New Testament, he was the one who stood the strongest against anything that perverted and distorted the gospel. This was the reason for much of his sufferings. However, the grace he enjoyed surpassed these sufferings.

2. Confirming the Gospel on the Positive Side with All the Revelation of God's Mysteries concerning Christ and the Church

The confirmation of the gospel is related, on the positive side, to all the revelations of God's mysteries

concerning Christ and the church as unveiled in Paul's Epistles. In the writings of Paul, the two great mysteries--Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ--are unveiled. No other apostle unveiled these mysteries as adequately as Paul did. To be sure, his teaching and preaching were a confirmation of the gospel and of God's economy.

In contrast to Paul, who was absolute for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, many preachers of the gospel today are wishy-washy in this regard. They seem to have no backbone. Instead of dealing with the major points of God's economy, certain of these preachers simply deliver sugar-coated messages to make others happy. But we in the Lord's recovery must defend the gospel and confirm it. On the one hand, we must defend the gospel against teachings which are perverting and distorting it; on the other hand, we must confirm it by pointing out the goal of the gospel of God.

C. For the Advancement of the Gospel

In 1:12 Paul says, "Now I want you to know, brothers, that the things concerning me have turned out rather to the advancement of the gospel." The Greek word rendered advancement refers to the advancement made by pioneers who cut the way before an army to further its march. Paul's sufferings made such an advancement for the gospel. Paul was a pioneer cutting the way so that the church as the army of God could march on. He knew that his sufferings were preparing the way, even the highway, for the advancement of the gospel. Apart from such sufferings, there would not have been this advancement. Even we today are marching on the way cut by Paul in his sufferings for the gospel.

Throughout the centuries, much debris has been thrown on the highway to block the way cut by Paul. Today there is no need for us to cut another highway, but there is the need to clear the one cut by Paul. Even this causes enmity. Certain of today's religionists do not want us to clear away the debris and obstacles. But we have been commissioned by the Lord to clear the way so that the church may advance. We expect that if the young people are faithful to the Lord, they will be able to march forward on a clear highway. For many years we have been helping to clear the way, and we trust that the young generation in the Lord's recovery will march on. We expect that, sooner or later, the Lord's people will travel on the way that is being cleared for them. Although many are not willing to take this way at present, some are using our materials and have begun to talk about the human spirit and the local churches.

D. Encouraging the Brothers to Speak the Word of God without Fear

In 1:14 Paul goes on to say, "And most of the brothers being confident in the Lord in my bonds are more exceedingly daring to speak the word of God without fear." Far from being a discouragement, Paul's imprisonment was an encouragement, an encouragement to the brothers to speak the word of God without fear. I expect that instead of discouraging us the opposition today will encourage us to speak the word of God with boldness. May all the saints be stirred up to speak God's word.

E. Strengthening the Brothers to Suffer for Christ

Paul's suffering for the gospel also strengthened the brothers to suffer for Christ (1:28-30). In 1:28 he charges us not to be frightened in anything by the opposers. He says that this would be proof to them of destruction, but of our salvation. Destruction here refers to the destruction of all

the opposers are and do, whereas salvation denotes the salvation of all we are and do. Paul's strong example of suffering for Christ strengthened the brothers and made them willing to suffer for Him in carrying out God's economy on earth.

In 1:29 Paul says, "Because to you it has been given on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer on His behalf." The Greek word translated "in" means into. The use of this word here implies the organic union the believer has with Christ through believing in Him. To believe in Christ is to have our being merged into His that the two may be organically one. To suffer on behalf of Christ, after receiving Him and being made one with Him through believing, is to participate in, to have the fellowship of, His sufferings (3:10), that we may experience and enjoy Him in His sufferings. This is to live Him and magnify Him in a situation that rejects and opposes Him.

In 1:30 Paul concludes, "Having the same struggle which you saw in me and now hear to be in me." Paul was a pattern set up by God's grace for His New Testament economy (1 Tim. 1:14-16). The New Testament believers should experience and enjoy Christ by living and magnifying Him as Paul did in his sufferings for Christ, that they may be partakers with him of grace.

II. PAUL'S ENJOYMENT OF GRACE

A. Partaking of Grace

In 1:7 Paul tells the Philippians that they "are all partakers with me of grace." Partakers of grace are those who share and enjoy the processed Triune God as grace. The apostle was such a one in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and the saints at Philippi were joint-partakers with him in this grace. By grace Paul endured all the sufferings for the gospel. Participating in this enjoyment of grace with Paul for the furtherance of the gospel, the Philippian believers were one with Paul both in his suffering and in the enjoyment of grace.

B. Experiencing the Inward Parts of Christ

In 1:8 Paul went on to say, "For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus." This verse indicates that Paul experienced the inward parts of Christ. The Greek word rendered "inward parts" means bowels. It signifies inward affection, then tender mercy and sympathy. Paul was one with Christ even in His bowels, the tender inward parts, in longing after the saints.

Verses 7 and 8 belong together and should not be separated. Notice that verse 8 begins with the conjunction "for." This indicates that grace is related to the inward parts of Christ. Paul partook of grace, for he longed after all the saints in the inward parts of Christ. To enjoy Christ is to be one in Christ's inward parts. This refers not only to enjoyment, but also to living Christ. To live Christ is to abide in His inward parts and there to enjoy Him as grace.

Elsewhere in this chapter Paul speaks of magnifying Christ and living Christ. Experientially, to magnify Christ and to live Christ require that we remain in the inward parts of Christ. In simple words, this is to abide in Him. If we would be those in Christ, we must be in His inward parts. We need to be in His tender heart and delicate feelings. If we abide here, we shall enjoy Christ as grace and experience Him in a very practical way. As we experience Christ and enjoy Him as our grace, we shall be sustained in suffering for the gospel by caring for the accomplishment of God's economy on earth today.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FOUR

THE DIFFERENT PREACHINGS OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:15-21

In 1:7-11 Paul uses a number of important terms. He speaks of the defense of the gospel, the confirmation of the gospel, full knowledge, all discernment, proving by testing, and the fruit of righteousness. In verse 8 he even refers to the "inward parts of Christ Jesus." The key to understanding these verses and all the terms and expressions they contain is the experience of Christ. The experience of Christ is the master key which opens the door to the book of Philippians. It is proper to say that the defense of the gospel, the confirmation of the gospel, knowledge, discernment, proving by testing, purity, and the fruit of righteousness are all Christ Himself. Yes, even the defense of the gospel is Christ. If we do not have Christ, there is no way for us to defend the gospel. We can defend it only by Christ, not by eloquence. It is possible to preach the gospel and even to mention Christ quite often without having the reality of Christ in our speaking. In such a preaching of the gospel, there is no ministry of Christ to others. The way to defend the gospel is to minister Christ. Christ is also the genuine confirmation of the gospel, for He is the centrality, the focal point, of the gospel. Apart from Him, there is no confirmation of the gospel.

True knowledge and discernment are also Christ Himself. If we experience Christ day by day, we shall be filled with knowledge and discernment. We shall discern matters not by our natural cleverness, but by the Christ who lives within us. Our experience of Christ will make us wise and tactful. The indwelling Christ is our perceptive power. Although I was a true seeker after the Lord when I was young, I did not know that Christ could be my

discernment, my tact, and my perception. But through the years I have come to see that He is the very ability by which I can see into the nature of things. The indwelling Christ is my perception.

In reading the book of Philippians, we need to remember that the experience of Christ is the subject and main emphasis of this book. The controlling factor enabling us to understand Philippians is the experience of Christ. Every aspect of the book is governed by this subject. This is the reason we say that the experience of Christ is the master key which opens the book of Philippians to us. If we apply this key to every verse and phrase in the book, we shall see that Paul's concern here is nothing other than the experience of Christ. For example, in suffering for the gospel we may enjoy grace. To enjoy grace is to experience Christ. In Philippians 3 Paul speaks not of grace, but of the power of Christ's resurrection. However, the power of resurrection in chapter three is the very grace in chapter one. Furthermore, to enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings is to suffer for the gospel. This indicates that even in suffering for the sake of the gospel, we need to experience Christ. Although Paul uses many different terms in this book, his subject is one--the experience of Christ. Therefore, if we wish to understand Philippians, we need to read it in light of the fact that its subject is the experience of Christ.

In this message we shall consider the different ways of preaching Christ. According to 1:15-17, some preach Christ out of envy and strife, announcing Him out of rivalry, whereas others preach Christ out of love, with a pure motive. In this matter, today's situation is the same as that faced by Paul in the first century. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, there were different ways of preaching Christ. The same is true today.

I. PREACHING CHRIST OUT OF AN IMPURE MOTIVE

In 1:15 Paul says, "Some indeed preach Christ even

because of envy and strife." The word some here refers to those Christians who were opposing Paul and his ministry (2 Cor. 10:7; 11:22-23). Even at Paul's time there were some who preached the gospel from envy of Paul's influence and in strife with him. As the Greek word rendered strife indicates, they preached Christ because of faction and partisanship. In 1:17 Paul goes on to say that these "announce Christ out of rivalry, not purely, thinking to raise up affliction in my bonds." The Greek word for rivalry denotes self-seeking, selfish ambition, faction. In Greek the word affliction means pressure. Those who announced Christ out of rivalry endeavored to make Paul's bonds press him more heavily by depreciating him and his ministry while he was laid aside outwardly from his preaching.

Paul's affliction in bonds was not mainly due to his preaching of the gospel, but to his defense of the gospel. The Judaizers mixed the gospel with the law and circumcision, but Paul defended the gospel. This caused the riot which put him into bonds (Acts 21:27-36).

II. PREACHING CHRIST OUT OF A PURE MOTIVE

In 1:15 Paul says that some also preached Christ out of good will. These were the ones who had fellowship, participation, in the preaching of the gospel with Paul and worked together with him for the defense of the gospel, preaching Christ out of love.

It is commonly thought among Christians that as long as we all believe in Christ as the Savior, worship the same God, teach the Bible, and preach the gospel, everything is all right. Although all Christians believe in the same Lord Jesus, worship the same God, teach the same Bible, and preach the gospel, they may have different ways of preaching Christ. It is very clear from Paul's word in 1:15-17 that even in the first century there were different ways of preaching Christ. Both Paul and the Judaistic believers preached Christ, but in their preaching of Him they were very different.

Because there are different ways of preaching Christ, we need knowledge and discernment. This was the reason Paul prayed for the Philippians that their "love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all discernment" (1:9). We need discernment concerning the different preachings of Christ. Christians all over the world are preaching Christ. However, we should not think that simply because all are preaching the same Christ, everything is fine. We need to realize that there are different ways of preaching Christ and discern between them. Hence, we are burdened in this message to cover the matter of the different ways of preaching Christ.

Concerning the gospel, Paul uses in Philippians several significant terms: "fellowship unto the gospel" (1:5), "the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (1:7), "the advancement of the gospel" (1:12), "the faith of the gospel" (1:27). We all need to have a clear understanding of these aspects of the gospel and not take them for granted. Whenever we read these expressions in Philippians, there should be a deep response within us.

Christians often speak of preaching the gospel; however, seldom do we hear believers talk of having fellowship in the gospel or unto the gospel. Even we ourselves are not very familiar with this term or accustomed to using it. The term "fellowship unto the gospel" may seem like an utterance in a foreign language. This indicates that we are still under the influence of our religious background, not adequately familiar with Paul's terminology concerning the gospel. Let us learn to use Paul's language with respect to the gospel. Let us speak of the fellowship of the gospel, the defense of the gospel, the confirmation of the gospel, the advancement of the gospel, and the faith of the gospel.

When many Christians preach the gospel today, they do not do so in the way of the fellowship of the gospel. They are not engaged in the defense of the gospel, and they do not exercise for the confirmation of the gospel. Their preaching may not lead to the advancement of the gospel,

and they may not even have an adequate understanding of the faith of the gospel. For this reason, there are different ways of preaching Christ. Paul's preaching of Christ included fellowship, defense, confirmation, advancement, and faith. But when the Judaistic believers preached Christ, they preached Him in an altogether different way. Instead of preaching Christ in the way of fellowship, they preached Him because of envy. Instead of preaching Christ in a way to defend the gospel, they did so because of strife. Yes, the Judaistic believers did preach Christ, but their preaching was not for the confirmation of the gospel. On the contrary, they preached Christ out of rivalry, out of faction and selfish ambition. Instead of all the positive aspects of the gospel, there were envy, strife, and rivalry. Such a preaching of the gospel did not cause the advancement of the gospel.

In principle, today's situation is the same as the situation in Paul's time. Many are preaching Christ, but in this preaching we can discern envy, strife, and rivalry in place of fellowship, defense, confirmation, advancement, and faith. Therefore, we need to adopt Paul's vocabulary concerning the gospel and in a proper way, with humility and love, share this with other believers who are open to us. Perhaps the Lord will give many of the young people an opportunity to share with their parents what Paul meant by fellowship unto the gospel and by the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

The Bible is deep and profound, and we should not be content with a superficial understanding of it. In seeking to know the Bible, we care for the pure Word, not for the centuries of tradition or for the opinions of church councils. We need to learn to dig into the depths of the Word, pursuing the right meaning of the different words, terms, and expressions. Then we need to use the vocabulary of the Bible in our conversation. We do not care for tradition or for man's systematic theology. We care only for God's holy Word.

If we become familiar with Paul's terminology

regarding the gospel, we shall see that many of the different teachings of the gospel today are very shallow. There have been certain preachers and teachers who have discovered some of the treasures in God's Word. But many of those who followed them neglected these riches, often placing more value on a certain traditional theological background than on a true understanding of the Word of God. We in the Lord's recovery should not be satisfied with a shallow preaching of the gospel; we must come back to the Bible and dig into the riches contained in it. We thank the Lord that, in His mercy, we in the recovery are enjoying these riches.

Much of today's preaching is not healthy. In this preaching something is presented to the people, but it is not healthy food. Rather, it is sweet and sugarcoated, pleasant tasting, but lacking in nourishment. We must be able to discern between such preaching and the preaching of Christ according to God's economy.

III. THE APOSTLE'S REJOICING IN BOTH KINDS OF PREACHING OF CHRIST

In 1:18 Paul declares, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice." Paul's heart was so broadened by grace that he even rejoiced in his opposing ones' preaching of Christ in pretense. What an upright spirit is this! This is the outworking of the life, nature, and mind of Christ who lived in him. His experience of Christ was an enjoyment. Such a life rejoices no matter what the circumstances may be.

IV. THE PREACHING OF CHRIST IN BOTH WAYS TURNING OUT TO SALVATION FOR THE APOSTLE PAUL

In 1:19 Paul continues, "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Paul

realized that both ways of preaching Christ would turn out to salvation. Salvation in verse 19 means to be sustained and strengthened to magnify Christ and to live Him. The circumstances in which Paul found himself forced him to experience Christ and enjoy Him in a fuller way through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In Paul's experience God's salvation was carried out to the uttermost. The experience of such a salvation is altogether related to the enjoyment of Christ and the experience of Christ.

Paul's circumstances also encouraged him to live Christ and to magnify Christ. Paul utilized the situations caused by the different preachings of the gospel to experience Christ, to live Christ, and to magnify Christ. Our situation is the same today. On the one hand, we cannot agree with certain ways in which Christ is preached; on the other hand, we must learn to be happy with the fact that Christ is being proclaimed. If this is our attitude, then the abnormal situation brought about by the different preachings of Christ will become an incentive for us to enjoy Christ, to live Him, and to magnify Him, as Paul did.

If we have the fellowship unto the gospel, the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and the advancement of the gospel, our preaching of the gospel will be healthy. The proper preaching of the gospel is safeguarded by these matters. The raising up of churches in South America illustrates this principle. In 1959 some brothers moved to Brazil with a burden for the spread of the Lord's recovery. During the first ten years these brothers faced much suffering. But during the next eleven years more than fifty churches were raised up in different countries. A certain brother who has taken the lead in this matter is not a gifted speaker. But because his preaching is in the fellowship unto the gospel, with the advancement of the gospel, and for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, the Lord has used him in raising up these churches. We praise the Lord for what He has done in South America through the proper, healthy preaching of the gospel! May

we all learn to discern the different ways of preaching Christ. In particular, may we discern between healthy preaching and that which is unhealthy.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIVE

THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21

In 1:19-21 there are three crucial expressions: "the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (v. 19), "Christ shall be magnified in my body" (v. 20), and "to me to live is Christ" (v. 21). In this message we shall consider the first of these expressions, "the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

I. THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY

In 1:19 Paul says, "I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The words "bountiful supply" are not simply a translation of the Greek, but an interpretation of the Greek term used. Literally, the Greek word refers to the supplying of all the needs of the chorus by someone known as the choragus, the leader or director of the chorus. The Greek word Paul uses thus implies a bountiful supply. The choragus supplied all the needs of everyone in the chorus, the needs for food, clothing, lodging, and musical instruments. The supply of the choragus truly was bountiful, even all-inclusive. Once a person had joined the chorus, there was no need for him to be concerned about the necessities of life; the choragus would supply whatever he needed. In using the expression "the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," Paul likens the supply of the Spirit to that of the choragus. Therefore, to have a proper understanding of 1:19, we need the word bountiful with the word supply. This bountiful

supply of the all-inclusive Spirit was for Paul to live Christ and magnify Christ in his sufferings for Him. The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is bountiful and all-inclusive. What we have today is not a partial supply, but a bountiful, all-inclusive supply.

II. THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST

The Spirit of Jesus Christ is "the Spirit" as mentioned in John 7:39. This is not merely the Spirit of God before the Lord's incarnation, but the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit with divinity, after the Lord's resurrection, compounded with the Lord's incarnation (humanity), human living under the cross, crucifixion, and resurrection. The holy anointing ointment in Exodus 30:23-25, a compound of olive oil with four kinds of spices, was a full type of this compound Spirit of God, who is now the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Here it is not the Spirit of Jesus as in Acts 16:7 (Gk.), nor the Spirit of Christ as in Romans 8:9, but the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Jesus is mainly for the Lord's humanity and human living; the Spirit of Christ is mainly for the Lord's resurrection. To experience the Lord's humanity, as illustrated in Philippians 2:5-8, we need the Spirit of Jesus. To experience the power of the Lord's resurrection, as mentioned in 3:10, we need the Spirit of Christ. In his suffering, Paul experienced both the Lord's suffering in His humanity and the Lord's resurrection. Hence, the Spirit to him was the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit of the Triune God. Such a Spirit has, and even is, the bountiful supply for a person like Paul, who was experiencing and enjoying Christ in His human living and resurrection. Eventually, this compound Spirit of Jesus Christ becomes the seven Spirits of God, who are the seven lamps of fire before His throne to carry out His administration on earth for the accomplishment of His economy with the church, and who are the seven eyes of the Lamb for the transfusing of all that He is into the church (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6).

A. The Spirit of God in Creation

The revelation in the Bible concerning God, Christ, and the Spirit is progressive. This revelation begins in Genesis 1 and develops progressively until it reaches its consummation in the book of Revelation. The first mention of the Spirit in the Scriptures is found in Genesis 1:2, where we are told that the Spirit of God was brooding over the waters (Heb.). In relation to God's creation, the Spirit is specifically called the Spirit of God.

B. The Spirit of Jehovah in Relationship with Man

God's relationship with man, of course, is more intimate than His relationship with creation. Hence, in speaking of God's relationship with man, the title of the Spirit is the Spirit of Jehovah (Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam. 10:6).

C. The Holy Spirit in Making Man Holy

At the time of the conception and birth of Christ, the term Holy Spirit was used (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20). This title of the Spirit is related to holiness, sanctification, and separation unto God. Through the Holy Spirit something in man is sanctified, made holy.

D. The Spirit of Jesus in Suffering

In Greek, Acts 16:7 speaks of the Spirit of Jesus. The Lord's life on earth was a life of suffering. Thus, the title "the Spirit of Jesus" refers in particular to the Spirit in relation to the Lord's suffering.

E. The Spirit of Christ In Resurrection

In Romans 8:9-11 Paul speaks of the Spirit of Christ. According to the context of these verses, the Spirit of Christ is related mainly to Christ's resurrection.

F. The Spirit of Jesus Christ in His Suffering and in His Resurrection

We have seen that in 1:19 Paul speaks of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Since the Spirit of Jesus has particular reference to the Lord's suffering, and the Spirit of Christ, to His resurrection, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is related both to suffering and resurrection. In his imprisonment

Paul was enjoying the Spirit both as the Spirit of Jesus in suffering and as the Spirit of Christ in resurrection. As he was suffering, Paul was enjoying Christ's resurrection. Since he was experiencing both suffering and resurrection, to him the Spirit was the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

G. The Spirit-- the All-inclusive Life-giving Spirit of the Triune God

John 7:39 says, "But this He said concerning the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." This verse speaks of "the Spirit," telling us that before the Lord Jesus was crucified and resurrected, "the Spirit" was not yet. The Spirit of God was there from the beginning (Gen. 1:1-2), but "the Spirit" as the Spirit of Jesus Christ was "not yet" at the time of John 7:39, because the Lord had not yet been glorified. After His resurrection, the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ. Even though, before the Lord's death and resurrection, the Spirit of God was the Spirit of Jehovah and the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit" was not yet. This term--"the Spirit"--is used often by Paul in his Epistles and by John in the book of Revelation. Instead of saying the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit, Paul often said "the Spirit"--the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit of the Triune God.

H. The Compound Spirit Typified by the Compound Ointment

The term "compound Spirit" cannot be found in the Bible. However, the reality of this aspect of the Spirit is found in the Scriptures. The same is true of the Trinity. Although this term cannot be found in the Bible, it cannot be reasonably denied that the Bible reveals that God is triune. Matthew 28:19 speaks of baptizing people into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, a clear indication that God is triune. Another indication is 2 Corinthians 13:14, which speaks of the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (Gk.). Based upon the fact that, according to the Bible, God is triune, the term Trinity is used. In the same principle, based upon the facts in Scripture, we may properly speak of the Spirit as the compound Spirit. According to Exodus 30:23-24, a hin of olive oil was compounded with four spices to produce the holy anointing oil, the holy ointment. In typology, oil signifies the Spirit of God, and the compound ointment, the oil blended with four spices, signifies the Holy Spirit. Through a compounding process, the oil became an ointment and was used to anoint the tabernacle and everything related to it. Even the priests were anointed with this holy ointment. Before Exodus 30, this compound ointment was "not yet," but after Exodus 30, such an ointment was definitely in existence. In like manner, before Christ was crucified, resurrected, and glorified, the Spirit as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit was "not yet." But through the process of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the Spirit of God, typified by the oil, became the compound Spirit, typified by the ointment.

The four spices used to make the ointment in Exodus 30 typify the effectiveness of Christ's death, the sweetness of His death, the power of His resurrection, and the fragrance of His resurrection. Before Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the Spirit of God did not have these four elements. But after Christ's resurrection, these elements

were compounded into the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God became "the Spirit, "the compound Spirit.

I. The Seven Spirits of God

The book of Revelation refers to the seven Spirits of God (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6). These seven Spirits are the seven lamps of fire burning before God's throne and also the seven eyes of the Lamb. Since Revelation mentions the seven Spirits, we must ask whether God the Spirit is one or seven. According to the mathematics in our mentality, one is one and seven is seven. But according to the mathematics of the Bible, there is a sense in which seven is one and one is seven. The one Spirit is called the seven Spirits.

According to the traditional understanding of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are regarded as three distinct Persons. Some even go so far as to insist that they are distinct and separate Persons. According to the Bible, however, the Three cannot be separated. I wonder what those who advocate the traditional understanding of the Trinity do with Revelation 5:6. This verse tells us that the seven Spirits, the third Person, are the seven eyes of the Lamb, the second Person. If the Son and the Spirit were two separate Persons, how could the seven Spirits be the eyes of the Lamb? In other words, how can one Person of the Trinity, the Spirit, be the eyes of another Person, the Son? There is no room in the traditional understanding of the Trinity, especially as it follows the formulation of the Nicene Creed, for "the Spirit, " the compound Spirit, or the seven Spirits. Actually, those who hold to the tradition are very narrow and restricted in their understanding, but those who hold to the pure Word in its entirety are very broad and inclusive.

We may use the word persons to speak of the Three of the Triune God. However, we must be careful not to press this word too far. W. H. Griffith Thomas recognized the danger of this. In The Principles of Theology he said this concerning the Trinity: "The term Person is also sometimes objected to. Like all human language, it is liable to be

accused of inadequacy and even positive error. It certainly must not be pressed too far or it will lead to Tritheism...." Those who press the term persons too far will end up not merely with the three Persons of the Godhead, but with three Gods. Eventually, what they have is tritheism instead of the Trinity. Without realizing it, many Christian teachers have done this very thing. We need to recognize that we are simply not able to define the Trinity adequately. We do not even have a thorough understanding of man. How could we expect, then, to understand adequately the mystery of the Triune God? We need to turn from the inadequacies of the Nicene Creed and of the traditional understanding of the Trinity and come back to the pure Word of God. In the light of God's Word, we see that the Spirit we are enjoying today is not only the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit; this Spirit is not even limited to the Spirit of Jesus or the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit we are enjoying is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This Spirit is "the Spirit," the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit of the Triune God. Because this Spirit is so rich, bountiful, and all-inclusive, He has the supply to meet our every need. For this reason, when Paul was suffering for the sake of the gospel, he enjoyed the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive Spirit.

Christians today may talk about the Spirit and even write books about the Spirit, but they say nothing concerning the compound Spirit or the seven Spirits. Instead, they hold on to the limited, traditional understanding of the Spirit of God expressed in the Nicene Creed. Those in the charismatic movement or in Pentecostalism claim to experience the Spirit. However, they also seem to neglect the life-giving Spirit, the compound Spirit, and the seven Spirits. If we would have a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit, we need to realize that the Spirit today is nothing less than the Triune God processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Some object to the word processed. They argue that it is not possible for God to be processed. But

did God not pass through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection? If this is not a process, then what word should we use to describe it? As we use the word Trinity to convey the revelation of the Triune God in the Bible, we use the word process to convey the steps the Triune God has taken from Christ's incarnation through His resurrection.

We are not satisfied simply to have a doctrinal understanding of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We must go on to experience the Spirit, the compound Spirit, and the seven Spirits of God. We need more and more experience of the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit who is the processed Triune God as everything to us. By such a Spirit Paul suffered for God's economy and simultaneously enjoyed a bountiful supply to strengthen him in resurrection. Paul was an overcomer not because he had a strong will. He could be an overcomer because he experienced and enjoyed the all-inclusive Spirit with His bountiful supply dwelling in him to be everything to him. Paul realized in his experience that the Triune God was working Himself into his being. May we also experience and enjoy the Triune God supplying us and working Himself into us as the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SIX

MAGNIFYING CHRIST BY LIVING HIM

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21

In this message we shall consider the matter of magnifying Christ by living Him (1:19-21). In verse 20 Paul said, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death." In Paul's bodily sufferings, Christ was magnified, that is, shown or declared great (shown to be without limitation), exalted, and extolled. His sufferings afforded him opportunity to express Christ in His unlimited greatness. Only Christ would he have magnified in him, not the law or circumcision. Philippians is concerned with the experience of Christ. To magnify Christ under any circumstances is to experience Him with the topmost enjoyment.

I. MAGNIFYING CHRIST

In verse 20 a number of expressions are related to Paul's statement that Christ would be magnified in him: "with all boldness," "as always," "even now," "in my body," "whether through life or through death." Paul does not simply say "with boldness," but says "with all boldness." Then he specifically points out that Christ would be magnified in his body. He said this because his body was in chains. At least during the night, if not all the time, Paul was chained to a guard. Nevertheless, even though his body was in chains, Christ would be magnified in his body. Moreover, Christ would be magnified whether through life or through death. This indicates that no matter what the circumstances were, Paul expected Christ to be magnified in him.

Now we must consider what it means to magnify Christ. The word magnify means to make something large to our sight. Perhaps you are wondering how Christ can be magnified since He is already universally great. According to Ephesians 3, the dimensions of Christ--the breadth, length, height, and depth--are immeasurable. They are the dimensions of the universe. Although Christ is vast, extensive, and immeasurable, in the eyes of the praetorium, the imperial guard of Caesar, Christ was virtually nonexistent. In their eyes, there was not such a person as Jesus Christ. However, Paul magnified Christ; he made Him great before the eyes of others, especially before the eyes of those who guarded him in prison. As a result, some eventually turned to Christ. Evidence of this is found in 4:22, where Paul speaks of the saints of Caesar's household. Through Paul's magnification of Christ, even some in Caesar's household were saved.

At the time of Paul's imprisonment, the Jews were despised by the Romans. The Romans were the conquerors, and the Jews were the conquered ones. Among these conquered ones there was a man named Jesus. Although He is great and most wonderful, in the eyes of the Romans He was nothing. But as Paul was held captive in a Roman prison, he magnified Christ, making Him to appear great in the eyes of his captors.

In our daily living we also should magnify Christ, making Him great in the eyes of others. Where you work or go to school people may look down on Christ. They may ridicule Him and take His name in vain, in violation of the third commandment. Therefore, you need to let others see Christ not in a small way, but in the way of enlargement, of magnification.

We should also magnify Him at home. The parents of some of the young people may not believe in Christ, but rather may despise Him. Hence, these young people must bear the responsibility to enlarge Christ before their parents. Instead of simply preaching to their parents about Christ, they need to magnify Him. We need not simply the

life within, but also the living without. Through the proper living Christ will appear to be great in the eyes of others. Young people, let your parents see Christ's greatness in you.

We can magnify Christ even in situations where we have little or no liberty to speak about Him. Although teachers may not be able to preach the gospel to their students, they can magnify Christ in the classroom. They can cause Christ to appear great in the eyes of their students. I do not believe that when Paul was in prison, he was free to do much preaching of Christ. On the contrary, he was very limited and under strict control. However, even in such circumstances, Christ was magnified in his body. With all boldness Paul sought to magnify Him always.

Paul says that Christ would be magnified in him whether through life or through death. No matter what faced him--the opportunity to go on living or martyrdom--Paul expected to magnify Christ. In his living Paul magnified Christ. This is to magnify Him through life. As he was expecting to be martyred, he also magnified Him. This is to magnify Christ through death. Thus, whether through life or death, Christ was magnified in Paul's imprisoned and chained body. Obviously this is not mere doctrine; it is the genuine experience of Christ.

In verse 19 Paul mentions the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. If we allow the bountiful supply of the Spirit to work in us, our daily living will be changed. We shall be burdened to magnify Christ always and with all boldness. Through our magnifying of Christ, others will see His greatness and His unlimitedness. To magnify Christ in such a way surely is to live Him.

At the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was an elderly person. No doubt, the guards expected him to be exhausted by his imprisonment. But far from being exhausted, Paul was full of joy and rejoicing in the Lord. I am confident that he was shining forth Christ and expressing Him. Such an expression was a declaration of

the unlimited greatness of Christ and a declaration that Christ is inexhaustible.

Our love is eventually exhausted, but Christ as love is inexhaustible. Likewise, our natural patience is limited, but Christ as our patience is without limit. We all have the capacity to be patient, but only to a certain extent. Then we become provoked and angry. For example, a brother may exercise patience with his wife. Eventually, however, this patience reaches its limit, and he becomes angry with her. Although our natural patience is so limited, Christ as patience is inexhaustible and immeasurable.

Even though Paul must have been mistreated in prison, he could be happy and display to the guards the unlimited greatness of Christ. In particular, Paul displayed Christ's inexhaustible patience. Christ certainly was magnified in Paul's physical body. Day by day, Paul was happy in the Lord. His happiness did not diminish as time went by. In his happiness he could show forth the immeasurable Christ he experienced and enjoyed. By this way Paul expressed, exhibited, exalted, and extolled Christ. I do not believe that Paul was offended by the jailers or that he offended them. Rather, he was a living witness of Christ, testifying of His ability, power, patience, love, and wisdom, all without measure. The guards may have considered Paul to be strange or peculiar, viewing him as possessing something which they did not have. What they sensed in Paul was Christ magnified. While he was in prison, Paul expressed the greatness of Christ in an enlarged way. He magnified Christ with all boldness both through life and through death. By magnifying Christ in this way, Paul could overcome any situation.

II. LIVING CHRIST

In verse 21 Paul goes on to say, "For to me to live is Christ." The little word "for" at the beginning of this verse is important. It indicates that what is to follow is an explanation of the preceding verse. Christ could be magnified in Paul's body because Paul lived Christ. In

order to magnify Christ, we must live Him. Although the matter of living Christ is of such tremendous importance, not many Christians have paid adequate attention to it. The word "for" in verse 21 helps us to see that Paul could magnify Christ because to him to live was Christ. In Paul's chained body Christ was exalted, extolled, praised, and appreciated because Paul lived Christ.

If we would live Christ, we must take Him as our person and be one person with Him. He and we must be one in a practical way. In Galatians 2:20 Paul declared, "Christ lives in me." For Paul, this was not a mere doctrine; it was a fact. It should also be real to us that Christ lives in us. It is sad that some Christians do not believe that Christ actually lives in them. Neither do they believe that we can abide in Christ and have Him abide in us. But the Bible tells us definitely that Christ is in us and lives in us. Furthermore, we should abide in Him and allow Him to abide in us.

Paul could say not only that Christ lived in him, but also that to him to live was Christ. On the one hand, Christ lived in Paul; on the other hand, Paul lived Christ. Inwardly Christ was Paul's life, and outwardly Christ was Paul's living. Paul and Christ thus had one life and one living. Christ's life was Paul's life, and Paul's living was Christ's living. The two, Christ and Paul, lived as one. First Corinthians 6:17 refers to such a living. In this verse Paul says that we are one spirit with the Lord. The organic union that has taken place between us and Christ causes us to be so close and intimate with Him that we are even one spirit with Him.

To live Christ is not merely to have a holy life or to live holiness. To live Christ is to live a person. We admit that the expression "live Christ" is new. We use this term deliberately. In the past we have spoken of living out Christ. Although this expression is not incorrect, to add the word "out" may detract from the proper meaning. We should simply live Christ. We should live a life which is Christ Himself.

From my experience I can testify that the most difficult thing in our Christian life is to practice to live Christ. We may be "holy," "spiritual," and "victorious" without living Christ. Even though we may be "holy," "spiritual," and "victorious," we are still the ones living our natural life. We are not living Christ.

By nature, I am a quick person. When my sister heard that I had turned to the Lord, she was happy and wanted to help me. In particular, she tried to help me with my natural quickness. She would not rebuke me or correct me. Instead, she would tell me about others who were slow in their speech and behavior. Realizing what she was trying to do, I told the Lord that I regretted my quickness and asked Him to enable me to slow down. But my behavior was like that of a monkey imitating a human being. Although I could deliberately be slow for a few days, eventually I reverted to my natural quickness. Because I had been born a quick person, I just could not make myself slow down. At the time my sister tried to help me, she was teaching me to be slow. But she did not help me to live Christ. Now, more than fifty years later, I can be slow and patient. I can also control my temper. In a sense, I can be holy, spiritual, and victorious. But I have come to see that it is possible to do all this without living Christ.

In order to live Christ we must take Him as our person and as our life. Although I have made progress in this matter, I admit that still my practice is not very successful. Almost every morning I pray, "Lord, I thank You for another day to practice living You. Lord, in myself, I cannot do this. I ask You to remind me to live You and grant me the grace I need for this." I have found, however, that soon after praying to the Lord in this way, I may go back to living myself instead of living Christ. Everything about my living may be good, and yet I may not live Christ. I do not yet have the assurance to testify with Paul, "To me to live is Christ."

In the Christian life it is easy to follow certain practices. For example, we may realize that we are

talkative and may adopt the practice of limiting our speech. However, we may succeed in restricting our talkativeness and yet fail to live Christ. It is one thing to follow a certain practice; it is another thing to live Christ. God does not care for how holy, spiritual, or victorious we are in ourselves. Actually, to live in this way by self-effort is to strive to keep the law. What counts in the eyes of God is Christ and the living of Christ. Concerning the matter of living Christ, the situation of today's Christians is far from God's goal. This is the reason we are fighting and struggling to enter into the genuine living of Christ in a practical way. God wants His people to live Christ. We should not care for holiness, spirituality, or victory as things in themselves, and we should not care for our natural virtues or attributes. Instead, we should focus our whole attention on living Christ and care only to live Christ that He might be magnified in us.

In the book of Philippians Paul encourages us to think the one thing (2:2). This one thing is to live Christ. We should care only to live Christ and magnify Him. Instead of pursuing holiness, spirituality, or victory, we should seek to live Christ and magnify Him always with all boldness, whether through life or through death. God's desire today is that we live Christ.

Do not allow anything to distract you from the direct, personal experience of Christ. Yes, we need to understand the background of Philippians and realize what is the present religious situation. We also need to discern between the different preachings of Christ. But none of this should distract us from Christ Himself. Today we need to focus our attention on the one thing--to live Christ.

III. HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH THE LAW AND CIRCUMCISION

Paul's life was to live Christ. To him, to live was Christ, not the law or circumcision. He would not live the law but would live Christ, not be found in the law but be found in Christ (3:9). Christ was not only his life within, but also his

living without. He lived Christ because Christ lived in him. He was one with Christ both in life and in living. He and Christ had one life and one living. They lived together as one person. Christ lived within him as his life, and he lived Christ without as His living. The normal experience of Christ is to live Him, and to live Him is to magnify Him always, regardless of the circumstances.

When Paul was in prison, he was living Christ. Therefore, he could be found not in the law, but in Christ. At any time, men, angels, and demons could find him in Christ. We also need to be found by others in Christ, not simply in our good behavior. Young people, your parents should find you in Christ. They should sense that there is something different about you. All of our relatives, friends, and colleagues should find us in Christ.

If we would be found in Christ, we must live Christ. Only when we live Christ shall we be found in Him by others and by the angels and demons. However, if we are law-keepers, we shall be found in the law instead of in Christ. We are not here to express the law or magnify the law; our goal is to express Christ and magnify Him. We all need to pray, "Lord, have mercy on me and rescue me both from sinful things and from good things, even spiritual things, that replace You in my daily life. Lord, rescue me from everything back to Yourself. Also, I ask You to grant me the grace each day that I may truly live You and be found in You." I can testify that this kind of prayer is effective. Let us all seek the one thing and pursue the one thing--to live Christ and magnify Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SEVEN

THE BEST CHOICE OF PAUL

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-26

Philippians 1:18-21 is one sentence. In verse 18 Paul says, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice." Verse 19 begins with the word "for." This indicates that verse 19 is an explanation of verse 18. Verse 19 says, "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The word "this" refers to the different preachings of Christ mentioned by Paul in the foregoing verses. Through the petition of the saints and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Paul knew that these different preachings would turn out to salvation. Then verse 20 opens with the words, "according to my earnest expectation and hope." This phrase modifies salvation in verse 19. With a full hope, Paul expected to enjoy salvation. Verse 20 indicates that the salvation Paul expected to enjoy was that in nothing he would be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, Christ would be magnified in his body.

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was in prison in a foreign country, far away from his homeland. Paul had good reason to worry and be sad. Since his circumstances were so difficult, he could have easily wept about his situation. However, if Paul had been weeping instead of rejoicing, he could not have said, "For me this shall turn out to salvation." If he had wept, he would not have experienced salvation in that environment. Suppose

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you

were a Jew held captive in a Roman prison. Would you have rejoiced? I am sure we all would have felt sorrowful and homesick. But instead of weeping, Paul rejoiced in the Lord. For him, everything that happened turned out to salvation.

According to the context of these verses, salvation means that Paul was not put to shame in anything. Not only did he not feel shameful, but nothing caused him to be put to shame. Christ was magnified in Paul's body. This magnification of Christ, spoken of in verse 20, is the very salvation mentioned in verse 19. This means that the salvation which was according to Paul's earnest expectation and hope was that he would not be put to shame, but would magnify Christ in his body. Therefore, in verse 20 we have a definition of the practical enjoyment of salvation.

To enjoy this kind of salvation is to live Christ. This is the reason Paul says in verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ."

Paul's sufferings did not put him to shame. Instead, they afforded him an opportunity to magnify Christ. If we experience the salvation mentioned in these verses, then when we undergo suffering, we shall magnify Christ and not be put to shame. But if we are defeated by suffering, suppressed by it, and filled with worry, we shall be put to shame. But if we magnify Christ in sufferings, we shall experience this salvation.

One day the wife of a certain brother died. Her death was a great loss to her husband and children. If in our contact with this brother we had seen nothing but sorrow and tears, we would have had a sense of shame. In such a case, the loss of his wife would have brought him into shame, and there would have been no manifestation of Christ and no magnification of Him. As a result, there would have been no experience of salvation. Rather, the brother's experience in grieving over the loss of his wife would not have been different from the experience of an unbeliever. However, with this brother the situation was very different. He could rejoice, praise the Lord, and testify

of the Lord's grace. Truly in his situation the Lord was manifested and magnified, and the brother experienced salvation. In this experience of salvation, the brother was saved in his suffering from the loss of his wife. Furthermore, this salvation enabled the brother to magnify Christ.

The experience of this brother in magnifying Christ after the loss of his wife illustrates Paul's experience in prison. Although he was a prisoner in a foreign country, his suffering did not put him to shame. According to Paul's earnest expectation and hope, Christ was magnified in him, and Paul enjoyed the Lord's salvation.

THE KEY TO PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

The key to Paul's experience of salvation was the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Everything that happened to Paul turned out to salvation through this bountiful supply. Between salvation in verse 19 and the magnifying of Christ in verse 20, we have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Actually, in our experience, salvation, Christ, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit are one. But if we would enjoy Christ and experience Him as our salvation in every circumstance, we need the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Just as this Spirit dwelt in the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment, He also dwells within us today. Through the supply of such a Spirit, Paul enjoyed salvation.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN CHRIST AND GAIN

In verse 21 Paul says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." In this verse we have a contrast between Christ and gain. Some may think that the gain here refers to Christ. Although in a sense it may refer to Christ, it refers to Christ in a different way, not to the Christ we experience by living Him. In a practical way, the gain in verse 21 is the presence of Christ. When Paul said, "To die is gain," he meant that to die is to enjoy Christ's presence in a better way. In verse 23 Paul says that his desire is to

depart and to be with Christ. To be with Christ is a matter of degree, not of place. While Paul was desiring to be with Christ in a higher degree, he was already with Him continually. Through his physical death, he would be with Christ to a fuller extent than he enjoyed in this earthly life.

When Paul was in prison, he enjoyed Christ and experienced Him in two ways. One way was to enjoy the presence of Christ, and the other way was to live Christ. There is a vast difference between enjoying the presence of Christ and living Christ. For example, I may enjoy my wife's presence, but I cannot live her. By this we see that we may enjoy a person's presence without living that person. Paul not only enjoyed the Lord's presence, but he also lived Him. He knew that when he died he would have no further opportunity to live Christ, but he would enter into a higher enjoyment of the presence of Christ. Therefore, to die would be gain. What Paul valued was not only the presence of Christ, but also the opportunity to live Him.

Throughout the centuries, Christians have been encouraged to practice the presence of the Lord. However, there has been little encouragement, if any, to live Him. Many believers are familiar with the famous book *The Practice of the Presence of God* and have been encouraged by it to endeavor to live in God's presence. However, the concept of practicing the presence of God is mainly an Old Testament concept, not a New Testament one. Yes, according to the New Testament, we may enjoy the Lord's presence on the one hand. But, on the other hand, we should practice living Him. We have not only the Lord's presence, but we also have His Person. Not only do we need to be in His presence; we also need to be one person with Him and live Him. To live Christ is a much deeper experience than simply to be in His presence. Living Him goes far beyond the enjoyment of His presence.

Do you intend just to practice the presence of Christ, or is it your desire also to live Christ? To live the Lord is even better than to be with the Lord. Yes, it is a gain to die and be with the Lord in a greater degree than on earth. But it

is even better to live Him while we are on earth. Probably you have thanked the Lord for His presence, but have you ever thanked Him for the experience of living Him? It is easy for us to thank the Lord for the sweetness and loveliness of His presence. Many have the habit of doing this. Sometimes when I am about to utter such a thanksgiving to the Lord, I have the conviction within that I am simply following an Old Testament practice. I am then reminded of my need to live Christ. First Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." We are one spirit with the Lord not only that we may enjoy His presence, but even more that we live Him. But what Christians today are being instructed and helped to live Christ? For years we have been helped to develop the habit of practicing the Lord's presence. This experience is on the first floor of the Christian life. Now in the Lord's recovery we must go on to the second floor, to the practice of living Christ.

There certainly is a difference in verse 21 between living Christ and gaining a greater degree of His presence. I can testify that my preference is to live Christ and not just to gain a greater degree of His presence.

FRUIT FROM WORK

In verse 22 Paul goes on to say, "But if to live in the flesh, this to me is fruit from work, and what I shall choose I cannot tell." To a great extent, the word "work" has been spoiled. Many Christians care only for a work; they do not care for Christ. But Paul could speak of "fruit from work." Paul's use of the word fruit indicates that his work was actually his living. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was living in prison; he was not working. This indicates that his living was his work. From such a living work, fruit would come forth. The fruit of this work was Christ lived out, magnified, and ministered to others. The fruit of Paul's work was thus the transfusion of Christ into others. Therefore, the fruit of work in verse 22 is the issue, the result, of Paul's living in prison.

Paul's living work was to minister Christ to others and to transfuse the Christ he magnified into them. As far as Paul was concerned, to die was to gain, but to live was to carry on such a living and fruitful work. It was difficult for him to choose between the two. This was the reason he said, "What I shall choose I cannot tell." If you had to choose between the gain which comes from dying physically and the fruit which comes from a living work, what would be your choice? I would definitely prefer to live in the flesh in order to carry on the living work of magnifying Christ and transfusing Him into others.

PAUL'S DESIRE TO BE WITH CHRIST

Verse 23 says, "But I am constrained by the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it rather is much better." When Paul wrote these words, he was in bonds suffering mistreatment. Under those circumstances, we would expect him to long to be with Christ. Any believer in Paul's situation would have the same desire.

We have indicated that to be with Christ is a matter of degree, not of place. No doubt, Paul was with Christ in prison. The fact that he was already with Christ indicates that being with Christ is not a matter of place. But although Paul was with Christ to a certain degree, he desired to be with Him in a higher degree. Paul knew that as a result of physical death he would be with Christ to a greater extent than in his earthly life. For this reason, he could desire to depart and to be with Christ, regarding this as much better.

REMAINING FOR THE SAINTS' PROGRESS AND JOY

In verse 24 Paul continues, "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." The words "your sake" mean for the sake of the church. The apostle's consideration was not selfish, but was for the sake of the saints. He was absolutely occupied by the Lord with the

church. Paul realized that the churches needed more of the ministry of Christ. For their sake, he would remain in order to minister Christ to them.

Paul was a person full of Christ. When he spoke, he spoke Christ. When he lived, he lived with Christ. When he worked, he worked with Christ and ministered Christ to the churches. For the sake of the church, he was willing to remain in the flesh that he might minister Christ to the saints.

Verse 25 says, "And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith." The faith here refers to what the saints believe in (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:7); progress, to the growth in life; and joy, to the enjoyment of Christ. Paul was willing to remain for the sake of the saints' progress and joy of the faith.

It is possible to be a Christian for years without having any progress or joy, without growing in life and without enjoying the Lord. We need both the growth in life and the enjoyment of Christ. I have known some saints who have been faithful to stay in the Lord's recovery. But with them there have been little growth in life and little enjoyment of Christ. As a result, they have had little progress and little joy. How about you? What can you say about your progress and your joy? Oh, we need the progress and the enjoyment!

Whether Paul was in prison or out of prison, he was a strong factor of the saints' progress and joy. Because of him the churches could have the growth in life and could be filled with the enjoyment of Christ. This should also be true of us today. All the elders in the local churches should be factors of the saints' growth in life and of their enjoyment of Christ. But whether or not the elders are such factors of progress and joy depends on whether or not they magnify Christ by living Him. If the elders live Christ, He will surely be magnified in them. Then the elders will become factors to enable the saints to grow in life and enjoy the Lord.

BOASTING IN CHRIST IN PAUL

In verse 26 Paul says, "That your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence again with you." This verse is not easy to understand. What does boasting refer to? The Greek word has a threefold meaning: boasting, rejoicing, and glorying. When we boast, we are glorying, and when we are glorying, we are rejoicing. Here Paul says that the saints' "boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me." It may be better to place "in me" before "in Christ Jesus," since this arrangement corresponds more closely to Paul's thought. Here Paul is saying that the believers may boast, rejoice, glory in Paul in Christ. Their boasting in Paul must be in Christ. It is rather easy to boast in Christ, but it is not so easy to boast in someone in Christ. However, what does this mean? The King James Version says, "rejoicing...in Jesus Christ for me." This rendering may be logical, but it is not accurate according to the Greek. The Greek does not say "for me"; it clearly says "in me." Paul was not saying that the Philippians boasted in Christ for him or because of him. He was saying that they boasted in Christ in him.

In this difficult verse lies a deep secret concerning the experience of Christ. If we would experience Christ, we, the believers, must be able to boast, rejoice, and glory not only in Christ Himself, but also in someone in Christ. It was necessary for the saints in Philippi to boast in the Apostle Paul in Christ. This boasting is related to the crucial fact that what we receive of Christ is not received directly in Christ, but is received from the Head through other members of the Body. Hence, we receive spiritual blessing from the Head through another member. No doubt, Paul was a very important member of the Body. If he had been lost to the Body, the Body would have been deprived of a very important means of spiritual blessing.

Our physical body illustrates how members can be a means of supply to the Body. The arm, for example, is such a means of supply for the fingers. Apart from the arm as a means, the fingers cannot receive any supply from the

head. As an important member of the Body of Christ, Paul was such a means of supply between us and the Head. If we did not have him, we would lack an important channel of supply.

None of us can boast, rejoice, and glory directly in the Head. Rather, we need to boast in Christ in and through a certain channel of supply. In verse 26 Paul says, "That your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me." The words "in me" include the meaning of "through me," but are not limited to this meaning. During the time of Paul's imprisonment, Gentile believers, like those in Philippi, were boasting in Paul. Their boasting, rejoicing, glorying was not in the Judaistic preachers; it was in the Apostle Paul. They could boast in Paul because he magnified Christ and lived Christ to the uttermost. Because Paul lived Christ and magnified Him in this way, he could transfuse Christ into the saints and minister Christ to all the churches. Therefore, the saints had reason to boast in such an apostle. If Paul had died prematurely, their boasting in him would have been cut short. But as long as Paul continued to live, they were able to boast in him in Christ. Hence, in verses 25 and 26 Paul said that he was confident that he would remain and continue with the saints for their progress and joy of the faith so that their boasting could abound in Christ Jesus in him through his presence with them again.

CHANNELS FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

In these verses we see the very crucial point that in the Body life there is the urgent need of certain ones to function as channels of supply. We need members like Paul. When such members die, the transfusion of Christ is in a very real sense interrupted. But as long as such ones are with us, the transfusion continues unabated, and we can boast in them in Christ. The leading ones in all the local churches should be such channels, such means of supply.

It should matter to the church whether we live or die.

Our living should matter greatly to the saints. But whether or not this is so depends on the degree to which we live Christ, minister Christ, and infuse others with Christ. I am sorry to say that, with respect to infusing Christ into the church, there are certain leading ones about whom it makes little difference whether they live or die. But with others their continuing with us or their being taken from us in death makes a great difference. I think of the example of a brother very dear to us, Eugene Gruhler, Sr. He surely was a means of supply to the Body. From the depths of my heart, I can say that his going to be with the Lord was a loss to us in the church life. It made a difference to us whether this brother remained or went to be with the Lord. The same should be true of every one of us. It should matter to the church whether we live or die. But this depends on our living Christ, magnifying Christ, ministering Christ, and transfusing Christ from the depths of our being into that of the saints. If we experience Christ and enjoy Him in this way, it will make a difference to the church whether we remain or go to be with the Lord.

We have seen that we cannot boast directly in Christ as the Head. Rather, there need to be some members to function as channels through which others may enjoy Christ and grow in life. There is an urgent need for such means of supply. Even if there are only one or two in a particular country, many others will receive the supply of Christ. Because Paul was this kind of member, he chose to remain and continue with the saints for their progress and their joy in the faith so that they could glory in him in Christ. If the saints are to experience Christ, there is the need for someone to serve as such a channel. In certain countries there is no way for people to experience Christ because there is not even one person in that country who truly lives Christ and magnifies Him. As a result, the believers there have no way to enjoy Christ. There is a great need for people like Paul. When Paul was alive, many could experience Christ and have the progress and joy in the faith.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE EIGHT

STANDING FIRM IN ONE SPIRIT, STRIVING TOGETHER WITH ONE SOUL

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:27-30

The basic concept of the book of Philippians is the experience of Christ. If we would have a proper understanding of Philippians 1 and the extraordinary expressions used in it, we need to see that the controlling concept, the governing factor, of the whole book is the experience of Christ. We should interpret Paul's expressions not according to our natural understanding, but according to Christ. Virtually every point in this book is related to Christ and the experience of Christ.

EXERCISING BOTH SPIRIT AND SOUL

In 1:27 Paul says, "Only conduct yourselves worthily of the gospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent I may hear the things concerning you, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together in the faith of the gospel." We need not only to stand firm in one spirit for the experience of Christ, but also to strive together with one soul in the faith of the gospel. To be with one soul for the gospel work is more difficult than to be in one spirit for the experience of Christ. This requires that, after being regenerated in our spirit, we be transformed in our soul, especially in our mind, which is the main part, the leading part, of our soul.

In 1:27 Paul charges the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit and to strive with one soul. Nowhere else in the Bible are the terms spirit and soul used together in this way. Concerning our standing, we need to be firm in one spirit; concerning striving together, we need to be with one

soul. We need to exercise both our spirit and our soul. We exercise our spirit to stand firm, and we exercise our soul to strive together in the faith of the gospel. To strive here is to struggle, to work by fighting.

STANDING BY STRIVING

It is important to see that we stand in one spirit and strive with one soul. We need to differentiate between the prepositions in and with. In one spirit we stand; with one soul we strive. We stand before God, but we strive before man. Before God we must stand as a testimony, and before man we must strive together with one soul.

Actually, according to the grammatical construction of verse 27, standing firm in one spirit and striving together with one soul are not two separate things. Paul does not charge the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit and then to strive together with one soul. Rather, he charges them to "stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together." Paul's way of writing indicates that in order to stand firm, we need to strive. Striving is in fact part of standing. We stand firm in one spirit by striving together with one soul.

What is the difference between "in one spirit" and "with one soul"? Why does Paul not say "with one spirit" and "in one soul"? And why does Paul say "stand firm...striving together" instead of "stand firm and strive together"? Let me use a simple illustration. Suppose a father says to his son, "Eat quickly, using your fork properly." This is different from saying, "Eat quickly and use your fork properly." In the first command, using the fork properly is the way to eat quickly. In the second, eating quickly and using the fork properly are two distinct matters. Because of the background, Paul did not tell the Philippians to stand firm and strive, but to stand firm, striving together with one soul. Because the Judaizers were so active, it was necessary for the believers to stand firm and not be distracted, shaken, or moved. Such a firm standing was especially necessary during Paul's absence. Paul, the one who could establish the believers, was away from them, but

the Judaistic teachers, those who were preaching contrary to God's economy, were at hand. This was the reason that toward the end of chapter one Paul charged the believers to stand firm. However, if they were to stand firm, they would have to strive together with one soul. Apart from striving, they would not be able to stand. Therefore, in this case striving is not a thing separate from standing. Rather, striving is the standing in actuality.

If we today only stand but do not strive, eventually we shall be shaken by the opposition or moved by it. It is not adequate simply to encourage others to stand firm. I repeat, in order to stand firm, we must strive and fight. Striving is the way to stand. Actually, to strive is to stand. Another way of putting it is to say that in order to have a defense, we need to be on the offensive. If we do not know how to go on the offensive, we shall not have an adequate defense. If we would defend ourselves, we must take the offensive against Satan. The point here is that defense requires offense. This is the reason that in 1:27 Paul does not make standing firm a separate matter from striving together. Instead, he indicates that these two matters are one.

In some places the churches are standing firm. However, they are not doing much striving. If these churches do not begin to strive and fight, eventually they will be shaken or moved. All the churches need to be aggressive. By striving in this way, they will be able to maintain their stand. But if the churches do not strive, sooner or later they will be shaken and moved.

NOT DRAWN OUT OF THE SPIRIT

If we would stand firm, we must be in one spirit. If we would strive together, we need to be with one soul. In our experience we realize that there is a great difference between being in one spirit and being with one soul. Whenever the church is attacked and opposed, we need to stand firm. Where do we stand firm? We stand firm in spirit. If we do not stay in our spirit, we shall be divided.

First opinions will enter in, then there will be dissension, and eventually division will come about. Even if three brothers are together and do not remain in the spirit, they will eventually be divided. The different opinions, thoughts, and concepts will lead to dissension, and this dissension will undermine the oneness and cause division. Therefore, we can stand firm only if we are in spirit. In no other organ of our being can we stand firm.

If we consider our experience, we shall realize that if we are drawn out of the spirit when we are opposed or attacked, doubts and questions will rise up within us. Suppose the Philippian believers did not remain in the spirit when they were opposed by the Judaizers. They might have had doubts or questions about Paul. They might have wondered if Paul had told them all the truth, or they might have thought that the Judaistic preachers had something more that they needed. Such doubts and questions do not have their source in the spirit. When we return to our spirit, stay there, and close our being to negative questions and doubts, there are no problems.

Throughout the years we have been attacked. The enemy attacks constantly and refuses to let us go. During times of attack or opposition, we may be pulled out of the spirit. If we realize that this is our situation, we must immediately return to our spirit and close the door to Satan's attack. To remain in the spirit in this way is to stand firm in the spirit.

During the years I was with Brother Nee in China, I saw how many attacks came upon him. In those days he was the umbrella, and I was one under the umbrella. Because he was the umbrella, the rain beat down on him, not on me. Sometimes, when the attacks first came, doubts would creep into my being. This would happen especially early in the morning or late at night. Occasionally the thought would come that perhaps we are wrong in certain matters. Whenever I detected such an inroad of the enemy, I would return to the spirit and exercise my spirit to pray. Then I could stand firm in one spirit. During times of

attack and opposition, it is crucial that we remain in spirit. Only our spirit can keep us together at such times. We need to stand firm not with one spirit, but in one spirit.

A PLACE TO STAND

Standing firm requires a place, and this place is our spirit. The leading ones in a local church should not ask whether or not others agree with them in a particular matter. This is the wrong question. Among the elders there is no need for agreement, but there is the desperate need to remain in the spirit. Diplomats may need agreements, but elders do not. If the elders in a local church remain in the spirit, there will be no need for agreement. To try to come to an agreement is an indication that we are not in spirit. Instead of trying to agree, we should simply stand firm in spirit.

USING THE WEAPONS OF THE SOUL

Standing firm in one spirit, however, is a defensive measure, not an offensive one. As we have indicated, without an offense we shall not be able to maintain a proper defense. Thus, in order to stand firm in our spirit, we also need to strive, to fight together, with one soul. Whereas the preposition "in" denotes a realm, the preposition "with" denotes an instrument. The realm is our spirit, but the instrument is our soul.

The faculties of our soul may be likened to weapons used in warfare. We need to strive together with these weapons of the soul. Do not think that it is sufficient only to be in spirit. No, we also need to be exercised in our mind, emotion, and will. We should be thoughtful in our mind, full of feeling in our emotion, and strong in our will. Then we shall have powerful weapons with which to fight.

Some seemingly spiritual people are like jellyfish in the soul. They are very wishy-washy. They never want to fight or strive. This indicates that they do not have the needed weapons. They are very different from the Apostle Paul. When Paul stood, he stood in spirit. But when he strove, he strove with a very strong soul.

Our problem is that either we are wishy-washy and do not use the faculties of our soul, or we become dissenting

and fight each other instead of fighting the enemy. Those who are wishy-washy are like jellyfish. Such ones not only lack backbone, but do not seem to have any bones whatever. Wanting to be "spiritual," they always act nice, kind, and humble, never striving with their soul in the faith of the gospel. Others, however, may fight and strive, using the mind, emotion, and will. But in fighting they become dissenting. Instead of fighting the enemy, they fight against other saints. This is the reason Paul tells us to strive with one soul. With one soul we should fight against the enemy.

Although it is rather easy to be one spirit, it is not so easy to strive together with one soul. In the spirit we have the conscience, the fellowship, and the intuition. These functions of the spirit are not the cause of problems. The cause of problems between us and others is found in the soul. The mind may be troublesome, the emotion may be destructive, and the will may be stubborn. The sisters are usually troubled by the "giant" of the emotion, whereas the brothers are troubled by two "giants"--the mind and the will. Most men are strong in their concept and in their will. They do not want to follow others foolishly, but insist on their own honor and integrity. For the most part, the sisters exercise the emotion more than the will or the mind. As a result, they are easily moved by the sight of someone weeping. No matter how well educated a sister may be, she is still a female and influenced much by her emotion. This is true of older sisters as well as younger ones. Our problems, therefore, are found in the soul--in the mind and will for the brothers and in the emotion for the sisters.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST BY STANDING AND STRIVING

We surely need Paul's charge to strive together with one soul. In our fighting, our striving, we need to be on the alert concerning our mind, emotion, and will. We need to be

watchful with respect to our thought, our feeling, and our intention. We should not give any ground to our natural mind, will, and emotion. They must not be allowed to interfere with our striving together with one soul. We who fight for God's interest must be in one spirit, and we must strive with one soul. This is another way for us to experience Christ. To stand firm is to experience Christ, and to strive together is also to experience Christ. Let us all experience Christ by standing firm in one spirit, striving together with one soul.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE NINE

THE BELIEVERS' SUPPORT TO THE APOSTLE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:1-4

The first four verses of Philippians 2 are one long sentence. Verses 1 and 2 say, "If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any tenderheartedness and compassions, make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing." In verses 1 and 2 the apostle appealed to the Philippians for their encouragement and consolation. He begged them to make his joy full, if they had any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship of spirit, and any tenderheartedness and compassions toward him.

The predicate in 2:1-4 is "make my joy full." Since this book is concerned with the experience and enjoyment of Christ, which issue in joy, it is also a book filled with joy and rejoicing (1:4, 25, 18; 2:17-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4). Among the Philippians there was dissension in their thinking (4:2), dissension which troubled the apostle. Hence, he asked them to think the same thing, even the same one thing, that they might make his joy full.

In 2:1-4 we see the fellowship between the believers and the apostle. The traffic in Philippians 1 is one-way traffic from the apostle to the believers. Now in chapter two we see the traffic from the believers to the apostle. Fellowship requires such two-way traffic. This two-way traffic is for the experience of Christ. Because Paul was rich in the experience of Christ, he could present an account of his experience to the believers in chapter one. This was his fellowship to them. Now in chapter two he asks the believers in Philippi to return the fellowship to him. Paul appealed to the Philippians that if there was any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any

fellowship of spirit, any tenderheartedness and compassions toward him, they would make his joy full. Paul could rejoice over the Philippians, but something about them kept him from rejoicing in a full way. Paul could say, "Philippians, I have joy concerning you, but my joy is not full. There is something among you which hinders me from rejoicing in a full way. I beg you to make my joy full."

Philippians 2:1-4 was obviously written by an experienced person, full of maturity. The tone of Paul's words is tender and soft. Because of the way Paul wrote these verses, most readers of Philippians do not understand them adequately. This is especially true of verse 1. What is Paul talking about in this verse? Why does he inquire if there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship of spirit, or any tenderheartedness and compassions? Paul was saying that if the Philippians had such things for him, they would make his joy full. If they had any encouragement, consolation, fellowship, tenderheartedness and compassions, they would be eager to cause the Apostle Paul to rejoice in full.

These words could not have been uttered by a young man. A young person would have spoken in a strong, direct way, saying, "Philippians, do you love me? If you love me, you must encourage me." The tone would have been harsh instead of soft. Paul's tone and expression testify of his maturity. He appealed to them and begged them to respond to his fellowship. He had given them such positive fellowship in the preceding chapter. Now he wanted them to return this fellowship. Such a return of fellowship would be the believers' support to the apostle. Their encouragement, consolation, and tenderheartedness would support Paul in his imprisonment.

Although Paul was a prisoner, his concern was not for his imprisonment. Instead, he was concerned about the attitude of the believers and for the kind of spirit they had toward him. Nothing hurt the apostle as much as a negative attitude of the believers toward him. In other words, Paul was not troubled by his imprisonment, but he

was troubled by the situation among the believers in Philippi. He was very concerned about their spiritual condition. Therefore, Paul appealed to the Philippians to make him happy to the uttermost. Paul needed their encouragement, consolation, and fellowship to be a support to him. If the Philippians would render him such support, they would make his joy full.

THINKING THE ONE THING

The way the Philippians could make Paul's joy full was to think the same thing, even the one thing (2:2). According to the context of the entire book, the one thing must refer to the subjective knowledge of Christ and experience of Christ (1:20-21; 2:5; 3:7-9; 4:13). Christ, and Christ alone, should be the centrality and universality of our entire being. Our thinking should be focused on the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and the experience of Christ. Anything else causes us to think differently and thus creates dissensions among us.

What troubled Paul in his imprisonment was the dissension among the Philippians. The saints in Philippi were good, and the church in that city had been well established. However, there was dissension among them. Although they were one in spirit, they were not striving together with one soul. Although they all loved the Lord, they were not thinking the same thing. This caused Paul's heart to be heavy. Out of heaviness of heart, he appealed to the Philippians to make his joy full by being joined in soul and by thinking the same thing.

HAVING THE SAME LOVE

Thinking the same thing is related to having the same love. Paul's word in verse 2 about "having the same love" indicates that, because of their dissenting thinking, the Philippian believers had different levels of love. They did not have the same love toward all the saints for the keeping of oneness.

It is possible that we in the church life today may not have the same love for all the saints. Instead, our love may

be on different levels. We may love a certain brother much more than we love another brother. Because we may love a particular brother only to a small degree, we may not be inclined to render much service to him. But because we love another brother to a very high degree, we may serve him too much and even spoil him by our love. It is possible in the church life to have different levels of love for different saints. If this is our situation, our love is not the love with one soul. We have one kind of soul when we love one brother, but a different kind of soul when we love another brother. As a result, instead of practical oneness, there will be dissension.

In 2:2 Paul also speaks of being joined in soul. This indicates that the dissension among the Philippians was due to their not being joined in soul, not thinking the one thing in their mind, the leading part of the soul. Their problem was not with their spirit, but with their soul, especially with their mind. They had Christ in their spirit through regeneration, but they did not have Christ fully in their soul through transformation. Only by having Christ saturate and occupy their entire soul could they be made one in soul.

The Philippians had been joined in spirit, but they had not been fully joined in soul. To have different levels of love is a sign that we have not been joined in soul. If we have been joined in soul, we shall have the same love for all the saints.

RIVALRY AND VAINGLORY

In 2:3 and 4 Paul goes on to say, "Doing nothing by way of rivalry nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind counting one another more excellent than yourselves, not regarding each his own things, but each the things of others also." Paul's word about rivalry and vainglory may indicate that the dissenting Philippians were doing things out of rivalry or vainglory, both of which cause dissension among believers. Rivalry and vainglory may lie hidden among us. Even when we testify in the church meetings, there may be rivalry. Perhaps when you share, not many

saints say amen. But when someone else shares, the saints are very responsive, and there are many amens. Disappointed by the situation, you may decide never to share again in the meetings. Thus, in giving testimonies there may be rivalry. Even when we share our experiences of Christ, a feeling of rivalry may be hidden within us.

Some brothers have advised the saints to say amen to the weaker ones in order to encourage them, but not to say amen as much to the strong ones. This kind of encouragement simply feeds the flesh and strengthens the soul.

I say once again that in the church life it is possible to have rivalry among the saints. Suppose a number of brothers come into the church life close to the same time. Later, one among them is appointed to be an elder. The others may be displeased and ask why that particular brother was made an elder, when he has not been in the church any longer than the others. Such a word may not be uttered, but this thought may be in the heart of those brothers.

Rivalry and vainglory are often found together. Where there is rivalry, there is usually vainglory. Why are you unhappy when the saints do not say amen to your testimony? Because of vainglory. Why do the brothers not feel pleased when a certain brother is appointed an elder and they are not? Also because of vainglory.

In 4:2 Paul says, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord." I believe that there was rivalry between these two sisters, perhaps competition over who would be the leading one. As a result, they were doing things in the way of rivalry and vainglory.

If there had not been rivalry and vainglory among the Philippian believers, Paul would not have mentioned these things in 2:3. Here Paul seems to be saying, "I ask you not to do anything by way of rivalry or vainglory. This will help to make my joy full. Brothers, I am troubled by the fact that some among you are doing things in the way of rivalry. I am happy that you love the Lord and that you are standing there in Philippi for the Lord's testimony. I

rejoice, but my rejoicing is not yet full. It cannot be full as long as rivalry exists among you. Furthermore, some of you are seeking vainglory. If you have any consolation of love toward me, please make my joy full by not doing anything by way of rivalry or vainglory. Instead, in lowliness of mind, count others more excellent than yourselves."

It is not easy to get rid of rivalry and vainglory, for we have a natural tendency to compete with others. In certain countries children are encouraged strongly to compete. In society competitiveness is found everywhere. However, we should not compete in the church life. Instead of competing with one another, we should count others more excellent than ourselves.

LOWLINESS OF MIND

In 2:3 Paul speaks of lowliness of mind. Lowliness is versus both rivalry and vainglory. The kind of lowliness Paul speaks of is not our natural lowliness; it is the lowliness of Christ, as illustrated in verses 7 and 8.

Notice that Paul refers to "lowliness of mind." Paul's use of the word mind here is another indication that the problem of dissension among the Philippians was a matter of their untransformed mind. They needed to have the mind which was in Christ (2:5).

In 2:4 Paul says, "Not regarding each his own things, but each the things of others also." The things here refer to virtues and qualities. We should not regard only our virtues and qualities, but also the virtues and qualities of others.

THE NORMAL EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

We have pointed out emphatically that Philippians is concerned with the experience of Christ. According to this book, the experience of Christ is a matter of mutuality between the apostle and the believers. As we read this Epistle, we see that Paul carried on fellowship with the saints in a proper way. In every aspect and from every angle, his fellowship with them was right. The Philippians, by contrast, were not proper in all respects in their

fellowship with the apostle. Therefore, on the apostle's side, the experience of Christ was normal. But on the side of the Philippian saints, the experience of Christ was not altogether normal. To some extent at least, it was abnormal.

If we consider the book of Philippians as a whole, we shall realize that the experience of Christ involves mutuality. It is definitely not a one-sided matter. However, many of today's Christians are subject to the mistaken teaching that the experience of Christ is one-sided. But it is a fact that we cannot have a normal experience of Christ if we are individualistic. The experience of Christ is a Body matter. Whatever is in the Body and of the Body involves mutual fellowship. The experience of Christ thus requires mutuality. If the apostle did not have proper fellowship with the saints, his experience of Christ would not have been normal. Likewise, if the believers were not in fellowship with the apostle, their experience of Christ would not be normal. This indicates that whether or not our experience of Christ is normal depends on our attitude toward the apostle. Concerning this, we shall be tested. If our attitude toward the apostle is not proper, our experience of Christ will be abnormal. In the same principle, if the apostle is out of line concerning his attitude toward the believers, his experience of Christ will be abnormal.

In the book of Philippians we have a picture of the proper fellowship between the believers and the apostle for the normal experience of Christ. Although the Philippian believers loved the Lord and were in the church, their experience of Christ was abnormal. One reason for this abnormality was that there was dissension among themselves. Another reason was that their attitude toward the apostle might not have been absolute. If their attitude toward Paul was absolute, they would receive his word to think the same thing, to have the same love, to be joined in soul, to think the one thing, not to do anything by way of rivalry or vainglory, to count others more excellent than themselves, and to regard the virtues and qualities of others. If the believers took Paul's word and acted on it,

they would become balanced and normal in experiencing Christ.

In Philippians, a book on the experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ, we see that the enjoyment of Christ must be a Body matter, a matter of mutuality in fellowship. If our attitude toward the apostle is wrong, we shall also be wrong in our attitude toward one another. Hence, our attitude toward the apostle is a test of our condition. If our attitude toward him is wrong, our situation must be abnormal. In such a case, our experience of Christ will be abnormal also.

Among Christians today there is virtually no normal experience of Christ. On the contrary, the condition among Christians is abnormal. The proper fellowship between the apostles and the believers has been damaged to the extreme. In the Lord's recovery we need to be enlightened from the book of Philippians and receive mercy and grace from the Lord to have the proper mutuality between the believers and the apostles.

We have pointed out that in Philippians we see Paul's attitude and spirit toward the believers. Paul's appeal was that the believers would show a proper attitude and spirit toward him so that the fellowship between them would be normal. The proper fellowship between the believers and the apostle is a safeguard to the normal experience of Christ. If our attitude toward the apostle is proper and our fellowship with him is right, we shall know that we are experiencing Christ in a normal way.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TEN

TAKING CHRIST AS OUR PATTERN

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-9, 12-13

In the foregoing message we considered Paul's appeal to the Philippian saints to make his joy full. This appeal is not confined to the first four verses of chapter two, but includes all of 2:1-16. It concludes with Paul's word about holding forth the word of life so that in the day of Christ he could boast that he had not run in vain nor labored in vain.

MAKING THE APOSTLE'S JOY FULL

Making the apostle's joy full involves more than just having a proper attitude. Suppose the Philippian believers had a very positive attitude toward Paul, respected him, and loved him to the uttermost, but did not take his charge concerning the experience of Christ. The apostle still would not have been happy, even though the saints had such an excellent attitude toward him personally. The only thing that could make the apostle's joy full was for the saints to take his word to experience Christ adequately and normally.

In 2:2 Paul tells the saints to think the same thing and the one thing. To think the same thing is to have our minds occupied with Christ and saturated with Him. Our mind should be occupied by Christ not merely in an objective, doctrinal way, but in a subjective, experiential way, in the way of allowing Christ to spread from our spirit into our mind and to take full possession of our mind, even to saturate our mind with His. If our mind is saturated with the mind of Christ, our mind will be wholly set on the spirit. Then we shall be those who have been occupied, permeated, and saturated by Christ and with Christ. If

this had been the condition of the believers in Philippi, Paul would have been extremely happy. His joy concerning them would have been full.

I repeat, Paul would not have been happy simply if the Philippians had a positive attitude toward him. He wanted them to allow Christ to possess them, and he was eager for them to grow in life. If the believers did not allow Christ to saturate them with Himself, Paul would have been troubled no matter how proper their attitude was toward him. Paul's desire was that all the saints would be occupied with Christ and thereby think the same thing.

SATURATED WITH CHRIST TO THINK THE SAME THING

It is not possible for us to think the same thing unless Christ saturates our mind and occupies our thinking. Then we shall spontaneously think the same thing, even the one thing. Apart from being saturated with Christ in this way, no two people, not even a husband and wife, will be able to think the same thing. Nevertheless, it was Paul's appeal and expectation that the whole church in Philippi would think the same thing. He begged the Philippians that, if they had encouragement, consolation, love, tenderheartedness, and compassion toward him, they make his joy full by thinking the same thing. But how can a large group of people think one thing? Once again we point out that this is possible only when the believers are occupied by Christ and allow Him to saturate their whole being. Then, and only then, shall we be able to think the same thing.

Christ is unique, central, and universal. When in an experiential way, not just in a doctrinal way, Christ becomes our centrality and universality, we shall automatically think the same thing.

TESTS OF THINKING THE SAME THING

We can test whether or not we truly think the same thing by checking if we have the same love, are joined in

soul, are free from rivalry and vainglory, count others more excellent than ourselves, and regard the virtues and qualities of others. These matters will always test to what extent we have actually been occupied by Christ, taken over by Christ, and saturated with Christ. If Christ truly possesses us inwardly, our love for all the saints will be on the same level. Furthermore, we shall be joined in soul, and our mind will be occupied with knowing Christ, experiencing Christ, pursuing Christ, and gaining Christ. As a result, we shall not do anything in the way of rivalry or vainglory, but instead we shall count others more excellent than ourselves and regard their virtues and qualities.

In this message we shall consider 2:5-8. These verses are very familiar, and messages have been given on them again and again. Even when I was a child, I heard, from Philippians 2:5-8, how Christ emptied Himself and humbled Himself, coming down from heaven to earth. Most of the messages given on these verses deal with them in an ordinary way. This makes it rather difficult for us to get into these verses in a thorough way.

CHRIST AS THE PATTERN WITHIN US

In 2:5-8 Paul presents Christ as our pattern. This pattern is not only objective, but also subjective. However, when I was young, I was taught only about the objective aspect of Christ as our pattern. I was told that in His life on earth Christ set up a pattern and that we should follow in His footsteps. Having established the pattern for us, Christ is now in heaven praying that we shall follow Him faithfully. I believe that many of us have heard such a teaching regarding Christ as the pattern.

Now we must go on to ask where is this Christ who is our pattern. Is He in heaven, or is He in us? Verse 9 indicates clearly that God has highly exalted Christ. Thus, there can be no doubt that as our pattern Christ is in heaven. He has been exalted to the highest peak in the universe, where God is. This is related to the objective aspect of the pattern. However, if Christ were only in the

third heaven objectively, how could we take Him as our pattern today? How could we, who are on earth, follow One who has been exalted and who is now in heaven? It would be impossible. In order for us to take Christ as our pattern, this pattern must be subjective.

Working Out Our Salvation

Verse 12 indicates that the pattern is subjective: "So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only as in my presence, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." How is it possible for us to work out our own salvation? If we could work out our salvation, would that not make salvation a matter of our own works? Suppose I fall into a pit and someone rescues me. That is salvation. But if I succeed in delivering myself, that is not salvation, but my own working. Since salvation is not of works, but of grace, what does Paul mean by telling us to work out our salvation? If we had been the first to utter such a word, we would be charged with heresy.

The key to understanding Paul's word is to know the meaning of salvation in this verse. Salvation here is not salvation from the lake of fire. Rather, it refers to what Paul has already said about salvation earlier in this Epistle. The words "so then" in verse 12 indicate that what Paul says in this verse is a consequence of what has gone before. Working out our salvation is the result of taking Christ as our pattern, as seen in the preceding verses. As our pattern, Christ is our salvation. However, this salvation needs to be worked out by us.

In order for this to be accomplished in our experience, the pattern must be subjective to us as well as objective. If it were only objective, it could not be the salvation worked out by us. The salvation here is not the salvation we receive; it is the salvation we work out. The salvation we receive is the salvation from God's condemnation and from the lake of fire. There is no need for us to work out that kind of salvation. The salvation here in Philippians is

salvation of another kind, or of a different degree. It is higher than that mentioned in Acts 16:31, where the jailer is told that if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he and his household will be saved. The salvation in 2:12 is actually a living Person. This Person is the very Christ whom we live, experience, and enjoy. A pattern which is only objective could not be our salvation in this way. The fact that salvation is a living Person and that this Person is our pattern indicates that the pattern is subjective as well as objective.

Experiencing Christ Subjectively

Another reason for saying that the pattern is subjective as well as objective is related to the fact that the book of Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. Anything that is a matter of spiritual experience must be subjective. Based upon this principle and upon the context of the book of Philippians as a whole, Christ as the pattern is not only objective, but also subjective and experiential.

God Operating in Us

Furthermore, following his word about working out our salvation, Paul goes on to say, "For it is God Who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure" (2:13). The word "for" at the beginning of verse 13 indicates that God's operating in us is related to our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. Surely the working in verse 13 refers to the working out in verse 12. We may confess that we are not able to work out our own salvation. Yes, in ourselves we are not able. But God, the One operating in us, is able. Since He is operating in us both the willing and the working, we can work out our own salvation. Paul's word about God operating in us is a further indication that the pattern is subjective as well as objective. Doctrinally, the pattern is objective; experientially, it is very subjective.

Cooperation, Not Imitation

In Philippians 2 Paul does not charge us to take the objective Christ as our pattern and then imitate Him. This is the practice recommended in the book *The Imitation of Christ*. Trying to imitate Christ in this way is like a monkey trying to imitate a human being. We should not take verses 5 through 8 out of context. When we consider these verses in context, we see that the pattern is our salvation and that this salvation is God Himself operating in us to save us in a practical way. Although in ourselves we cannot work out our salvation, the One who is able is now operating in us to will inwardly and to work outwardly. Our responsibility is to cooperate with Him. When we cooperate with God's operation in us, we take Christ as our pattern.

THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST

Let us now consider verses 5 through 8 in more detail. In verse 5 Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The Greek words translated "let this mind be in you" can also be rendered "think this in you." The word "this" refers to the counting and regarding in verses 3 and 4. This kind of thinking, mind, attitude, was also in Christ when He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and humbled Himself, being found in fashion as a man (vv. 7-8). To have such a mind requires us to be one with Christ in His inward parts (1:8). To experience Christ, we need to be one with Him to such an extent, that is, in His tender inward feeling and in His thinking.

THE STEPS OF CHRIST'S HUMILIATION

Verse 6 says, "Who subsisting in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." The Greek word rendered subsisting denotes existing from the beginning. It implies the Lord's eternal preexistence.

The word form refers to the expression, not the fashion, of God's being (Heb. 1:3). It is identified with the essence

and nature of God's Person and thus expresses His essence and nature. This refers to Christ's deity.

In verse 6 Paul tells us that Christ did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. Although the Lord was equal with God, He did not consider this equality a treasure to be grasped and retained. Rather, He laid aside the form of God, not the nature of God, and emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave.

Emptying Himself and Taking the Form of a Slave

Verse 7 goes on to say that Christ "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men." When Christ emptied Himself, He laid aside what He possessed--the form of God. The word form in verse 7 is the same word as used for the form of God in verse 6. In His incarnation, the Lord did not alter His divine nature, but only His outward expression of the form of God to that of a slave. This was not a change of essence; it was a change of state. The word "becoming" indicates entering into a new state.

Becoming in the Likeness of Men

According to verse 7, Christ became in the "likeness of men." The form of God implies the inward reality of Christ's deity; the likeness of men denotes the outward appearance of His humanity. He appeared outwardly to men as a man, but inwardly He had the reality of deity.

Humbling Himself and Becoming Obedient unto the Death of the Cross

Verse 8 continues, "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross." When Christ became in the likeness of men, entering into the condition of humanity, He was found in fashion as a man by men. The word fashion implies the outward guise, the semblance.

What Christ looked like in His humanity was found by men to be in fashion as a man.

Being found in fashion as a man, Christ humbled Himself. First He emptied Himself by putting aside the form, the outward expression, of His deity and becoming in the likeness of men. Then He humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death. Christ was God with the expression of God. Although He was equal with God, He put aside this equality and emptied Himself by taking the likeness of men. This indicates that He became a man through incarnation. Then, being found in the appearance of a man, He humbled Himself. This means that when He was a man, He did not insist on anything. Rather, He humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross. This is Christ as our pattern.

Humbling Himself was a further step in emptying Himself. Christ's self-humbling manifests His self-emptying. The death of the cross was the climax of Christ's humiliation. To the Jews this was a curse (Deut. 21:22-23). To the Gentiles it was a death sentence imposed upon malefactors and slaves (Matt. 27:16-17, 20-23). Hence, it was a shameful thing (Heb. 12:2).

The Lord's humiliation involves seven steps: emptying Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men, humbling Himself, becoming obedient, being obedient even unto death, and being obedient unto the death of the cross.

LIVING A CRUCIFIED LIFE

The pattern presented in these verses is now the life within us. This life is what we call a crucified life. The seven steps of Christ's humiliation are all aspects of the crucified life. Although Christ had the expression of deity, He laid aside this expression. However, He did not lay aside the reality of His deity. He laid aside the higher form, the form of God, and took on a much lower form, the form of a slave. In this, He emptied Himself. Surely this is a mark of a crucified life. Then, after becoming a man and

being found in the appearance of a man, Christ humbled Himself even unto the death of the cross. This was the crucified life lived out in a full and absolute way.

Christ is not only an outward pattern for us; He is also the life within us. As this inner life, He would have us experience Him and thereby live a crucified life. In this crucified life there is no room for rivalry, vainglory, or self-exaltation. On the contrary, there is self-emptying and self-humbling. Whenever we experience Christ and live Christ, we automatically live such a crucified life. This means that when we live Christ, we live the One who is the pattern of a crucified life. Then we also shall empty ourselves and humble ourselves.

If we did not have the crucified life within us, we could never live according to the pattern presented in Philippians 2. Only the crucified life can live such a pattern. If we still do things out of rivalry and vainglory or are still ambitious to be leaders or elders, we are not living a crucified life. We are not emptying ourselves or humbling ourselves. However, we have a life within us that truly is a self-emptying and self-humbling life. This life never grasps at something as a treasure. Instead, it is always willing to lay aside position and title.

THE PATTERN BECOMING OUR SALVATION

When the pattern in Philippians 2 becomes our inward life, the pattern becomes our salvation. Then we are saved from rivalry and vainglory. If the Philippians were not willing to live according to this pattern, they could not make Paul's joy full. He would still be troubled by their rivalry and vainglory. But if they were willing to live the crucified life, a life that always empties itself and humbles itself, not grasping anything as a treasure, they would have the genuine experience of Christ. Their experience of Christ as such a pattern and inward life would make the apostle extremely happy.

Living a crucified life shows that toward the apostles

we have encouragement in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of spirit, and tenderheartedness and compassion. Only when we live a crucified life can we make the apostles happy and cause their joy to be full. In prison Paul was not concerned with how he was treated by others. His concern was whether or not the believers would take Christ as their pattern and live a crucified life. This was the desire of Paul's heart, and only this would make his joy full.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:19-22; Acts 2:36

In this message we shall consider the exaltation of Christ (2:9-12). The exaltation of Christ in 2:9 is actually the manifestation of resurrection power. Resurrection power always follows the living of a crucified life. According to 3:10, Paul aspired to know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. In the foregoing message we pointed out that in 2:5-8 we have Christ as our pattern and that this pattern is the crucified life within us. Following the crucified life, there is the power of resurrection by which Christ is exalted to the uttermost. In the Bible the power to exalt Christ is called the power of resurrection. When we live a crucified life, we know the power of resurrection and the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS OUR PATTERN

There is a correspondence between chapters two and three of Philippians. In chapter two we see that we should live a crucified life so that we may enjoy the power of resurrection. In chapter three we see Paul's aspiration to know the power of Christ's resurrection. We should take the crucified life in 2:5-8 as our pattern so that we can experience the power of resurrection which exalted Christ to the highest peak in the universe. The experience of Christ as the pattern of a crucified life and the experience of the resurrection power which exalts Him is endless. Day by day, we need to live a crucified life. This is to live Christ

as our pattern. Instead of having a life of rivalry and vain-glory, we should live a life of self-emptying and self-humbling. This is to live a crucified life. By means of this life we are ushered into the power of resurrection by which Christ is exalted. According to his word in chapter three, Paul did not regard himself as having experienced this in full. He still aspired to know, to experience, the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

There is an urgent need among us in the Lord's recovery today to experience Christ as our pattern. We desperately need to experience Him as our crucified life. Such a life stands altogether in contrast to a life of rivalry and vainglory. In the church life we either take the crucified life as our pattern or automatically live a life of rivalry and vain-glory. There is no third way. If we do not take the crucified life as our pattern, we shall automatically live in the way of rivalry for vainglory. The issue here is extremely serious. We need to be honest with ourselves and consider the kind of life we have been living in the church. If you review the time you have been in the church life, you will see that whenever you did not take the crucified life as your pattern, you were living a life of rivalry for vainglory.

Nothing was more troubling to the Apostle Paul than to learn that the saints in Philippi were living in the way of vainglory. He was very concerned that they live a crucified life. As we have seen, this life is Christ Himself as the One who emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Taking this crucified life as our pattern opens the gate of resurrection and brings us into the power of resurrection. The exaltation which is of God will never come by way of rivalry or vain-glory. The more we seek vainglory, the more shameful our situation will be. To pursue vainglory is not a glory at all; it is a shame. Likewise, when we are in rivalry with others, the result is never exaltation. Inevitably the result is that we are brought low. The highest life on earth is the crucified life. Whenever we live a crucified life, God will bring us into the power of resurrection, and in this power we shall be exalted.

During the years I have been in the church life, I have known many cases of those who were in rivalry for vainglory. Without exception, all those who engaged in such rivalry went downhill. It is utterly foolish to have rivalry in the church life. We should fear this more than we fear a serpent. Whenever you are in rivalry with others, you are without question living in the self. We must condemn this rivalry and repudiate it.

Furthermore, none of us in the church life should hold to any personal standing. Of course, we must stand firm for the Lord's testimony. However, we should not claim any standing, title, or position for ourselves. Making such claims will never bring us into the power of resurrection.

In the church life I have seen not only those who were in rivalry for vainglory, but also a good number of saints who took the crucified life as their pattern. Eventually, these saints entered into the power of resurrection where they experienced God's exaltation.

I earnestly hope that none of the saints in the church life today will seek glory for themselves. Instead of seeking glory, we should seek Christ and Him alone. Then we shall experience the crucified life.

I believe that in the church in Philippi, two sisters, Euodias and Syntyche, were in rivalry for position or vainglory. Otherwise, there would have been no need for Paul to beg them to "think the same thing in the Lord" (4:2). If there had not been the problem of rivalry in the church there, there would have been no need for Paul to say in 2:3, "Doing nothing by way of rivalry nor by way of vainglory." Because among the saints in Philippi there was rivalry for vainglory, it was necessary for Paul to present Christ as the pattern of a crucified life. Paul presents this pattern in Philippians, not in other books, because in Philippi rivalry for vainglory was a definite problem. As long as certain of the saints there were seeking glory for themselves, there was rivalry. Therefore, Paul showed them that Christ, the Son of God, had a very high position. He possessed the very form of God and had the right to be equal with God.

Nevertheless, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men. Then, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient even unto the death of the cross. Those Philippian saints who were seeking position and title for themselves surely needed to live according to Christ as the pattern of a crucified life.

We must admit that the rivalry for vainglory found among the saints in Philippi can also be found in many local churches today. No doubt, among the Christians outside the Lord's recovery there is much rivalry for vainglory. But what about us in the churches? To some extent at least, such rivalry still exists among us. Thus, we need Paul's word concerning Christ as our pattern. We need to be enlightened and take this crucified life as our pattern so that we may experience the power of resurrection. When we live the crucified life, we shall be ushered into resurrection power, and this power will exalt us.

We should be warned, however, not to take this word about the crucified life, the power of resurrection, and God's exaltation as a ground for seeking glory. We should not even seek true glory as something apart from Christ. Do not seek any glory that is other than Christ Himself. We need to say, "Lord, I want only You. I am not seeking any exaltation or glory." If we take the crucified life as our pattern, we shall experience the power of resurrection. This resurrection power is Christ Himself. Christ is not only the crucified life, but He is also the power of resurrection.

Often the saints complain of weaknesses. We are weak whenever we do not take the crucified life as our pattern. If you are weak in your family life, daily life, or church life, it is an indication that you are not taking the crucified life and therefore are not in the power of resurrection. I repeat, the gate through which we enter into the power of resurrection is the crucified life. Paul's expectation concerning the saints in Philippi was that they would live this crucified life and then experience the power of resurrection.

EXALTING CHRIST IN OUR EXPERIENCE

My burden in this message is to relate the exaltation of Christ to our spiritual experience. God has already exalted Christ, but have you exalted Him? Christ has been exalted in the universe, but has He been exalted in you? The problem is that Christ has been exalted everywhere except in you. This is the reason that I do not care to talk about the exaltation of Christ in an objective way, but to apply this to our subjective experience. Christ cannot be exalted in us unless we take Him as the crucified life to be the pattern of our daily life.

We should not forget that Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. Hence, even the exaltation of Christ in this book is related to our experience. When I was young, I was taught about Christ's exaltation. However, I did not see much of Christ's exaltation in the lives of believers. This was primarily just a teaching from the Bible. We need to experience Christ to such a high degree that in our life He is exalted. Do not consider Christ's exaltation merely in an objective way. Just as we need to experience the Christ who emptied Himself and humbled Himself, so we need to experience the Christ who has been exalted. God has already exalted Christ in the universe, but now it remains for us to exalt Him in our personal universe--in our daily life, in our family life, and in our church life.

Paul's desire was that the saints in Philippi would exalt Christ in their daily living. If the believers had done this, they would have made Paul's joy full. Paul did not want the saints simply to have a positive attitude toward him. His expectation was that the believers would experience Christ as the crucified life and then experience Christ in His exaltation. Christ's exaltation needs to be carried out in our daily living.

THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF SALVATION

Proof that Paul's concept was that Christ would be exalted not only objectively in the universe but also subjectively and experientially in our daily life is found in

verse 12. After speaking of the crucified life in verses 5 through 8 and the exalted life in verses 9 through 11, Paul says in verse 12, "So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only as in my presence, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The words "so then" indicate that what Paul speaks of in verse 12 is a consequence of taking Christ as the pattern of a crucified life in the preceding verses. These words indicate that Christ's crucified life should be our experience. It is also true that Christ's exalting life should be our experience. On the one hand, we may speak of Christ's exalted life; on the other hand, of His exalting life. No matter which expression we use, in 2:9-11 we have a life of exaltation. Such a life should also be part of the salvation worked out by us. The main elements of the salvation in verse 12 are Christ as the crucified life and Christ in His exaltation. This should be the salvation we work out by God operating in us.

Surely the exaltation of Christ is the highest standard of our salvation. We should not simply be those who are saved, but we should be those who are exalted through Christ's resurrection power. It was not Paul's aim in speaking of the exaltation of Christ to teach doctrine objectively. Like all the other matters covered in this book, this point is related to Christian experience. We need to experience Christ in His humiliation. This means we need to experience Him as the One who emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Now that Christ has been exalted by God to the highest peak in the universe, we need to experience Him also in His exaltation. Oh, may the Lord open our eyes to the fact that we are far below His standard of salvation! The standard of the salvation worked out by us must be so high that it includes the exaltation of Christ. Christ's exaltation should be our consummate experience in salvation. This requires that Christ be not only our crucified life, but also our exalted life in the power of resurrection. The very power that has exalted Him in the universe is the power that causes Him

to be exalted in us. This power is nothing less than the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

In the book of Philippians Paul uses different terms to refer to the same reality. The bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the very power that exalts Christ. It is also the power of resurrection in 3:10 and the power referred to in 4:13, where Paul says, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me." That with which we are empowered is the power of resurrection, the exalting power, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This power is adequate to enable us to work out our salvation to the highest standard. When we reach this standard, we shall be more than conquerors.

Verses 12 through 16 are the interpretation of verses 5 through 11. This means that the words "so then" include all that Paul covers in verses 12 through 16. Therefore, 2:5-11 needs 2:12-16 for its interpretation and exposition.

THE HIGHEST NAME

Philippians 2:9 says, "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." The Lord humbled Himself to the uttermost, but God exalted Him to the highest peak. The name referred to in this verse is the name of Jesus, as indicated in the following verse. From the time of the Lord's ascension, there has never been a name on this earth above the name of Jesus. God has exalted Jesus, a real man, to be the Lord of all. Therefore, it is altogether right for us to call, "O Lord Jesus." We need to confess the Lord's name openly. What a glory it is to worship the Lord by calling on His name! Actually, in the New Testament we are not told to worship Christ, but there is the clear indication that we are to call on the Lord's name.

When Paul was Saul of Tarsus, he received authority from the chief priests to bind those who called on the name of Jesus. Today we are opposed for calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. But the more we are opposed and attacked, the more we should call on His name. By His exaltation,

the Lord has been given a name which is above every name. There has never been a name in history higher than the name of the Lord Jesus. The highest name in the universe, the greatest name, is the name of Jesus.

In verses 10 and 11 Paul goes on to say, "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." The name is the expression of the sum total of what the Lord Jesus is in His Person and work. The words "in the name" mean in the sphere and element of all the Lord is. It is in this way we worship the Lord and pray to Him.

We should not only call on the name of the Lord Jesus, but also bow our knees in His name. This is to worship Him.

In verse 10 we see three levels of the universe: heaven, earth, and under the earth. Those who are in heaven are angels, those who are on earth are men, and those who are under the earth are the dead. The day is coming when those on every level will bow their knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. To openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord is to call on the Lord (Rom. 10:9-10, 12-13). The Lord Jesus as a man was made the Lord in His ascension by God (Acts 2:36). Thus, every tongue should confess that He is Lord. This confession is to the glory of God the Father. The Greek word rendered "to" means resulting in. Our confessing that Jesus is Lord results in the glory of God the Father. This is the great end of all that Christ is and has done in His Person and work (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWELVE

WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:12-16; Eph. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 13:3a, 5; Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:5

Philippians 2:10 and 11 say, "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." We have seen that the name is the expression of the sum total of what the Lord Jesus is in His Person and work. In the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This implies calling on the name of the Lord. When we call on the Lord's name, we have the reality of bowing our knees to Him. Paul's word about bowing our knees in verse 10 and confessing in verse 11 implies that as we bow our knees to the Lord, we call on His name. We confess the Lord's name openly by calling on Him.

We have pointed out again and again that Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus is a way to experience Him and enjoy Him. Many of us can testify that before we began to call on the Lord's name, we did not have much experience of Him or enjoyment of Him. But when we call on the Lord, we spontaneously exercise our spirit and thereby touch the Lord who dwells in our spirit. As the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, the Lord is the fresh spiritual air for our enjoyment and experience. We would encourage all those who have recently come into the church life to practice calling on the name of the Lord. Many of us can testify how much we enjoy Him by calling on His name. Just as it is very helpful to breathe deeply of fresh air for the cleansing of our system, so we need to breathe deeply of

the spiritual air by calling on the name of the Lord. By calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, we are stirred in spirit and even set on fire. Let us all learn to call, "O Lord Jesus," from the depths of our being. In this way we shall worship the Lord and openly confess Him.

In this message we shall consider the matter of working out our salvation. In 2:12 Paul says, "So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only as in my presence, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." To work out our own salvation is to carry it out, to bring it to the ultimate conclusion. We have received God's salvation, which has as its climax to be exalted by God in glory as the Lord Jesus was (v. 9). We need to carry out this salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion, by our constant and absolute obedience with fear and trembling. We have received this salvation by faith. Now we must carry it out by obedience. This includes the genuine oneness in our soul (v. 2). To receive salvation by faith is once for all; to carry it out is lifelong.

In verse 12 Paul charges us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Fear is the inward motive; trembling is the outward attitude.

In verse 13 Paul goes on to say, "For it is God Who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." The word "for" at the beginning of this verse gives the reason we need to obey always. It is because God operates in us. In God's economy we have the Lord Jesus as our pattern (vv. 6-11), as the standard of our salvation (v. 12), and we also have God operating in us both the willing and the working to carry out our salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion. It is not that we by ourselves carry it out, but that God operates in us to do it. The only thing we need to do is to obey the inner operating of God. The willing Paul speaks of here is inward, whereas the working is outward.

In verses 12, 13, 15, and 16 we have four wonderful

matters: salvation (v. 12), God operating in us (v. 13), lights or luminaries (v. 15), and the word of life (v. 16). The salvation in verse 12 is actually the very God who operates in us in verse 13. The One who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure is Himself our salvation. As believers, we are children of God, children of the One who is operating in us. Because we are children of God, we most assuredly have the divine life and divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). How could a child not have the life and nature of his father? It is simply not possible for someone to be born of a particular person and not have the life and nature of that person. In the same principle, it is not possible for us to be genuine children of God, born of Him, and not have His life and nature. We have been truly born of God and not merely adopted by Him.

When we say that as children of God we have the life and nature of our Father, some accuse us of teaching what they call "evolution into God." We definitely do not claim that man is evolving into the Godhead. However, we definitely teach according to the Word of God that, as true believers in Christ, we have experienced a divine birth. God has actually been born into us, and thereby we have His life and nature. We all may boast not in our first birth, but in the second, the divine birth which made us children of God.

Because we are children of God with the life and nature of God, we shine as lights in the world. The Greek word rendered lights in 2:15 means luminaries which reflect the light of the sun. Every child of God is a stone reflecting the light which comes from Christ, God's unique Son. In this universe there is only one source of light, and this source is God. As those luminaries, we also hold forth the word of life.

These four important matters are very subjective and experiential. We have received a salvation which is God Himself. Now there is operating in us this very God, the One who is real in our experience as our subjective salvation. He is not dormant, passive, or idle. His operating

in us is His energizing in us. How wonderful that we have been born of this energizing God! Hence, we have His energizing life and nature. We are the energetic children of the energizing God! Spontaneously we reflect the light which comes from God as the universal source. In the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, we shine as lights, as luminaries, in the world. Therefore, we can hold forth the word of life to those around us. This is to take Christ as our pattern and to work out our salvation.

If the believers in Philippi worked out their salvation in this way, they would make Paul very happy. If all the saints in all the churches would work out their salvation according to the items in these verses, all those who serve the churches, the apostles and elders, would be happy. To work out our salvation is to have the genuine experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ.

I. HAVING RECEIVED SALVATION OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD

In Ephesians 2:5 Paul says that we have been saved by grace. In Ephesians 2:8 he declares, "By grace you have been saved through faith." It is absolutely true that we are saved only by grace through faith. Without grace, it is not possible for us to be saved. Many Christians today rightly emphasize the fact that salvation is by grace alone. However, although they may stress salvation by grace, they fail to point out the extent of God's salvation. According to Ephesians 2, God's salvation brings us into the heavens. This indicates that we have received a salvation with the highest possible standard. We have been saved by grace to be in the heavenlies with Christ (Eph. 2:6).

Although many Christians point out that we are saved from sin, Ephesians 2 indicates that we are also saved from death, for we have been enlivened by God, raised with Christ, and seated with Him in the third heaven. My emphasis in this message is not on the fact that we are saved by grace. It is on the extent and standard of God's

salvation. We have been saved by God's grace to be with Christ in the heavenlies.

II. THE NEED TO WORK OUT THIS SALVATION

In Philippians 2:12 Paul tells us explicitly to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. To receive salvation is one thing, and to work it out is another thing. To work out salvation is not to accomplish salvation. Rather, it is to carry out through continual obedience the salvation we have received.

Paul's word about obedience in verse 12 answers to what he has previously said about Christ becoming obedient (v. 8). A very striking aspect of Christ as our pattern is His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. As God, Christ first took the major step of emptying Himself, of laying aside the expression of His deity. Then, having emptied Himself and having taken the form of a man, He humbled Himself. This self-humbling is particularly related to obedience. The Bible underscores the importance of obedience. For example, in 1 Samuel 15:22 we are told that to obey is better than sacrifice. We who have received Christ as the pattern of our salvation must learn to always obey with fear and trembling. Within we should have fear as the motive, and without we should have trembling as our attitude, an indication that we have no confidence in ourselves.

III. GOD OPERATING IN US

According to verse 13, God is operating in us. Our salvation is not merely an action; it is a living Person, the Triune God Himself, operating in us. The God Paul speaks of in verse 13 is the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. According to chapter fourteen of John, the Father is one with the Son, and the Son is one with the Spirit. The God in Philippians 2:13 is not only the Father, but the Triune God. He is the Son and the Spirit as well as the Father.

In order to prove that God in 2:13 is the Triune God, we need to consider the context of the whole book of Philippians. The last verse of the book, 4:23, says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Certainly the Lord as the One whose grace is with our spirit is not separate from the God who operates in us. The very Christ who is with our spirit is the God who operates in us. Furthermore, 1:19 speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt that the Spirit who supplies us is the Spirit who indwells us. But this Spirit cannot be separate from the God who operates in us. If we put all these verses together and consider the context of the book as a whole, we shall see that the God who operates in us is the Triune God. He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He is the very God who is Christ in us (2 Cor. 13:3a, 5) and the Spirit dwelling in us (Rom. 8:11).

In verse 13 Paul says that God operates in us "both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." Where within us does this willing take place? It must be in our will. This indicates that God's operation begins from our spirit and spreads into our mind, emotion, and will. We have pointed out that the grace of Christ is with our spirit. However, God's operating to will in us involves not only our spirit but also our will. Therefore, God's operation must spread from our spirit into our will.

As God operates the willing within us, He carries out His working. This corresponds to Romans 8, where we see that God works not only in our spirit, but also in our mind and eventually in our physical body (vv. 6, 11). We will in our will, and we work in our body. The Triune God operates in us from our spirit, through our will, and then into our physical body.

God's operating is for His good pleasure. His good pleasure is the heart's desire of His will (Eph. 1:5) that we may reach the climax of His supreme salvation. Every living being has a good pleasure. This is especially true of God. For this reason, Paul speaks of God's good pleasure. The good pleasure of a mother can be observed in the way

she loves her child. Using this as an illustration of God's good pleasure, we may say that God's good pleasure is to love us in a way that makes Him happy. God's working in us is to enable us to reach the climax of His supreme salvation. Praise Him that we are now in God's good pleasure! As He operates in us, we cooperate with Him by obeying Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

HOLDING FORTH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:14-16

In this message we shall consider 2:14-16. These verses continue Paul's word about working out our salvation. In verse 12 Paul charges us to work out our salvation, and in verse 13 he tells us that God is operating in us. Now in verse 14 Paul issues a warning: "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." Murmurings are out of our emotion, mostly on the part of the sisters; reasonings are out of our mind, mostly on the part of the brothers. Both frustrate us from carrying out our salvation to the fullest extent, from experiencing Christ to the uttermost.

The context indicates that if we murmur or reason, we do not obey. Obedience to God slays all murmurings and reasonings. In order to work out our salvation, we must obey the very God who operates in us. He Himself is our salvation, and our obedience to Him is the working out of our salvation. The sisters need to realize that when they murmur, they disobey the God who works within them. Likewise, the brothers need to see that whenever they reason, they are rebellious against the One who operates in them. Only by obedience can murmurings and reasonings be put to death.

Paul's word in 2:14 about murmurings and reasonings is a further indication that his purpose in writing the book of Philippians was not related to doctrine, but very much related to experience. Murmurings and reasonings are important factors that frustrate our Christian life. From experience Paul knew that if we would work out our salvation, we need to do all things without murmurings and reasonings. Often in important matters we may not murmur or reason. But in small matters we are prone to

murmurings and reasonings. Any kind of murmuring or reasoning is disobedience to the inner working of the Triune God. How we need the Lord to save us from our murmurings and reasonings!

In verse 15 Paul continues, "That you may become blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." The Greek word rendered "that" means "in order that." We should do all things without murmurings and reasonings in order that we may become blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish. The Greek word translated guileless also means simple, artless, innocent; hence, harmless (Matt. 10:16). It comes from a root which means unmixed. The word blameless describes our outward behavior, and the word guileless, our inward character. To be artless means not to play politics. No one who is political can rightly be called guileless. If we are artless, we are also guileless and harmless.

In verse 15 Paul refers to "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation." As children of God, we have God's life and nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Being children of God with the divine life and nature, we are luminaries which reflect the light of the sun (Christ). As such, we are without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation. "Without blemish" is the total quality of being blameless and guileless. The Greek word translated perverted means warped or twisted. There can be no doubt that today's generation is twisted and warped. In this kind of generation we should shine as lights in the world.

In verse 16 Paul goes on to say, "Holding forth the word of life, for my boasting in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain nor labored in vain." The Greek word for "holding forth" also means applying, presenting, offering. As God's children, we need to present the word of life to others. If the Philippian believers did this, Paul would be able to boast in the day of Christ that he had not labored in vain. The day of Christ is the day of the Lord's second

coming, also called "the day of the Lord" (1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Thes. 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14) and "that day" (2 Tim. 1:18; 4:8). In that day all believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the reward each deserves (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:19-30).

Just as the Philippians could boast in Paul in Christ, so Paul wanted to be able to boast, rejoice, and glory in them in the day of Christ. He hoped to be able to boast that, as far as they were concerned, he had not run in vain or labored in vain. However, at the time Paul wrote this Epistle, he was concerned that his running and labor might be in vain. Whether or not his labor was actually in vain would be determined by the deeds of the believers in Philippi. Suppose the believers there did all things without murmurings or reasonings and thus became blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a warped and twisted generation. Suppose, moreover, that the saints in Philippi were shining forth as luminaries in the world and presented the word of life to those around them. If such were their situation, Paul would be able to rejoice and even boast at the time of the Lord's coming back.

I. TO LIVE OUT CHRIST, TO EXPRESS CHRIST, TO WORK OUT OUR SALVATION

The title of this message is "Holding Forth Christ." To hold forth Christ is to live out Christ, to express Christ, and to work out our salvation. As we have indicated, to work out our salvation is to obey the Triune God who is operating within us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. Here we have five important, inter-related matters: working out our salvation, obeying God, living Christ, expressing Christ, and holding forth Christ. Christians commonly speak of obeying God. However, in most cases their understanding of obedience is very superficial. The other four expressions--living Christ, expressing Christ, holding forth Christ, and working out our salvation--are unusual and even extraordinary. It would be helpful if we would make such expressions part of our conversation in fellowship. As we speak to one

another, we need to encourage one another to live out Christ and express Christ. We need to remind one another to hold forth Christ and to work out our salvation. Using these expressions will help us in ministering Christ to others, especially to young ones who have just received the Lord. We should not merely talk about the gospel and salvation in a common, ordinary way. We need to use expressions based on Paul's word to the Philippians to stir in others the desire to experience the Lord in their spirit. It is very important that we bring these extraordinary spiritual expressions into our daily conversation, prayer, fellowship, and testimonies in the church meetings. This will serve to enrich our utterance. May we all be exercised to speak of living out Christ, expressing Christ, holding forth Christ as the word of life, and working out our own salvation.

II. DOING ALL THINGS WITHOUT MURMURINGS AND REASONINGS

We have pointed out that murmurings issue from the emotion, whereas reasonings proceed from the mind. Furthermore, murmurings are more of a problem among the sisters, and reasonings more among the brothers. Again and again we need to be reminded of Paul's word in 2:14. When the sisters are washing dishes in the sisters' house, they should remember not to murmur. As the brothers are taking care of matters in the service groups and the church life, they should remember to do all things without reasonings. They should not reason, but simply serve the Lord in the church.

III. BECOMING BLAMELESS AND GUILELESS

If we do all things without murmurings and reasonings, we shall become blameless and harmless. What a great thing it is not to have murmurings and reasonings! However, I have never met a sister who did not murmur or a brother who did not reason. The problem of murmurings and reasonings comes out in particular in married life. For example, a wife may murmur if her husband does not show appreciation of the love and care she has for him. Some

brothers have learned that one way to eliminate a wife's murmuring is to use two simple expressions: "I'm sorry" and "thank you." Using these simple expressions can make your married life much happier. If a brother never tells his wife that he is sorry or if he never says thank you, there is apt to be murmuring. If we are successful in eliminating murmurings and reasonings, we shall be blameless and guileless.

IV. CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT BLEMISH IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERTED GENERATION

In 2:15 Paul says that the believers are children of God. This implies regeneration, the new birth. To be a child of God means that we have been born of God, that God has been conceived within us. When we were born of God in our spirit, we were mingled with Him. Conception always precedes birth. When we became children of God, God was conceived in our very being. This involves even more than mingling. However, we do not have words adequate to express the deep relationship between us and God that has been produced by God's being conceived within us. He has been conceived within us, and we have been born of Him to become His children.

Now that we have been born of God, we need to eat Him and drink Him. To be sure, whatever we eat and digest is assimilated by us and mingled with us. The Lord Jesus said that He is the bread which came down from heaven and also that the ones who eat Him will live because of Him (John 6:50, 57). The Lord clearly likened Himself to food for us to eat, digest, and assimilate. Those who oppose the teaching that believers are mingled with God are short of the proper knowledge. They do not realize that at the time of our conversion, God was conceived within us, and we were born of Him. At that time, we and God, humanity and divinity, were joined in a marvelous way. After our spiritual birth, we need to feed on God day by day. The Triune God is our food and drink. We can truly say that the food we eat and the water we drink are not merely united

to us, but also mingled with us. We simply cannot deny the fact that the food and drink we take in and digest are mingled with us and eventually saturate us metabolically. In the same principle, when we take in the Triune God as our food and drink, He is mingled with us, and we are mingled with Him. However, we must be clear that this mingling of God and man does not produce a mixture, or a confusion, of divinity and humanity. On the one hand, there is a genuine mingling; on the other hand, there is no mixture or confusion.

The expression "children of God" is very rich in its implications. It implies that God has actually been born into us and that we possess His life and nature. Christians often say, "I'm just a sinner saved by grace." Although this, of course, is true, it is very shallow compared with the revelation in the New Testament. If we know the truth of the Word, we shall not say we are merely sinners saved by grace. We shall have the assurance to declare, "I'm a child of God born of the Spirit!" If you have truly seen the vision that you are a child of God, you will be filled with joy, wonder, and praise. If you were the son of the President of the United States, would you not have a special feeling? Would you not be proud of your status? Surely to be a child of God is infinitely greater than to be a child of the President. In a proper sense, we need to boast of our status as God's children. No doubt, we are sinners who have been saved by God's grace. But because we have also been born of God, we are now His children. How marvelous!

According to Paul's word in 2:15, we are to be children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation. The generation in which we live is crooked, warped, and twisted. We, however, as children of God, must be different. Because we are God's children, we should be both blameless and guileless, without blemish.

We can be children of God only by having the life of God. How marvelous it is to have God's life! All those who are truly the children of God need to realize that they have the divine life within them.

The divine life within us wants to grow. Recently I

noticed how much a palm tree planted in my backyard has been growing, thriving, and spreading. It is almost unbelievable how much this tree has grown. What a testimony to the strength of the inner life of the palm tree and to the riches of this life! When I looked at that palm tree recently, I had the sense that the divine life within me is far more energetic than the life of that palm tree. Praise the Lord that we have God's very life! How sad that few Christians today know of this life and live by it.

Along with the divine life, we also have the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Although we cannot fully define the divine nature, we know that as God's children we partake of it and have it within us.

Every living thing acts according to its own nature. Everything it does comes out of its nature. For example, a peach tree produces peaches because it is in keeping with the nature of a peach tree to do so. It would be absurd for anyone to charge a peach tree not to bring forth apples, but only to produce peaches. As ridiculous as this is, in principle many Christians are doing this very thing. In giving commandments to others to behave in a certain way or to improve themselves, they neglect the fact that as children of God all genuine Christians have the divine nature. This nature should govern and direct us. Everything in the Christian life is according to the nature of God. How wonderful that we have God's life with His nature!

V. SHINING AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

As lights, or luminaries, the believers shine among those in this crooked and perverted generation. Actually, we have no light in ourselves; we are luminaries reflecting the light of the sun, Christ. Christ is the unique sun, and the church is the moon reflecting Him. Praise the Lord that we have a source of light to reflect!

VI. HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

In 2:16 Paul speaks of "holding forth the word of life." The word of life is very different from doctrine in dead letters. The word of life is the living breathing of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63). We have

the Lord Jesus as our pattern (vv. 6-11), we have God operating in us (v. 13), we are God's children possessing God's life and the divine nature (v. 15), we are luminaries qualified to reflect the divine light of Christ (v. 15), and we have the word of life to hold forth, to present to others. What a divine and rich provision! By such we are well able to carry out God's salvation to the full extent.

The word of life we are holding forth is actually Christ Himself (John 1:1, 4). In order to have the experience of Christ revealed in the book of Philippians, we need to have Christ as our pattern, we need to have the Triune God operating in us, we need to be children of God with the divine life and nature, and we need to be luminaries positioned to reflect Christ. All these matters are necessary for the experience of Christ.

VII. FOR THE APOSTLE'S BOASTING IN THE DAY OF CHRIST

If we hold forth Christ as the word of life, the apostle will be able to boast in the day of Christ that he has not run in vain nor labored in vain. This is to make his joy full. In 2:1-16 we see that the way to make the apostle happy is to have a life of seeking Christ, living Christ, expressing Christ, and carrying out God's salvation to its fullest. Because the apostle represents God, God will also be happy to see such a life. Then at the day of Christ, the day of the Lord's coming, the apostle will be able to boast and rejoice.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

A DRINK OFFERING POURED OUT UPON THE SACRIFICE OF THE BELIEVERS' FAITH

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:17-18; 2 Tim. 4:6; Rom. 15:16

In 2:17 Paul says, "But if even I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith, I rejoice and rejoice together with you all." In 2 Timothy 4:6 Paul also refers to himself as a drink offering: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (lit.). Since everything Paul covers in the book of Philippians is related to the experience of Christ, this must also be true of the drink offering referred to in 2:17. If our experience of Christ has not come to the point where we have been constituted as a drink offering, we have not yet experienced Christ to the uttermost. When we experience Christ to an exceedingly high degree, we shall become a drink offering.

CONSTITUTED A DRINK OFFERING

The drink offering was additional to the basic offerings revealed in Leviticus chapters one through seven (Num. 15:1-10; 28:7-10). The basic offerings were types of various aspects of Christ. The drink offering was a type of Christ as enjoyed by the offerer, an offering that fills him with Christ as the heavenly wine and even causes him to become wine to God. The Apostle Paul became such a drink offering by so enjoying Christ that he could be poured out by the shedding of his blood upon the believers' faith as a sacrifice to God.

The burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering were the basic offerings, but the drink offering was not. The five

basic

offerings covered in chapters one through seven of Leviticus are types of various aspects of what Christ is to God on our behalf. If we read Numbers 15:1-10 and 28:7-10, we shall see that the drink offering was something additional. If one of the basic offerings was offered without the drink offering, this was an indication that there was something lacking with the presentation of the basic offering. The one who offered the basic offering must have been rather poor. Actually the drink offering signifies that the offerer himself becomes the drink offering. However, this does not mean that the offerer can be such a drink offering according to his own natural constitution. Rather, he must enjoy Christ to such an extent that Christ fills him, saturates him, and permeates him. Christ is the heavenly wine for our enjoyment. When we enjoy Him by taking Him into us, we shall become filled with Him and thoroughly saturated with Him. In this way we shall become the wine to be poured out as a drink offering upon the offerings we present to God.

With the typology in the Old Testament as a basis, Paul came to regard himself as a drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice and priestly service of the believers' faith. For years Paul had been drinking of Christ and enjoying Him so that he came to the point that he was filled with Christ and saturated with Him. Eventually, Christ as the heavenly wine caused Paul to become a constitution of wine in his very being. This was the reason Paul could consider himself wine poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice he offered to God as a priest.

FAITH CONSTITUTED OF THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

In 2:17 Paul speaks of "the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith." The sacrifice of the believers' faith means that the faith of the Philippian believers was considered by Paul a sacrifice offered to God by him as a priest (Rom. 15:16), and his offering ministry was considered a priestly service. The issue, the result, of Paul's ministry was the

faith of the believers. Faith in 2:17 is all-inclusive. It refers to much more than the act of believing. Faith here includes all the believers have received and enjoyed. Ultimately it includes what the believers themselves are. This faith was the result of Paul's ministry. Paul's ministry resulted in the all-inclusive faith of the believers, the faith which Paul offered to God as a sacrifice.

To be sure, the sacrifice of the believers' faith was full of Christ. It included Christ as the basic offerings. When we experience Christ in these different aspects and enjoy Him as these basic offerings, this experience and enjoyment become our faith. Experientially, the enjoyment of Christ as the basic offerings eventually becomes our faith. Hence, this faith is constituted of the Christ we experience and enjoy.

We must not make the mistake of understanding the faith spoken of in 2:17 in a shallow, superficial way. Faith is a constitution of our experience of Christ. As such, it could be viewed by Paul as a sacrifice to be offered to God. The faith which can be offered to God as a sacrifice is a constitution of our enjoyment of Christ. The amount of faith constituted in us is in proportion to our enjoyment of Christ. The more we enjoy Him, the more we have the faith which is constituted of the enjoyment of Christ.

During the years I have been ministering in this country, the saints have been enjoying the Christ ministered to them. They have experienced Christ and enjoyed Him in many different aspects. As a result, within the saints there is a constitution, and this constitution is called faith. There is no better word to signify the enjoyment and experience of Christ in its various aspects than the word faith. This was the word used by Paul in 2:17, and we cannot improve on it. Paul uses the word faith to denote the totality of our enjoyment of Christ and experience of Him. Therefore, faith is the total expression of our experience and enjoyment of Christ.

As we have pointed out, Paul regarded this faith, constituted of the believers' experience and enjoyment of

Christ, as a sacrifice which he could offer to God as a priest. Although I by no means presume to compare myself with Paul, many times in prayer I have had the sense that the enjoyment and experience of Christ found among the believers is an offering which I can present to God. There is among the saints in the Lord's recovery a kind of faith which is the constitution and totality of their experience and enjoyment of Christ. This faith can be found in every local church in the Lord's recovery. The saints have a faith which is a constitution of their experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ over the years. This is a sign that the ministry has not been in vain. The ministry has resulted in a constitution which comes out from the saints' enjoyment of Christ and experience of Christ. In 2:17 Paul refers to this constitution as faith.

Based upon the principle in the Old Testament that the drink offering required a basic offering, Paul regarded the faith constituted of the believers' experience of Christ as the basic offering upon which he could pour out himself as a drink offering. God in heaven must have been very happy with this situation. How pleased He must have been to see the faith as the basic offering and also to see the drink offering! On the side of the believers, there was faith; on the side of the apostle, there was the drink offering. What a marvelous scene! No wonder Paul could say that he rejoiced with them all! Paul rejoiced to have his blood shed as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of the believers' faith. He not only rejoiced, but he rejoiced together with all the saints. To rejoice together with others is to share joy with them. The apostle shared his joy with the Philippians in his martyrdom over their faith. This implies a congratulation to them. I believe that the Triune God was also rejoicing with Paul at such a happy, joyful scene.

Both the believers' faith as the basic offering and the drink offering are something which has been constituted over a period of time. Faith does not grow and develop suddenly, for it is a constitution of the believers' enjoyment of Christ and spiritual experience. Likewise, a drink

offering can only be produced out of our experience with the Lord. In order to become a drink offering, we need to be filled with the Lord and saturated with Him. Only in this way can we have the spiritual constitution which makes us a drink offering. What a tremendous matter that sinners such as we can be constituted into heavenly wine for God's satisfaction!

SATISFYING GOD AND MAKING HIM HAPPY

As a result of their experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ, the believers have a constitution which Paul terms faith. In the eyes of God, this faith is so excellent, beautiful, and marvelous that He considers it a sacrifice offered to Him. Paul, after experiencing the Lord for so many years, especially during his imprisonment, became a constitution of heavenly wine that could cheer God and make Him happy. The sacrifice of the believers' faith was satisfying to God, and the drink offering was cheering to Him. Thus, the drink offering is a cheering offering presented in addition to a satisfying sacrifice. The sacrifices were very satisfying to God. In the Old Testament, the one who offered the drink offering presented something which, in type, came not from the flock or the herd, but out of himself and his experience. In the New Testament we see that through his personal enjoyment of Christ and experience of Him, Paul became cheering wine poured out before the Lord. His experience of Christ constituted him into wine to make God happy.

In 2:16 Paul expresses his concern about laboring in vain. According to verse 17, Paul realized that his labor among the Philippians had not been in vain. He knew that their faith was the basic offering upon which he could pour out himself as a drink offering. The words, "if even I am poured out as a drink offering," indicate that Paul thought of himself as one who was continually being sacrificed for his ministry. His use of the word "even" suggests that he was sacrificed to the uttermost. He considered martyrdom as a pouring out of himself upon the sacrifice of the

believers' faith. From the human point of view, Paul eventually was slain. But from Paul's viewpoint, martyrdom was the pouring out of himself as a drink offering. Throughout the years, he had continually been sacrificing himself for his ministry. However, it was not until the time of martyrdom that he was poured out to the uttermost as a drink offering. Although Paul had made great sacrifices, he had not poured himself out in this way. Now if even he was poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and priestly service of the believers' faith, he could rejoice together with them all.

Paul's word here is very touching. I can testify that time and time again I have been deeply touched by his word. Here Paul implies that he was always a sacrifice for his ministry. We who serve the churches and minister Christ to the saints must learn of Paul to become a sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice, there can be no ministry. We should not think that the more we sacrifice, the greater will be our reward. Ministry is a matter of sacrifice, not of compensation. Eventually, we need to reach the point where we can say that even if we are poured out as a drink offering, we shall be happy and rejoice together with all the saints.

MUTUAL REJOICING

It is significant that Paul says, "I rejoice and rejoice together with you." The reason he speaks of rejoicing and then of rejoicing together with the saints is that two constitutions are involved: the faith of the believers as one constitution, and the apostle as a drink offering as the other. In the pouring out of the drink offering, these two constitutions answer to each other. It is not possible for there to be rejoicing on one side, but not on the other side. The apostle rejoices, and the believers respond by rejoicing with him. This was the reason Paul could say, "And in like manner you also rejoice and rejoice together with me."

It is not normal for one of two parties to rejoice and the other not to respond with rejoicing. If you rejoice before a

living person, that person should respond with rejoicing. Here in 2:17 and 18 both parties, Paul and the believers, were rejoicing. When Paul rejoiced, the believers responded with rejoicing. Those who had the constitution of faith rejoiced with the one who had been constituted into a drink offering poured out upon this faith. What a marvelous interchange there was between Paul and the believers in Philippi! What a wonderful fellowship and communication! On the one hand, Paul said, "I rejoice and rejoice together with you all." On the other hand, he said, "You also rejoice and rejoice together with me." What a marvelous situation with everyone rejoicing together!

We may be amazed that Paul's approaching martyrdom was a cause of rejoicing. Paul expected that the Philippians would share their joy with him by congratulating him in his martyrdom for the sake of their faith. Paul's martyrdom became a situation filled with rejoicing. This was made possible by the fact that with the believers there was the constitution of faith, and with Paul there was the constitution of the drink offering. As we have indicated, neither of these constitutions can be produced in a quick way. It takes much time to develop them.

In this message we have seen that the drink offering is an offering additional to the basic offerings; that the basic offerings typify various aspects of Christ; that the drink offering is a type of Christ enjoyed by the one offering Him, an offering that fills the offerer with Christ as heavenly wine and makes him wine to God; and that the apostle became such a drink offering through the enjoyment of Christ so that he could be poured out upon the sacrifice of the believers' faith. The faith of the Philippian believers was considered by Paul a sacrifice he offered to God as a priest. According to Romans 15:16, Paul viewed himself as a priest offering the Gentile believers to God as an acceptable sacrifice. Furthermore, the service of the Philippian believers was also considered by Paul to be a sacrifice, and Paul's offering ministry was considered a priestly service.

According to 2:17 and 18, Paul and the believers in

Philippi rejoiced mutually, sharing their joy with one another. Paul rejoiced to pour himself out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of the believers' faith, and he shared his joy with them in his martyrdom over their faith. Then the Philippian believers rejoiced in Paul's drink offering and even congratulated him in his martyrdom for the sake of their faith. Actually, the believers' response of rejoicing was a kind of congratulation offered to Paul.

TWO PEAKS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

The two constitutions we see here--that of the believers with respect to their faith and that of Paul with respect to his becoming a drink offering--represent two peaks of the experience of Christ. On the side of the believers, there is the peak of faith, and on the side of the apostle there is the peak of martyrdom. This martyrdom was Paul's pouring out of himself as a drink offering. As one who loved the Lord Jesus and enjoyed Him to the uttermost, Paul was eventually constituted by Christ into heavenly wine poured out as a drink offering unto God. How meaningful and how marvelous! Both Paul and the saints in Philippi could respond to each other with rejoicing. Paul rejoiced over the believers, and the believers rejoiced over Paul. This mutual rejoicing was also a mutual congratulation. They congratulated one another for their success. Paul congratulated the believers for their success in faith, and they congratulated him in his success in martyrdom. Here in this mutual rejoicing and congratulation we see two peaks of the experience of Christ. May we all go on until we arrive at these peaks in our experience and enjoyment of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

THE APOSTLE'S CONCERN FOR THE BELIEVERS

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:19-30

In 2:19-30 we see Paul's concern for the believers. Immediately after referring to himself as a drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice and priestly service of the believers' faith, Paul speaks of sending Timothy and Epaphroditus, two intimate co-workers, to the saints in Philippi. We may wonder why Paul turned to such a matter, which seems to have no relationship to the experience of Christ. However, if we get into the depths of this portion of the book of Philippians, we shall see that it is definitely related to the experience of Christ.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AND CARING FOR THE SAINTS

In 2:20 and 21 Paul says, "For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you; for all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus." In these verses we find a strong hint that even Paul's concern for the believers was the concern for the things of Christ and for the genuine experience of Christ. Besides Timothy, Paul did not have another who was like-souled with him. Paul's soul was concerned with the things of Christ. What are the things of Christ? The things of Christ are the churches with all the saints.

Here we see the important point that if our seeking after Christ does not result in a concern for the church, our seeking is at least somewhat abnormal or biased. Many Christians today are seeking spirituality, but they have no concern for the churches with the saints. Such a spiritual seeking is not normal. Where today can you find believers who are truly seeking after Christ with a concern for the churches and the saints? We must check our seeking after

Christ in relation to the concern for the churches with the saints. Many desire to be "spiritual," "holy," or "victorious." Those who pursue spirituality without a concern for the churches are misled in their seeking. The normal seeking after Christ includes a concern for the churches and the saints.

In this Epistle, Paul does not cover the experience of Christ in a doctrinal way. Rather, little by little, he unveils the genuine experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ by dealing with practical matters and actual situations. In 2:19-30 he indicates that the experience of Christ must include a concern for the churches and the saints. We may have the concept that the experience of Christ is one thing, but the concern for the church is another. Not many of us may realize that to experience Christ and to enjoy Christ is actually to care for the church, and to care for the church is to experience Christ and enjoy Him. Our natural tendency is to separate these things. We may think that because we are enjoying Christ, we do not have time to care for the church. Or, on the other side, we may think that because we are so busy in caring for the church, we have no time to enjoy Christ. It is important for us to see in 2:19-30 that these two things must be one. If we truly experience Christ and enjoy Him, this should result in a concern for the church and the saints. There is a principle in the Word that if our seeking after Christ and our experience of Christ do not result in a concern for the churches and the saints, our seeking and our experience are abnormal. The experience of Christ must be for His Body.

I believe that, deep within, as Paul was testifying that he was willing to be poured out as a drink offering upon the believers' faith, he was concerned for them. In these verses Paul seems to be saying, "My desire is to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith. Because I am in prison, I have no way to come to you. If I were at liberty to do so, I would visit you immediately. Since I am not able to come, I shall send Timothy, one whose experience of Christ makes him full of concern for the churches and the saints." I wish to

emphasize again and again the crucial point that the genuine experience of Christ will always cause us to care for the churches and the saints.

I have often said that if we have good fellowship with the Lord in the morning, we shall be eager to meet with the church in the evening. This is another indication that the real experience of Christ always turns us to the church and results in a care for the saints.

Caring for the church because we have the genuine experience of Christ is very different from the so-called pastoring work common among Christians today. That kind of work may be a distraction from the true experience of Christ. However, the concern for the church which issues from the experience of Christ is not a distraction from the enjoyment of Christ. Because that kind of pastoring work often becomes a preoccupation which keeps people from the enjoyment of Christ, many of today's pastors have no time to enjoy the Lord.

Paul's concern for the churches and the saints came out of his experience of Christ. The real concern for the church will always proceed from the experience of Christ and the enjoyment of Christ.

No doubt, both Timothy and Epaphroditus were younger than Paul. In verse 22 Paul says of Timothy, "But you know his approvedness, that as a child with a father he has served with me in the gospel." The Greek word rendered approvedness means approved worth, proof of having been tested. We have seen that in verse 20 Paul speaks of Timothy as one who was like-souled. Timothy's being like-souled with the Apostle Paul was the secret of his experience of Christ.

THE NEED TO BE ONE IN SOUL

The book of Philippians deals very much with the soul of believers. We must strive together with one soul in the faith of the gospel (1:27); we must be joined in soul, thinking the one thing (2:2); and we must be like-souled, genuinely caring for the things of the Lord (2:20-21). In the

gospel work, in the fellowship among the believers, and in the Lord's interests, our soul is always a problem. Hence, it must be transformed, especially in its leading part, the mind (Rom. 12:2), that we may be of one soul, joined in soul, and like-souled in the Body life.

In the book of Philippians the experience of Christ is the key point, and the secret of the experience of Christ is to be one in soul or joined in soul. According to this book, we cannot go on in the experience of Christ unless we are joined in soul. If we are one only in spirit but are not joined in soul, we cannot go on in the experience of Christ.

There is a great difference between being in the soul and being one in soul or joined in soul. The secret of experiencing Christ is to be one in soul, not to be in the soul. The dissenting ones who are altogether in the soul find it impossible to be one in soul. Those who exercise their mind, emotion, and will are not one in soul. If we would experience Christ, we need to be one with others in the soul; that is, we need to become like-souled with others. When we exercise our mind, emotion, and will, we may be very individualistic. But if we exercise our spirit to be one in soul, our mind will be sobered, our emotion will be regulated, and our will will be adjusted. Then it will be possible for us to be one in soul with other saints.

The extraordinary expression "like-souled" is used in the Bible only in this one place. The King James Version renders the Greek word as "like-minded." The mind is the leading part of the soul. According to the context, to be like-souled primarily means to be like-minded. The book of Philippians deals much with the believers' mind. At the beginning of chapter two, Paul tells us to think the same thing and even the one thing. This indicates clearly and strongly that to be like-souled is to be like-minded.

Some translations have made a serious mistake in their rendering of the Greek word for like-souled. The New American Standard Version says "kindred spirit." This is terrible! In fact, it is actually a change of the holy Word. Such a rendering ignores the crucial difference between spirit and soul. This same version even goes so far as to use

the expression "united in spirit" in 2:2 instead of "joined in soul."

In the past we have emphasized the fact that to experience Christ we must know our human spirit, for only in the spirit can we experience Christ. Now we must go on to see that to experience Christ we must also be one in soul. Experiencing Christ in our spirit is primarily for our individual, personal experience. But our personal experience of Christ must issue in a concern for the churches. If our experience of Christ results in a concern for the churches and the saints, it will be impossible for us to be individualistic. Instead, we shall realize the need to be corporate. In order to care for the church, we must be one with others. Otherwise, the more concern we have for the church, the more problems we shall cause. One brother will enjoy Christ in the spirit, and this experience will give him a concern for the church. Another brother will also enjoy Christ in the spirit, but have a different kind of concern for the church. These different kinds of concern will cause problems. The only way for us to be one in our concern for the church is to be like-souled, to be joined in soul.

Let me give you an example of the problems caused when the leading ones in a local church are not like-souled. More than forty years ago, it was necessary for me to visit the church in a certain locality in China to help smooth over the differences among the five elders. Each of the elders loved the Lord very much. All of them were intelligent and also frank and straightforward. Furthermore, these five brothers experienced the Lord in the spirit. However, each had a different concern for the church. As a result, when they came together for an elders' meeting, they argued. They did not argue over worldly things, but over the church affairs. Every few months I was asked to visit that locality to try to reconcile the brothers and to settle the differences. However, after a short period of time the problem arose again. Even though the elders in this church loved the Lord and experienced Christ in the spirit, they were not able to be one in the soul.

Problems between husband and wife also arise because

the two are not one in soul. In loving the Lord and experiencing Him, they have no problems. The brother experiences Christ in his spirit, and his wife experiences Him in her spirit. However, when they talk over certain matters, the husband has one concept, and his wife has another concept. In other words, the husband and wife each have different souls. The wife may eventually recognize that her husband is the head and go along with him, but inwardly she still does not agree with his concept. They are not truly like-souled.

What should the elders in a local church do when they find that they are not one in soul? Their relationship to one another is surely different from that between a husband and wife. Who among the elders can be regarded as the head to whom the others should submit? No one is the head. Even though they love the Lord and experience Christ in the spirit, they may not be one in soul. This lack of oneness is a leakage which weakens the eldership in the churches. Perhaps certain of the elders who are more experienced will not argue. Instead, they will remain quiet. This quietness, however, may be political. Actually they may not be willing to open and express what is in their soul. Since the elders are not one in soul, they lack the genuine oneness in the concern for the church and the saints. They find it easy to be one in spirit, but not to be like-souled.

LIKE-SOULED

Although Paul had a number of co-workers, only of Timothy could he say that he was like-souled. Concerning the churches, only Timothy had the same soul as Paul. I treasure the expression "like-souled" used by Paul in 2:20. This short phrase opens a window through which we can see the secret for us to experience Christ in a way which issues in a true concern for the churches. I hope that we all will come to know this precious secret.

Because Paul and Timothy were like-souled, they could experience Christ to the uttermost. However, if we experience Christ only in our spirit and are not one in soul

with others who love the Lord and are seeking Him, our experience of Christ will be limited. Those co-workers who were not like-souled with Paul could experience Christ, but not to the extent to which Paul and Timothy experienced Him.

I was shocked when I first read that apart from Timothy Paul had no one like-souled who would genuinely care for the things concerning the saints in Philippi. Were there not others who also had a genuine concern for the churches? Yes, there were, but their concern was not the same in soul as Paul's concern.

Sooner or later, we shall all be tested whether or not we are one in soul with the leading ones and with those who have more experience. If you are not like-souled with the leading ones and experienced ones, those with a true knowledge of the situation in the church life, you will be hindered from going on in the experience of Christ. But if you are one in soul with these saints, you will be protected, and you will not have any problems in experiencing Christ.

RISKING OUR SOUL

In 2:25 Paul speaks of Epaphroditus, referring to him as "my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier." Paul also tells the Philippian believers that Epaphroditus was their apostle, one sent with a commission, and a priestly minister to his need. A priestly minister is one whose ministry is like that of a priest. All New Testament believers are priests to God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). Hence, our ministry to the Lord, in whatever aspect, is a priestly ministry, a priestly service (Phil. 2:17, 30).

In 2:30 Paul points out a striking feature of Epaphroditus. Here Paul tells us that for the work of Christ Epaphroditus "drew near even unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me." The Greek word rendered "risking" means venturing, recklessly exposing one's life, like a gambler throwing down a stake. The Greek word for life in verse 30 is *psuche*, the word for soul. Hence, to say that Epaphroditus risked his life means that he risked his soul. Epaphroditus was one

who was willing to sacrifice his soul for the churches and the saints. This sacrifice of soul is revealed clearly by the Lord Jesus in John 10:11, where He says concerning Himself that, as the good Shepherd, He was ready to lay down His soul-life so that we could receive His divine life.

In Philippians 2:19-30 we see two crucial points concerning the soul. First, we need to be one in soul; second, we need to be willing to sacrifice or risk our soul. Both are necessary if we are to have a genuine concern for the churches with all the saints. Timothy was a like-souled person, and Epaphroditus was a soul-risking person. We also should be those who are one in soul and who are willing to risk our soul. We should be ready to sacrifice our mind, will, and emotion to be one with our dear co-workers.

It is especially important for the elders and leading ones to be like-souled and to risk their soul. Instead of loving your soul, learn to risk it, to sacrifice it, and to pay the price for the church life. If the elders do not have this kind of soul, they are not adequate to take the lead in their locality. If we love the Lord and the church, we should first experience the Lord in our spirit and then be like-souled in the experience of Christ for the concern of the church and also ready and willing to sacrifice our soul for the sake of the saints. In the Lord's recovery today we need saints who seek the Lord and enjoy Him in their spirit and who also are willing to have a genuine concern for the churches by being like-souled and by risking their soul life. If we are one in soul as well as in spirit, our experience of Christ will reach the peak.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

BEING LIKE-SOULED AND RISKING OUR SOUL

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:19-30

In this message I would like to give a further word on the matters of being like-souled and of risking our soul. Concerning Timothy, Paul says, "I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you" (2:20). Regarding Epaphroditus, he says, "Because for the work of Christ he drew near even unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me." Without spiritual experience, we cannot have an adequate understanding of Paul's thought in these verses. Mere reading without experience is not sufficient. Through our experience in the church life and through observation, we have come to understand at least to some extent what Paul means when he speaks of being like-souled and of risking the soul.

THE SOURCE OF DIVISIONS

As we all know, there are a great many divisions among Christians today, divisions that number in the thousands. In virtually every case, these divisions have been caused by Christians who have a heart for the Lord and who truly love Him. In fact, the more the believers love the Lord Jesus, the more divisions there are apt to be. The reason for this is that, out of their love for the Lord, Christians desire to do something for Him. Time and time again, the outcome has been division.

In order to accomplish something for Christ, we must use our soul. To simply have fellowship with the Lord it is sufficient to exercise our spirit, but to do something for Him we need to exercise our soul with its faculties. This

was the reason God created the soul with the faculties of mind, emotion, and will. Whenever we seek to accomplish something for the Lord, we must use these faculties. However, the serious problem is that when Christians endeavor to do something for the Lord Jesus out of their love for Him, they are not like-souled. Instead, they are very different in the soul. These differences in the soul are the primary cause of division.

It is commonly thought that divisions among Christians have their source in doctrinal differences, and apparently this is so. But actually the true source is found not in disagreement over doctrine, but in the differences in the souls of believers. Because so many Christians are not like-souled, not truly one in soul, those who love the Lord Jesus have caused most of the divisions we see today. The source of divisions, therefore, is man's soul.

The saints in the Lord's recovery have a genuine love for the Lord Jesus. As far as loving the Lord and enjoying fellowship with Him are concerned, there are no problems. But when we attempt to carry out something for the Lord according to what we have seen in our fellowship with Him in the spirit, we may have problems because we are different in soul from the other saints. In other words, in what we desire to do, we are not like-souled.

TWO RESULTS

This difference in soul may have two different kinds of results. First, some may even go so far as to leave the church life and cause yet another division. Second, some may keep the proper standing on the ground of oneness and stay in the recovery, but they may become negative, dissenting, or cold. One who remains in the recovery while holding such an attitude may say to himself, "The brothers certainly are strong in their concepts about certain things. I simply am not able to get my idea across to them. Since they are not willing to take my proposal, it is best that I am silent from now on. Instead of being aggressive, I'll withdraw and become passive. I'll attend the church

meetings, but I'll let someone else care for the various matters in the church life." Those who adopt such an attitude may have a good intention. They may be reluctant to argue or cause trouble. For example, an elder in a local church may consider within himself, "My concept is different from that of the other elders. According to my opinion, my way is better than theirs. But, they won't accept my proposal. Instead of arguing, it is better that I not say anything. Let the brothers do things their way and let them bear the responsibility of taking the church on." I have seen many cases of this in the church life.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST IN THE BODY

It is very important to realize that if we hold such an attitude because of differences in the soul, this will cause our experience of Christ to be limited. We shall not be able to experience Him to the full extent. Rather, our experience of Christ will be limited to what we experience in our fellowship with Him in the spirit. We shall be hindered from going further to experience Christ in the Body. Because of the differences of our emotion, understanding, or decision regarding certain matters, we are different in soul. Such differences keep us from the full experience of Christ, the experience of Him in the Body. If we do not experience Christ in the Body, we do not experience Him in full. Only by experiencing Christ in the Body do we experience Him to the fullest extent.

In order to experience Christ in the Body, our experience needs to be corporate. Furthermore, to have a corporate experience of Christ we need to be like-souled with others. It is vitally important that we learn to be like-souled. An elder must learn to be like-souled with other elders, and all the members of a local church need to learn to be like-souled with the other saints.

Throughout the years we have seen a number of saints who have been held back from full participation in the church life because they were not like-souled. For example, some have not been willing to give themselves to the

church service in a positive, aggressive way. They could excuse their lack of involvement by saying they do not want to cause trouble, but want to keep the situation calm. However, the true reason for their holding back is that they are not like-souled and are not willing to risk their souls in the church life. We know some brothers who have truly behaved like gentlemen in their involvement with the church. They have been honest and good and have not caused turmoil. Nevertheless, because of their difference of opinion, because of not being like-souled, they eventually forsook the Lord's recovery. When these brothers gave up the church life, they did not criticize us. They simply went their own way. The underlying reason for leaving the church life was holding on to the differences in their souls. As we have pointed out, the divisions among Christians originate mainly from such differences in soul.

Other saints who are not like-souled have chosen to remain in the recovery. But toward the church life in general and toward the church service in particular, they have a negative attitude. Instead of offending others or causing trouble, they withdraw and become cold. On the one hand, they do not leave the Lord's recovery; on the other hand, they do not go on with the church in a strong, positive, aggressive way.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he had a number of co-workers. Nevertheless, Paul said that, apart from Timothy, he had no one like-souled who would genuinely care for what concerned the believers in Philippi. Paul's situation with respect to the co-workers was quite difficult. On the one hand, there were a number of co-workers. But, when Paul was thinking of sending a brother to learn of the situation among the Philippian saints, he knew that he had only one, Timothy, who was like-souled with him. For this reason, Timothy was the only co-worker Paul could send to Philippi to care for the things concerning the saints.

Any co-worker who could not be sent by Paul with such a concern for the Body of Christ could not experience Christ to the same degree Paul did. Because Timothy was like-souled with Paul, he was in a position to experience

Christ to the uttermost in the Body, just as Paul was experiencing Him. But those who were different in soul from Paul could not experience Christ to this high degree. Their experience of Christ was restricted by the differences in soul.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST BY RISKING OUR SOUL

In Philippians, Paul speaks not only of being like-souled, but also of risking our soul-life. He says of Epaphroditus that he risked his life, his soul, in order to fill up the lack of the Philippians' service toward Paul. When we speak of Epaphroditus risking his soul, some may say that Paul's meaning here is that Epaphroditus did not love his physical life, but was willing to give it up for the sake of the Body of Christ. It is certainly true to say that Epaphroditus risked his physical life for the sake of the Body. However, this implies that he risked his soul.

MARTYRS FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

Years ago, I read an article which said that before a believer can become a martyr, he must first have the attitude of a martyr. According to that article, every martyr has already been equipped with a certain attitude. Then when the time comes to be martyred, such a person can actually become a martyr by laying down his physical life. This principle applies to risking our soul in the church life. If we do not have the heart to sacrifice our mind, emotion, and will for the sake of the Body of Christ, we shall not be able to sacrifice our physical life in martyrdom. In order for Epaphroditus to risk his physical life, he first had to be willing to risk his soul.

In a very real sense, we in the church life need to be martyrs for the Body of Christ and for all the saints. If we desire to be one with the Lord for His recovery, we must be willing to sacrifice our mind, feeling, and intention. This is to risk our soul. In order to experience Christ to the

uttermost, we need to be not only like-souled, but also to risk our soul by risking our mind, emotion, and will.

In 2:30 Paul said to the Philippians that Epaphroditus risked his life that "he might fill up your lack of service toward me." Epaphroditus risked his soul in order to fill up what was lacking on the part of the Philippian believers toward Paul. This indicates that if we do not risk our soul, we shall not be able to fill up any lack there may be in the Body of Christ. Filling a lack in the Body affords us a splendid opportunity to experience Christ. We need to experience Christ to such an extent that we are able to fill up what is lacking in the Body. If we would experience Christ to this degree, we must risk our soul life by sacrificing our emotion with its desires, our will with its intentions, and our mind with its opinions. Whenever we sacrifice our soul for the sake of the Body, we have an opportunity to experience Christ in the Body. This is to experience Christ to the full extent.

If we daily risk our soul in the church life, we shall be ready for martyrdom should this ever be required of us. Those who risk their soul for the Body of Christ are able to lay down their physical life for the Lord. Furthermore, if we risk our soul, we shall find it easy to be like-souled with other believers.

THE LIMITATIONS DUE TO NOT BEING LIKE-SOULED

During the years I was with Brother Nee in China, I came to realize that it was not easy for him to carry out what he had seen in fellowship with the Lord concerning His move on earth for His Body. The reason for the difficulty was that some of the co-workers were not like-souled with Brother Nee. Certain very crucial things concerning the Lord's recovery could not be fulfilled in a practical way because these co-workers were not like-souled.

One clear illustration of this shortage involves the case of a brilliant young man who was about to leave China to study in the United States. This young man had just been saved and wanted to be baptized. Convinced that it was

both right and necessary to baptize the young man Brother Nee thought that the church should baptize him before he left China. However, a co-worker in that locality held an opinion to the contrary. This co-worker thought that because the young man had only recently believed in Christ, it was not safe to baptize him. When Brother Nee pointed out that the young man was about to leave for the United States and that they were not assured of another opportunity to baptize him, this co-worker still refused. From different angles Brother Nee tried to persuade him to change his mind. Eventually Brother Nee even said that he was willing to baptize the young man and bear the full responsibility of this action before the Lord. But because that co-worker still would not agree, Brother Nee was not able to do anything.

This case illustrates the differences in soul that existed between some of the co-workers and Brother Nee. At the time, I did not realize that the problem was due to the fact that they were not like-souled with him. But as I look back on the situation in the light of Paul's word in Philippians, I see clearly what the problem was. Eventually, some of those dear co-workers who were not like-souled with Brother Nee were distracted from the Lord's recovery. Their experience of Christ was limited. They did not go on to experience Christ to the uttermost in the Body.

OUR NEED TO BE LIKE-SOULED AND TO RISK OUR SOUL

Paul's word about being like-souled is a warning to all who remain in the Lord's recovery. If we are not like-souled with others, we shall not have the full enjoyment of Christ, even though we stay in the church life. Although we have no problems in our spirit, we may hold on to differences in our soul. According to your impression, the feeling you have in your soul is right. However, because you hold on to your differences, your experience of Christ is limited. Thus, it is crucial for us all to learn that in the church life we need to be like-souled. Do not allow the differences in your

soul to hold you back from experiencing Christ in His Body. May we all learn to sacrifice our soul, to risk our mind, emotion, and will. Then we shall become like-souled with others in the Body of Christ. If this is our condition, how much we shall experience Christ and enjoy Him in the Body! In order to experience Christ to the full extent in the Body, we need to be like-souled and we need to risk our soul.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE THREE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL BELIEVERS VERSUS THE THREE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE RELIGIOUS JUDAIZERS

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:1-6

The book of Philippians was not written in logical order according to doctrine. For this reason, it is rather difficult to divide the book into sections. We may even wonder why Paul, after speaking of the mutual fellowship between him and the believers in Philippi in chapter two, goes on to speak of other matters, which he refers to as "the rest" (3:1). I believe that the reason for this change of subject lies in the fact that Paul was deeply troubled by the activity of the Judaizers. He knew that the Judaizers were disturbing the churches, damaging the church life, and trying to turn the saints away from the faith.

The Epistle to the Philippians was written when Paul received material supply from the believers in Philippi. Through Epaphroditus they had sent this supply to care for Paul's need during his imprisonment. After receiving their gift, Paul wrote them this Epistle.

As we have pointed out, in the first two chapters we see the believers' concern for Paul and Paul's concern for the saints. According to 1:7, Paul realized that the believers in Philippi had him in their heart and that they were partakers of his grace. Paul went on to say that he longed after them all "in the inward parts of Christ Jesus" (1:8). Thus, there was a mutual care between the apostle and the believers.

Toward the end of chapter two, Paul speaks of sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi. Remarks about the

sending of co-workers to visit the saints are usually found at the very end of Paul's Epistles. This may indicate that Paul was planning to close this Epistle at the end of chapter two. Paul, however, was obviously burdened to write more. After he spoke of Timothy and Epaphroditus, his burden still was not discharged. Deep in his heart he was troubled by the Judaizers. I believe that this is the reason for the change of subject at the beginning of chapter three.

I. REJOICING IN THE LORD

In 3:1 Paul says, "For the rest, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, and for you it is safe." The Greek word rendered irksome also means wearisome, tedious, troublesome. Paul did not find it irksome or wearisome to write the same thing to the saints.

Paul here charges the saints to rejoice in the Lord. To rejoice in the Lord is a safeguard, a security. For Paul to write the saints about rejoicing in the Lord was safe for them. Paul's use of the word safe points to the connection between 3:1 and 2. There must have been a situation in Philippi which required a safeguard, some kind of protection. The situation Paul had in mind was the trouble caused by the Judaizers. Therefore, after telling the believers to rejoice in the Lord, he charges them to beware of the dogs, the evil workers, the concision (v. 2). The Greek word for beware means to keep a watchful eye ever upon. On the one hand, the apostle advises the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord; on the other hand, he warns them to beware of, to keep a watchful eye ever upon, the Judaizers.

II. THE THREE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE RELIGIOUS JUDAIZERS

In using the word "dogs" Paul was very strong. If we were to use such an expression today, we would surely be condemned. Paul, however, was not the first to be so bold in his utterance. Both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus referred to the Pharisees as the offspring of vipers (Matt.

3:7; 12:34). Like John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus, Paul was honest and frank in speaking the facts. The Pharisees truly were the offspring of vipers, and the Judaizers really were "dogs."

In 3:2 Paul says, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision." Since there is no conjunction used between these clauses, they must refer to the same class of people. Dogs are unclean (Lev. 11:4-8), the workers are evil, and the concision are those deserving contempt. (Concision, meaning mutilation, is a term of contempt, used in place of circumcision.) The "dogs" refer to the Judaizers. In nature they are unclean dogs, in behavior they are evil workers, and in religion they are the concision, people of shame. In such a book concerning the experience and enjoyment of Christ, the apostle warns the Gentile believers to be wary of such unclean, evil, and contemptible people.

In speaking of the dogs, the evil workers, the concision, Paul exposed the shame of the Judaizers. In nature, they were dogs; in behavior, they were evil; and in religion, they were contemptible. Although they gloried in their religion, Paul regarded it as an object of shame and contempt. He wanted the believers to beware of the dogs, the evil workers, the concision.

III. THE THREE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL BELIEVERS

In verse 3 Paul continues, "For we are the circumcision, who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Those who are the circumcision here are the New Testament believers, the ones genuinely circumcised by Christ's crucifixion. They are absolutely different from the Judaizers. They serve as priests by the Spirit of God, not by the ordinances of law; they boast in Christ, not in the law; and they have no confidence in the flesh, but have their confidence in the Spirit.

In verses 2 and 3 there is a threefold contrast: believers

who serve by the Spirit of God in contrast to the dogs; believers who boast in Christ in contrast to evil workers; and believers who have no confidence in the flesh in contrast to the concision. The Judaizers lived by their fallen nature, whereas the believers in Christ serve by the Spirit of God. Thus, the Spirit of God is in contrast to the nature of the "dogs." The Judaizers did evil things and even boasted in them, whereas the true believers boast in Christ. They glory and rejoice in Him. As used here, the word boast implies not only boasting, but also rejoicing and glorying. Our boasting, glorying, and rejoicing are not in our outward deeds, not in our behavior or conduct, but in Christ alone. The Judaizers had confidence in the flesh, whereas the true believers in Christ have no confidence in the flesh.

The flesh in 3:3 comprises all that we are and have in our natural being. The fact that the Judaizers had confidence in their circumcision was a sign that their confidence was in their flesh. They trusted in their natural qualities and qualifications, not in the Spirit. Their confidence was in what they were by nature. They trusted in the fact that they were Jews. By contrast Paul says strongly that we who believe in Christ do not have any confidence in the flesh. Our confidence is wholly in the Lord.

What a contrast we see in verses 2 and 3! We serve by the Spirit of God, we boast in Christ, and we have confidence not in the flesh, but only in the Lord. Because we deny our old nature, we are the true circumcision. The denial of the flesh is the real circumcision, the true cutting off of the flesh as revealed in Colossians 2:11.

IV. SAUL OF TARSUS AS A MODEL OF THE JUDAIZERS

According to verses 4 through 6, Paul had been a model of the Judaizers: "Though I myself could have confidence also in the flesh; if any other man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law,

become blameless." When Paul used to be among the Judaizers, he had been very active and had many outstanding qualifications.

A. Having More Confidence in the Flesh

A former leading one among the Judaizers, Paul had more reason than others to have confidence in the flesh. In Galatians 1:14 he tells us that he "advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." In a very real sense, Paul had been a "top dog" among the Judaizers.

B. Circumcised the Eighth Day

In verse 5 Paul says that he was circumcised the eighth day, the day for a genuine Israelite to be circumcised (Gen. 17:12). This day distinguished him from the Ishmaelites and proselytes, who were circumcised later. Paul was a typical Jew, not a proselyte. This gave him ground to boast when he was a Judaizer.

C. Of the Race of Israel

Paul was also of the race of Israel, God's called race, the genuine seed of Abraham (Rom. 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22). He was not a descendant of the proselytes grafted into the race of God's covenant.

D. Of the Tribe of Benjamin

Paul could also be confident in the fact that he was of the tribe of Benjamin. This was a lovely and faithful tribe, among whom was the royal city of Jerusalem with the temple of God (Deut. 33:12).

E. A Hebrew of the Hebrews

Paul also says that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents with Hebrew ancestry on both sides. Furthermore, his grandparents on both sides were Hebrews as well. Only such a one could say

that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. A full-blooded Hebrew, he could boast that he was of pure Hebrew blood.

F. A Pharisee Keeping the Law

In verse 5 Paul tells us that, as to the law, he was a Pharisee. The law here is the law of Moses respected by all orthodox Jews. As a Pharisee, Paul was a member of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5; 23:6), a sect exceedingly zealous for the law of Moses. The Pharisees were proud of their superior sanctity of life, devotion to God, and knowledge of the Scriptures.

G. Persecuting the Church out of Zeal for the Law

Out of zeal for the law and Judaism, Paul persecuted the church. When Paul says, "as to zeal, persecuting the church," he refers to zeal for the law of Moses and the Jewish religion (Gal. 1:14). Those Jews who persecuted the church were certainly among the leading ones in Judaism. No one could surpass them in their zeal. Paul boasted in his zeal in persecuting the church.

H. Blameless according to the Law

Finally, Paul says that "as to the righteousness which is in the law," he was found, or proven, blameless. This, of course, was in the eyes of man according to man's judgment. In the eyes of God, according to His righteous law, no flesh is blameless (Gal. 2:16).

Paul presented this list of qualifications for the purpose of showing the Philippians that they should not have any trust in the Judaizers. Paul once had been a leading Judaizer, but a radical change had taken place in him. Now he was very different from what he had been before. This was a strong indication to the believers in Philippi not to follow the Judaizers.

Paul's word in 3:1-6 is also related to the experience of Christ. Had Paul remained a Judaizer, it would have been impossible for him to experience Christ. But because he became another kind of person, one who served by the

Spirit of God, boasted in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh, he could enjoy Christ and experience Him in a very rich way. We also should be those who have no confidence in the flesh, in our natural ability, or in our heritage or tradition. Rather, we should be those who serve God by the Spirit, who boast in Christ, and who put no trust in the flesh. If we are such persons, we shall have the genuine experience of Christ.

Although we are not Judaizers, in principle we may actually be the same as the Judaizers were. Even though we have been regenerated, we may continue to live in our fallen nature, boast in what we do in the flesh, and have confidence in our natural qualifications. We have pointed out that in 3:2 the dogs, the evil workers, and the concision refer respectively to the fallen nature, deeds, and religion. If we continue to live according to our old nature, boast in what we do in ourselves, and have confidence in our qualifications, we shall be the same as the Judaizers. As a result, we shall cause problems in the church, and we shall not be able to progress in the experience of Christ. In order to experience Christ, we must serve by the Spirit of God, not by our fallen nature; boast in Christ, not in our own doings; and not trust our natural qualifications, but trust only in the Lord. This is a secret to the experience of Christ.

We may consider within ourselves that we are different from the Judaizers. However, we may still live in our old nature, boast in our deeds, and have trust in our natural qualifications. I do not have the assurance that most of the saints fully condemn their fallen nature. Instead, many may still live, move, and act according to the "dog" nature. Furthermore, to some extent at least, we may still boast in our deeds, considering ourselves intelligent and capable. Moreover, we also may have confidence in our flesh, in our natural qualifications.

It is important that we all be deeply and personally touched by these verses in Philippians 3. We need the Lord's light to shine on us concerning our nature, our

deeds, and our confidence in the flesh. If we are enlightened by the Lord, we shall confess that although we have been regenerated to become children of God with the divine life and nature, we still live too much in our "dog" nature. Yes, we have a right to proclaim the fact that we are children of God. But if this declaration is contrasted with our daily experience, it may be little more than a doctrine to us. One day, when the light shines on you concerning this, you will want to prostrate yourself before the Lord and confess how unclean your nature is. Then you will condemn everything you do by your fallen nature. You will see that in the eyes of God whatever is done in the fallen nature is evil and worthy of condemnation. Formerly, we boasted in our deeds and qualifications. But the time will come when instead of boasting in the flesh with its qualifications, we shall condemn it. Then we shall boast in Christ alone, realizing that in ourselves we have absolutely no ground for boasting.

Only when we have been enlightened by God shall we be able to say truly that we have no trust in our natural qualifications, ability, or intelligence. Only then shall we be able to testify that our confidence is wholly in the Lord. After we are enlightened in this way, we shall be able to experience Christ. I hope that many among us will see this light and turn from a mere objective understanding of these verses to the subjective enjoyment and experience of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

COUNTING ALL THINGS LOSS ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:7-8

Philippians 3:7 and 8 say, "But what things were gains to me, these I have counted loss on account of Christ. But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of Whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them to be refuse that I may gain Christ." When we come to these verses, we come to the heart of this book. Here we are initiated into the experience of Christ.

In verse 7 Paul speaks of "what things were gains to me." These are the things mentioned in verses 5 and 6. The things that were gains to him Paul counted loss on account of Christ. All the different gains were counted as one loss by Paul because they all issued in one thing, that is, the loss of Christ, as indicated by "on account of Christ." All the things which were once gains to Paul hindered him and held him back from participating in Christ and enjoying Him. Hence, on account of Christ, all the gains were a loss to him.

Whereas in verse 7 Paul refers specifically to religious things, in verse 8 he goes on to say, "I count also all things to be loss." Paul counted as loss on account of Christ not only the things of his former religion, but all other things as well. In this message I have a particular burden to point out what these things include.

RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND CULTURE

Years ago, many of us were taught that the things in verse 8 refer to worldly, material things. In a sense, this

understanding is partly right. However, to interpret Paul's word in this way is not very practical. According to verses 5 and 6, Paul's concept is not mainly related to material things. It is true, of course, that worldly, material things occupy people and keep them from experiencing Christ. However, Paul realized that the things which truly frustrate people from experiencing Christ are mainly the things of religion, philosophy, and culture. For the most part, the thoughtful, philosophical people are not occupied by material things. Those who are not thoughtful or philosophical are the ones usually distracted by material things. Those who are more philosophical care for religion, culture, and philosophy. When you go out to preach the gospel, you will discover that religion, philosophy, and culture are the most powerful strongholds of resistance to the gospel.

Before Paul was converted, he was not one who loved material things. On the contrary, he was a person fully given to Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. His whole being was for Judaism and everything included in it. Apparently Jews care for their religion. Actually they care much more for their culture and philosophy than for religion. The same is true, of course, for people of every race, culture, and nationality. Moslems, for example, are fully occupied with their own type of thought, logic, philosophy, and culture.

Let us review the items covered by Paul in verses 5 and 6. He says that he was circumcised the eighth day, that he was of the race of Israel, that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, that concerning the law he was a Pharisee, that concerning zeal he persecuted the church, and that concerning righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless. These items are related to religion, philosophy, and culture. This is a strong indication that as Paul was writing these verses he was conscious not of material things, but rather of religious, philosophical, and cultural things. At the time the book of Philippians was written, most of the people in

the Roman Empire were for religion, philosophy, or politics. In fact, the three main elements of Western culture, then as well as now, were Jewish religion, Greek philosophy, and Roman politics.

HOOKED BY SATAN

For thousands of years, Satan, the enemy of God, has been using religion, philosophy, and culture to possess people and to keep them from experiencing Christ. Man was made for Christ. God created man in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and the image of God is Christ (Col. 1:15). Man was made in the image of God for Christ. But Satan uses religion, philosophy, and culture to hook people and to keep them from Christ. Although the more simple people may be hooked by material things, the more thoughtful ones are hooked by religion, philosophy, and culture. Actually it is the people who are occupied by these things who control the earth. The thoughtful, philosophical, and cultured ones are the most powerful ones. However, Satan has used religion, philosophy, and culture both to occupy these people and also to nail them on his wall.

Before Paul believed in Christ, he also was one hooked and nailed by Satan. He had been hooked by Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. How strong he was for Judaism! Perhaps there has not been another person more absolute for Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. To people like Saul of Tarsus, wealth or material things mean nothing compared with their religion, philosophy, and culture.

If we get into Paul's spirit and thought in Philippians 3, we shall realize that as he was writing he was thinking of religion, philosophy, and culture when he spoke of "all things." The "all things" in verse 8 must certainly include the three categories of religious things, philosophical things, and cultural things. If we would drop our religion, philosophy, and culture, we would truly abandon everything. By dropping these categories of things, we would automatically drop the worldly, material things,

which are actually dominated by religion, philosophy, and culture. Although it is easy to overcome the influence of material things, it is very difficult to overcome religion, philosophy, and culture. Those who love the Lord may easily abandon material things for His sake. But it is not easy for them to lay aside their particular thought and logic. You may love the Lord and seek Him for years without dropping one bit of your personal philosophy or logic.

NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND DOMESTIC LOGIC

Every nationality and culture has its particular type of logic and philosophy. The British, for example, are noted for their diplomacy, which embodies their logic and philosophy. The Chinese and Japanese are steeped in their own national logic and philosophy. Every nationality is strong in its particular kind of cultural peculiarity. As a result of all the different kinds of logic and philosophy, Christ does not have a way with any group of people on earth today. He does not have a way either with those in the Orient or with those in the West. At the time of the Reformation, Christ tried to find a way with the Germans, but He was not successful. Later, He tried to find a way with the British, also without success. We repeat, there is not one group of people on earth with whom Christ has been able to fully have His way. People of every nationality have been taken over by Satan and hooked by him through religion, philosophy, and culture. It has been difficult for the Lord to find any group of people available to Him for His move on earth.

It is important for us all to realize that we still hold on to our national philosophy and domestic logic. Those from one part of the country hold to their logic, and those from another region cling to their philosophy. Holding to our domestic logic and national philosophy deprives us of Christ. In a sense, this drives Christ away from us in our experience. In a subtle, secret, and hidden way, the religious, philosophical, and cultural things occupy the believers, even the best of Christians, and keep them from

the experience of Christ. Wherever you may go in the world today, you will find that Christ simply does not have a way with any nationality or group of people. In every part of the world, the national philosophy and the domestic logic are so strong that there is little ground in the believers for Christ. Years ago, I was invited to stay in a certain place as an honored guest. As I observed the way the people there behaved themselves, I was deeply impressed that because they were so strong in their religion, philosophy, and culture, Christ had no way to get through in them.

For the most part, people are willing to accept God's salvation for their personal benefit, but they are not willing to give full ground to Christ. In a sense, they receive salvation, but, experientially speaking, they may not receive Christ and allow Him to have a free way in them. The cause of this problem is religion, philosophy, and culture.

If we would get into the depths of Paul's thought in 3:7 and 8, we would realize that Paul was very concerned about the matters of religion, philosophy, and culture. His word about the dogs, the evil workers, and the concision in verse 2 confirms this. The concision, a contemptuous term for circumcision, is a matter not only related to religion, but is a matter especially related to Jewish culture. Moreover, Jewish culture is based upon Jewish philosophy and logic. In verse 3 Paul says that we are the circumcision, who serve by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Then he goes on to give the reasons he once had for confidence in the flesh, listing seven items related to Jewish religion, philosophy, and culture. These are the very things Paul counted as loss on account of Christ. Do you know why he counted them loss? It is because they were all substitutes for Christ, hooks used by Satan to keep people from Christ and from the experience of Christ. How subtle is the enemy in keeping us from the experience of Christ!

Oh, the subtlety of the enemy needs to be exposed! To some extent at least, we still have within us certain things which are a substitute for Christ in a subtle, secret way.

These substitutes mainly involve religion, philosophy, and culture. As a result, we still are not fully and thoroughly occupied by Christ. We have not yet counted all things loss on account of Christ.

Many of us have known 3:7 and 8 for years, and we are very familiar with these verses. However, we probably have not touched the depths of this part of chapter three. Without this, we cannot be initiated into the genuine experience of Christ. You may have heard many messages on how Paul counted all things loss on account of Christ and on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. But has knowing these verses in an objective way brought you into the real experience of Christ? I believe that, if we are honest, we shall have to admit that we have not experienced Christ according to these verses. The reason for this lack of experience is that, until now, we have not probed into the depths of Paul's thought in this portion of the Word.

We cannot experience Christ if we only drop the worldly, material things. If this is our understanding of "all things" in 3:8, we are far from the experience of Christ revealed here. These verses are not shallow. According to the context, Paul is not speaking of superficial, outward things. He is not concerned mainly with material things. His concept is much deeper and is related to religious, philosophical, and cultural things, even to our domestic logic and national philosophy, things hidden deep within us. As we have indicated, it is very difficult for us to set aside these things in order to give ground to Christ and experience Him. During my lifetime I have met many Christians. But I do not know many who have been able to drop their national philosophy and domestic logic in favor of the experience of Christ.

A PRACTICAL WORD

This word about our national philosophy and domestic logic is extremely practical. It exposes a hidden substitute for Christ and a subtle enemy of the experience of Christ.

By the Lord's mercy and grace, may we learn to say that on account of Christ we count as loss our national philosophy and domestic logic, realizing that these things are a substitute for Christ and keep us from the deeper experience of Christ. Yes, we have experienced Christ to a certain degree, but our experience has been severely limited and blocked by our national philosophy and domestic logic. Perhaps we can testify that we are free from the influence of religion. But who can say honestly that he is not hindered by his national philosophy or domestic logic? We must confess that we are still hindered by this subtle substitute for Christ, that Satan is still using our national philosophy and domestic logic to hook us, to occupy us, and to keep us from going further and deeper in the experience of Christ. May the enemy's subtlety be exposed and may we truly count all things loss, including our own philosophy and logic, on account of Christ and the experience and enjoyment of Him!

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:5-8

In 3:8 Paul says, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." In this message we shall consider the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LAW AND CHRIST

As Paul was writing 3:5-8, he was no doubt mindful of the contrast between the law and Christ. Paul had much experience both with Christ and with the law. Through his experience, he gained a full knowledge both of Christ and of the law.

The law and Christ are two major factors in the composition of the Bible. In a sense, the Old Testament is composed mainly with the law as a basic factor. It may be regarded as a book of the law. The New Testament, on the contrary, is composed with Christ as the basic and governing factor. Hence, the Old Testament is based on the law, and the New Testament is based on Christ.

Paul was very knowledgeable concerning both the law and Christ. Through his years in Judaism, he gained a detailed knowledge of the law. His knowledge was not that of an outsider, but of a very zealous insider. But by the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he had been transferred out from under the law into Christ. Furthermore, he had both the knowledge and the experience of the wonderful, all-inclusive, and extensive

Person of Christ. Paul lived in this Person and could therefore speak of himself as a man in Christ (2 Cor. 12:2).

The phrase "as to" in 3:8, which may also be rendered "according to," is used three times in verses 5 and 6, referring to the law, zeal, and righteousness. The phrase "on account of," which may also be rendered "because of," is also used three times, in verses 7 and 8, referring to Christ, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and Christ again. Christ stands in contrast to the law, the zeal for it, and the righteousness in it. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ and Christ Himself are in contrast to all other things, including the law. On account of Christ and the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul gave up the law, his zeal for it, the righteousness in it, and all other things. This indicates that Christ and the excellency of the knowledge of Him are far superior to the law and all other things.

According to verse 8, Paul not only counted all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and suffered the loss of all things, but he actually counted them to be refuse. The Greek word for refuse denotes dregs, rubbish, filth, what is thrown to the dogs; hence, dog food, dung. There is no comparison between such things and Christ.

It is important to realize that in 3:8 Paul does not speak of the excellency of Christ, but of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Many readers of Philippians take the word excellency to refer not to the knowledge of Christ, but to Christ Himself. However, Paul specifically and definitely speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Paul's knowledge of Christ was excellent. On account of the excellency of this knowledge, he was willing to suffer the loss of all things.

In verse 7 Paul says "on account of Christ," but in verse 8 he goes further and says "on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." The addition of the words "my Lord" indicates that as Paul was writing, he was filled with intimate, tender feelings concerning Christ. Tender feelings concerning the preciousness of the Lord

Jesus rose up within him, causing him to speak of "Christ Jesus my Lord." Paul placed great value on the excellency of the knowledge of his dear Lord Jesus Christ.

DERIVED FROM THE EXCELLENCY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of His Person. The Jews consider the law of God given through Moses the most excellent thing in history. Hence, they are zealous for the law. Paul participated in that zeal. But when Christ was revealed to him by God (Gal. 1:15-16), he saw that the excellency, the supereminence, the supreme preciousness, the surpassing worth, of Christ far exceeded the excellency of the law. His knowledge of Christ issued in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. On account of this, not only did he account the law and the religion founded on the law to be loss, but he counted all things loss.

Here Paul speaks not directly of the excellency of Christ, but of the excellency of knowing Christ. The knowledge in 3:8 is not the knowledge that belongs to Christ, the knowledge that Christ Himself has; it is our subjective knowing of Christ. To you, which is more excellent--the Person of Christ or your knowing Christ? According to doctrine or opinion, you may say that the Person of Christ is more excellent than the knowledge of Christ. However, Paul, speaking from his experience, could say that it is the knowledge of Christ which is more excellent.

We have pointed out that the excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of His Person. There can be no doubt that in Himself Christ is excellent. But if we do not have the knowledge of Christ, how shall we know His excellency? If we lack the knowledge of Christ's excellency, His excellency will not mean anything to us.

Before Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, he did not have any knowledge of Christ. He treasured the law and regarded it as most excellent. Paul's zeal for the law

was a sign of his appreciation of the law. His zeal came out of his appreciation. Paul certainly was proud of his excellent knowledge of the law. Even though Christ is infinitely more excellent than the law, Paul did not have the knowledge of Christ. But at the time of his conversion, this excellent One was revealed to him. With this revelation of Christ, Paul began to have the knowledge of Christ. After he began to acquire the knowledge of Christ, Paul came to realize that the knowledge of the law received through Gamaliel was far inferior to the knowledge of Christ. Conscious of this comparison as he was writing 3:5-8, Paul could speak of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and of suffering the loss of all things for the excellency of this knowledge.

To be sure, the excellency is in the very Person of Christ. But for our experience, our realization of this excellency depends on our knowledge. If we lack knowledge, there is simply no way for us to realize that this Person is so excellent. Only when we come to know His excellency do we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. How precious is this excellency of the knowledge of Christ!

THE ALL-INCLUSIVENESS OF CHRIST

In the four books that make up the heart of the divine revelation--Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians--Paul opens the veil to show us who Christ is and what Christ is. Christ is all-inclusive and all-extensive, the reality of every positive thing in the universe. He is the reality of God, man, eternity, light, and life. We simply do not have adequate words to declare who and what Christ is.

What was the extent of your knowledge of Christ before the books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were opened to you in the Lord's recovery? Perhaps you knew only that Christ is the Son of God sent by the Father in His mercy to die on the cross for the salvation of sinners. You knew that He was born of a

virgin, that He died on the cross, that He was raised from among the dead, and that He was exalted to the heavens. You believed in Him as your dear Redeemer and precious Savior, and in this way you were saved. Then you realized that you need Him to help you live in such a way as to glorify the Father. It is good to know Christ in this way, but this knowledge of Him is far too limited.

Forty-eight years ago, I also had such a limited knowledge of Christ. But beginning in 1932 the Lord through the recovery has gradually been opening the veil that I may have a fuller knowledge of Him. Little by little, the veil has been taken away. I believe that many saints in the Lord's recovery can give the same testimony.

Only recently have I been impressed with the extensiveness of Christ. One day as I was speaking on the Christ revealed in Colossians, I spontaneously used the term extensive and pointed out that the revelation in Colossians concerning Christ is extensive, even all-extensive, for Christ is more extensive than the whole universe. He is immeasurable, limitless. Hence, He is not only all-inclusive, but also all-extensive.

According to the Bible, Christ truly is all-inclusive. In 1932 I first began to see the all-inclusiveness of Christ and to minister along this line. Although Christ's all-inclusiveness is clearly revealed in the Bible, many believers are greatly surprised when they hear us speak of it.

Colossians 2:16 and 17 say, "Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." These verses indicate that Christ is our eating, drinking, feast, new moon, and Sabbath. He is the body, the reality, the substance, of all the positive things in the universe. He is the reality of the air we breathe, of the food we eat, and of the sunshine we enjoy. Furthermore, He is the reality of both the Triune God and of man. When we teach that Christ is all-inclusive, the reality of all positive things in the universe, some go so far as to accuse us of teaching pantheism. They

accuse us of identifying God with the material creation. We utterly repudiate pantheism and declare that it is a devilish teaching. We do not preach pantheism in any way. However, according to the Bible, we do teach that Christ is God, man, and the reality of all positive things. But this does not mean that the material things in the universe are God Himself. We are not God and we never shall become God. Nevertheless, Christ is in us and, in a very real sense, He is even becoming us. Colossians 3:10 and 11 say, "And having put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him Who created Him; where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all and in all." These verses also point to the all-inclusiveness of Christ. In the new man, the Body, the church, there cannot be Greek and Jew. Likewise, there cannot be Chinese and American, German and French. In the new man Christ is all and in all. He is all the members and in all the members. This means that in the new man Christ is you and Christ is me. He truly is all-inclusive and all-extensive.

OUR URGENT NEED FOR THE EXCELLENT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

When Paul was still in Judaism, he was blind to the all-inclusive Christ. Christ existed as the all-extensive One, but Paul was totally ignorant of Him. At that time, Paul had a thorough and excellent knowledge of the law. But one day, as he was on the road to Damascus, Christ appeared to him, called to him, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Although Paul did not know Christ and was blind to Christ, he was nevertheless persecuting Him. After the Lord was revealed to him and he was converted, scales fell from his eyes. His eyes having been opened, he began to see Christ and to know Him. The more he saw Christ, the more he received the knowledge of Him. This is the reason he speaks in Philippians 3:8 of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

There surely is such a thing as the excellency of knowing Christ. If you testify that Christ is excellent but do so without having the knowledge of Him, you will be speaking merely according to tradition. Actually your word will be uttered in ignorance. You will be speaking something you do not know, because you yourself have not received the excellent knowledge concerning Christ. Unless we have the excellent knowledge of Christ, we cannot say that Christ is excellent. We urgently need the excellent knowledge of Christ. Paul was so desperate to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ that he was willing to count all things loss on account of this knowledge.

Gaining the excellency of the knowledge of Christ may be illustrated by the experience of tourists shopping in Hong Kong. The merchants there know how to display their products, especially jade, in a way to make them very attractive to tourists. Often when tourists see items on display, they become excited. Furthermore, they acquire a knowledge of the excellency of these things. Before they entered the store, they did not know anything of the excellency of these precious items. But once they saw them and gained the excellency of the knowledge concerning them, they were willing to pay the price to possess them. In like manner, we need a revelation of Christ's excellency, of His supreme preciousness.

My burden in this message is not related to doctrine; my burden is that we see a vision and receive a revelation of the excellency of Christ. If we have a revelation of Christ's excellency, we shall automatically have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is in 3:8, whereas the actual experience of Christ is in 3:10. The knowledge of Christ, however, is basic. By knowledge we actually mean a revelation, a vision, concerning Christ and His excellence. When Paul was blind and in religion, he could not see Christ; he could see only the law. Thus, he had the excellency of the knowledge of the law. But after Christ was revealed to him, he began to have the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He was captured by the excellency of knowing Christ, and for the sake of this knowledge, he was willing to drop all things and count them to be loss.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY

TO BE FOUND IN CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:8-9

If we would have a proper understanding of 3:9, we should not isolate it from verse 8. Rather, the end of verse 8 must be read in connection with the beginning of verse 9. "I have suffered the loss of all things," Paul declares, "and count them to be refuse that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith." According to these verses, Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them to be refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Furthermore, Paul's desire was to be found in Christ in the condition of having the righteousness which is of God based on faith, not of having his own righteousness.

PAUL'S ASPIRATION

In verse 9 we see that Paul's earnest desire was to be found in Christ. In the past Paul was fully in the Jewish religion under the law and was always found by others in the law. But at his conversion he was transferred from the law and his former religion into Christ, and he became "a man in Christ" (2 Cor. 12:2). Now he expected to be found in Christ by all those who observed him--the Jews, the angels, and the demons. This indicates that he aspired to have his whole being immersed in Christ and saturated with Christ so that all who observed him could discover him in Christ. We also should aspire to be found by others in Christ. To be found in Christ actually means to be observed, seen, or discovered by others in Christ.

Before Paul was converted to Christ, he lived in the law and under the law. Whenever someone met Paul, that person found Paul in the law and enveloped by the law. Saul of Tarsus was a person altogether encased by the law, fully boxed in by it. He was living by the law, with the law, and under the law. But one day he was transferred out from under the law into Christ. Henceforth, whenever others saw him or observed him, they could tell that he had become a person in Christ. Paul was not in culture, philosophy, or religion. He was a person who lived in Christ, and his aspiration and expectation were that he would be found by others in Christ. Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse in order to gain Christ on the one hand and to be found in Him on the other.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD BASED ON FAITH

In verse 9 Paul does not speak merely in a general way, but in a very definite way. He says that he did not want to have his own righteousness, but he wanted the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith. "Not having my own righteousness...but...the righteousness which is of God" is the condition in which Paul desired to be found in Christ. He wanted to live not in his own righteousness, but in the righteousness of God, and to be found in such a transcendent condition, expressing God by living Christ, not by keeping the law.

Before Paul was saved, he had no idea that Christ could be his righteousness. The righteousness of the law is the righteousness which comes from man's own effort to keep the law, as mentioned in verse 6. Formerly, Paul lived in that righteousness which was according to the law. Others could invariably find him enveloped by the righteousness of the law. But now Paul's desire was to be observed as a person living in Christ and having Christ as his righteousness.

The righteousness in which Paul wanted to be found was the righteousness "which is through the faith of

Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith." The expression "the faith of Christ" implies our believing in Christ. Such faith issues from our knowing and appreciating Christ. It is Christ Himself infused into us through our appreciation of Him, who becomes our faith in Him. Hence, it is also the faith of Christ that brings us into an organic union with Him.

The righteousness which is of God based on faith is that righteousness which is God Himself lived out of us to be our righteousness through our faith in Christ. Such righteousness is the expression of God, who lives in us. It is based on faith because it is on the basis, or condition, of faith. Faith is the basis, the condition, for us to receive and possess the righteousness out from God, the highest righteousness, which is Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

A VISION OF THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

It is one thing to have a doctrinal understanding of being found in Christ; it is quite another thing to be found in Christ in our daily living. If I were to visit you in your home, where would I find you? Would I find you in your good behavior or in Christ? Where we are when others observe us indicates the realm in which we live. If we live in our culture, we shall be found by others in culture. If we live in our good behavior, we shall be discovered by others in our behavior. In whatever realm we live, that is where we shall be seen, observed, and discovered by others. When Paul was still living by the law, he was found in the law. But one day he began to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He saw the vision that Christ must be his everything: love, kindness, humility, wisdom, patience, intention, attitude, and even his words, utterances, and expressions. On account of this excellency of the knowledge of Christ, he was willing to count all things to be loss. Furthermore, he suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him.

We need to have a vision of the preciousness of Christ.

Then we need to gain the very Christ we have seen. For example, suppose a person visits a jewelry store and sees many valuable items on display. To see these items is one thing, but to gain them is another. To know Christ is not merely to have the knowledge concerning Him, but to gain His very Person. Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9) and the reality of the shadows of all positive things (Col. 2:16-17). To gain Him is to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8). As we gain Christ, we should also live in Him and become those who are in Him in experience. Then when others see us or observe us, they will find us in Christ. We shall not be found in our own virtues--we shall be found in Christ and in Him alone. Oh, that we may gain Him and be found in Him! May we be willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them refuse in order to be found in Christ.

If we gain Christ and live in Him, He as our righteousness will become our expression before both God and man. Then we shall not simply be found in Christ in a general way, but we shall be found in the very righteousness which is Christ Himself lived out of us. Only when we are found in Christ will the Lord be satisfied. Likewise, those who serve the Lord will be pleased and satisfied only when the believers are found in Christ.

THE SIX-THOUSAND-YEAR TRADITION

If you visit another country and stay in a brother's home, you will probably find it impossible to avoid the national flavor prevailing there. The reason for this is that we are all still under the influence of six thousand years of tradition. When Paul wrote Philippians 3, deep within him was the realization that the traditional forms of human living occupy everyone. Whether a person is sinful or not sinful, moral or immoral, that person is occupied by something other than Christ, by some element of the thousands of years of human history. We may call this the six-thousand-year human tradition.

The building up of the church has been hindered by this tradition for more than nineteen hundred years. The Lord Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. 22:12). But more than nineteen centuries have passed, and still He has not come. How can the Lord come back when His purpose on earth has not been accomplished? Satan, the subtle one, is lurking behind the six-thousand-year human tradition. Due to his influence, we live in this tradition instead of in Christ. With the exception of Paul, hardly anyone has ever touched this powerful stronghold. No matter how spiritual we may be, others rarely find us in Christ. Rather, they find us in something other than Christ, in some aspect of man's six thousand years of traditional living. During times of prayer, we may be released temporarily from this tradition. But even in the prayers of the saints it is sometimes possible to sense the flavor of the six-thousand-year tradition. What a serious situation this is!

If we would be found in Christ instead of in the thousands of years of tradition, we must be willing to forget our past, even our past Christian life, humble ourselves before the Lord, and ask Him to have mercy on us. In the Lord's recovery we have come to the place where we are facing a huge rock standing in our way. For many of us, there seems to be no way to go on. Furthermore, many of us have come to a stage where it seems difficult for even the Lord to get through in us. This is very much related to the fact that when others see us, it is very probable that they will find us in something other than Christ.

Should you visit a certain brother, you may not find him doing anything sinful or wrong. But, instead of finding him in Christ, you may find him in his good behavior or in his habitual way of living. I do not have the assurance that if you visit me at home, you will find me in Christ. On the contrary, you may observe that, as an elderly person, I live simply in my natural goodness. You may find me in so many things other than Christ.

The book of Philippians was written by Paul in his later ministry, not long before he was to depart from this

earth.

Hence, when Paul wrote this Epistle, he was quite mature. Nevertheless, he still did not have the assurance that he would be found by others in Christ. For this reason in verses 8 and 9 he used the present tense, saying, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...and count them to be refuse that I may gain Christ and be found in Him."

If we would be found in Christ, we need to be watchful moment by moment, continually on the alert to live in Christ. If we are not alert, we shall immediately be distracted from Christ and live in something other than Christ. Our living may be very good, but in our experience we are not in Christ.

OUR UNIQUE EXPRESSION

I am burdened that we must not regard Paul's word in 3:8 and 9 as mere doctrine. We need to consider seriously before the Lord just where we are right now. Are we in Christ? As the angels and demons observe us, do they find us in Christ? When others meet us, where do they find us--in Christ or in some good thing that is not Christ Himself? Paul's word about being found in Christ is of great significance. Deep within Paul was the aspiration to be found in Christ.

May we all aspire to be found in Christ. We need to pray, "Lord, my desire is to be found in You. In everything I do day by day, I want to be found in You." However, I doubt that many of us have prayed in this way.

Paul could say that he counted all things as refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. This is a very important statement. All that he says in verses 5 through 7 help him to reveal his aspiration expressed in verses 8 and 9. Let us pray that we may be found in Christ by our wife or husband, by our children and relatives, and by our neighbors, colleagues, and classmates.

If we are truly found in Christ, all other things will lose their hold on us. We shall no longer be under the influence of religion, philosophy, or culture. How marvelous to be

found only in Christ! When we are found in Him, religion, philosophy, and culture are annulled.

To be found in Christ means that He is our unique expression. Because Paul could be found in Christ, Christ was his expression. In every aspect and from every angle, only Christ could be seen upon him. Paul's aspiration was that Christ would be his only expression. He did not want to be found in such natural virtues as humility, patience, and love. These were among the things that he counted refuse, trash, in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Culture, human patience, natural love, and submission--all are refuse when compared to Christ. We should not aspire to be found in our own love for others or in our natural submission. Our earnest desire should be to be found only in Christ.

THE STANDARD OF GOD'S SALVATION

The standard of God's salvation is very high. Paul refers to this salvation when he says, "I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19). Salvation here is Christ Himself, the very Christ in whom we may be found by others and even by angels and demons.

If we see the high standard of God's salvation, we shall realize how desperately we need God's mercy. We are far below His standard, for people can find us in many good things other than Christ. All these things belong to the six thousand years of human tradition. Satan, God's enemy, uses this tradition as a means to occupy us, to frustrate us, and to keep us from the higher and richer experience of Christ. For this reason, in Philippians, a book on the experience of Christ according to God's high standard, Paul expresses the aspiration that we would experience Christ to such an extent that we may be found in Him.

Oh, we all need to bow down before the Lord and pray, "Lord, have mercy on me. Cause Paul's aspiration to become my aspiration also. O Lord, create in me the

hunger and thirst to pursue after You that I may be found in You. I don't want others to find me in anything other than Yourself. I want to be a person wholly in You, and I want others to find me in You." May the Lord grant us mercy that we may be found in Him!

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

SEEKING TO KNOW CHRIST, THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:8-11; Eph. 1:19-20; Rom. 1:4; Matt. 20:22-23; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:11

If we would understand 3:8-11, we need to pay attention to the way these verses are composed. In Greek verses 8 through 11 are one long sentence. Verse 10 begins with the infinitive "to know." This infinitive phrase is related to the phrase "gain Christ and be found." This indicates that to know Christ is a result of being found in Him. All the words between "be found in Him" in verse 9 and "to know Him" in verse 10 describe in what condition Paul aspired to be found in Christ. He was willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them to be refuse that he might gain Christ and be found in Him to know Him. According to Paul's concept, if we would know Christ, we must first be found in Him. Moreover, to be found in Him requires that we count all things loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and then suffer the loss of all things and count them to be refuse. Only when we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, a vision of the supreme preciousness and surpassing worth of Christ, shall we be willing to let go of everything else and count those things as refuse. Then we shall gain Christ and be found in Him. We shall be those who live in Christ and who are found by others in Christ. Being found in Him, we shall surely know Him.

REVELATION AND EXPERIENCE

Paul lived in a condition of not having his own righteousness but having the righteousness of God, in order to know (to experience) Christ and the power of His

resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. To have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ in verse 8 is by revelation. But to know Him in verse 10 is by experience--to have the experiential knowledge of Him, to experience Him in the full knowledge of Him. Paul first received the revelation of Christ and then sought for the experience of Christ--to know and enjoy Him in an experiential way.

After we receive the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we shall be willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. As a result, we shall know Christ experientially. Therefore, verse 9 comes out of verse 8, and verse 10 comes out of verse 9. If we do not have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (v. 8), we shall not be found in Christ, for it is having the excellency of the knowledge of Christ which makes us willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Then, once we have gained Christ and are found in Him, we shall know Him; that is, we shall enjoy Him and experience Him.

To gain Christ is one thing, and to experience Him is another. We may illustrate this difference by the difference between buying groceries and eating food which has been purchased and prepared. Gaining Christ may be compared to buying groceries, and the experience of Christ may be compared to the eating of the food we have first purchased and cooked. However, before we buy any groceries, we must first have the excellency of the knowledge of groceries. Before we purchase anything, we are first attracted by the excellency of the knowledge of that thing. Thus, first we have the excellency of the knowledge of the groceries, then we gain them by buying them, and finally we enjoy the food by eating it. In like manner, Paul first received the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, then he paid the price to gain Christ and be found in Him, and finally he experienced Christ and enjoyed Him. Paul realized that to gain Christ and be found in Him always

results in knowing Him, in enjoying and experiencing Him.

A HIGHER KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Our experience of Christ can never surpass the excellency of our knowledge of Christ. Rather, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ always exceeds our experience of Christ. There has never been a case where a believer's experience of Christ surpassed his knowledge of Christ. If we do not have a higher knowledge of Christ, we cannot have a higher experience of Christ. This is why it is very important that we not be limited by our past knowledge of Christ.

You may know that Christ is joy, peace, and rest. Before you were saved, you did not have the peace. But now that you have received the Lord, you have peace and joy. By no means do I belittle these aspects of the knowledge of Christ. I certainly enjoy the Lord Jesus as my peace, rest, and joy. Nevertheless, we should not be con-tent with such a limited knowledge of Christ, but should advance in our knowledge of Him. Oh, how we need the excellency of knowing Christ!

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ will attract us to Christ and motivate us to lay aside everything other than Him. If we see the surpassing worth of Christ, we shall be willing to count as loss not only worldly, material things, but even our culture, religion, and philosophy. I repeat, it is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ which causes us to drop everything else so that we may gain Christ and be found in Him.

OUR SHORTAGE IN LIVING CHRIST

Our daily living is an indication of what we are and where we are concerning the experience of Christ. We may talk a great deal about Christ, but in our daily living we may not actually be in Christ. Instead, we may be in our culture, national philosophy, or domestic logic. When we are in the church meetings or with the saints, we may have a lot to say about Christ. But in our daily life we may live

in our national philosophy, domestic logic, or family concept.

During the years we have been in the Lord's recovery, we have come to know that the Lord is the all-inclusive Spirit and that we are one spirit with Him. The Lord is now the Spirit dwelling in our spirit. Although we know this as a doctrine, in our daily life much of the time we do not live one spirit with the Lord. Instead, we often live in our culture. We may pray, "Lord, we thank You that You are the life-giving Spirit and that we are one spirit with You." Nevertheless, day by day we do not live Christ moment by moment. We do not practice being one spirit with Him all the time.

Recently the Lord has pointed out to me my shortage in living Christ. Most of the confession I make to Him is related to this lack. Day by day, I spend too little time living one spirit with the Lord. Too much of the time I live in something other than Christ, in many good things that are not Christ Himself. Because this is our situation, all of us need the Lord to have mercy on us.

Both we and the Lord have come to a point of crisis. A critical situation definitely exists among many of us today. Yes, we have seen the vision that Christ is our life, that He is the life-giving Spirit, and that we are one spirit with Him, and we talk a great deal about Christ. However, in our practical life day by day, we do not live Christ every moment. We are not found by others in Christ continually. We may be very familiar with 3:7-10. But how much have we gained Christ, how much are we found in Christ, and how much do we experientially know Christ? Because of our urgent need to experience Christ, it is not my burden in these messages to present Bible teachings. It is to minister Christ to the saints that they may grow in the divine life, which is Christ Himself, and may advance in the experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST IN THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

In verse 10 Paul says, "To know Him and the power of

His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." According to this verse, Paul aspired not only to know Christ, but also to know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. The power of Christ's resurrection is His resurrection life which raised Him from among the dead (Eph. 1:19-20). The reality of the power of Christ's resurrection is the Spirit (Rom. 1:4). To know, to experience, this power requires identification with Christ's death and conformity to it. Death is the base of resurrection. To experience the power of Christ's resurrection, we need to live a crucified life according to the pattern of His life. Our conformity to His death affords a base for the power of His resurrection to rise up that His divine life may be expressed in us.

The participation in Christ's suffering--"the fellowship of His sufferings"--(Matt. 20:22-23; Col. 1:24) is a necessary condition for the experience of the power of His resurrection (2 Tim. 2:11) by being conformed to His death. Paul was pursuing to know and experience not only the excellency of Christ Himself, but also the life power of His resurrection and the participation in His sufferings. With Christ, the sufferings and death came first, followed by the resurrection. With us, the power of His resurrection comes first, then the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death. We first receive the power of His resurrection. Then by this power we are enabled to participate in His sufferings and live a crucified life in conformity to His death. Such sufferings are mainly for producing and building up the Body of Christ.

Being conformed to Christ's death is the very base of the experience of Christ. If we are not conformed to the death of Christ, we do not have the base for the experience of Christ. In order to experience Christ, we must be conformed to His death. But to be conformed to the death of Christ, we must have the fellowship of His sufferings. By participating in Christ's sufferings, we are ushered into a position to experience the power of His resurrection. Then, when we experience the power of Christ's resurrection, we know Him.

In Philippians 3 the sequence is knowing Christ, knowing the power of Christ's resurrection, knowing the fellowship of His sufferings, and being conformed to His death. But in our spiritual experience, the sequence is reversed. Daily we are conformed to Christ's death; then we participate in His sufferings, know the power of His resurrection, and, by knowing the power of resurrection, we know Christ Himself. According to Paul's sequence, first we receive the excellency of the knowledge of Christ by seeing the vision of Christ; second, we count all things to be refuse; third, we gain Christ and are found in Him; and fourth, we know Christ, experience Him.

In order to experience Christ, we must be in the power of resurrection. We cannot be in our natural life. The more we know the power of Christ's resurrection, the more we shall participate in the sufferings of Christ and thereby have the fellowship of His sufferings. If we experience the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we shall then be conformed to His death. As we are conformed to the death of Christ, we are ushered into the power of His resurrection. It is by this resurrection power that we know Christ and experience Him.

THE CRUCIAL NEED FOR A VISION OF CHRIST

It is crucial that we see a vision of Christ and thereby receive the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. I can testify that by giving so many messages on Christ from the book of Colossians, I have been greatly helped to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. The knowledge of Christ contained in this book has made a deep impression on me. According to Colossians, Christ is the portion of the saints, the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation, the Head of the Body, and the Firstborn from among the dead. In Colossians we have a revelation of the all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ.

If we have gained the excellency of the knowledge of Christ from Colossians, we shall be able to testify not only that Christ is peace and joy, but that He is the portion of

the saints, the mystery of God, and the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead. Yes, the book of Colossians does reveal that Christ is our peace. But in this book peace is not revealed in an ordinary way. Rather, in Colossians 3:15 we see that the peace of Christ arbitrates in our hearts. Simply to say that Christ is peace does not require much excellency of knowledge concerning Christ. However, to know that Christ is the arbitrating peace in our hearts does require the excellency of the knowledge concerning Him.

In Philippians 3 Paul uses a number of extraordinary expressions. In this chapter Paul does not say that Christ is our joy, peace, or rest. Rather, he speaks of gaining Christ and being found in Him; of knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; and of being conformed to His death. First, we need to see all these matters. Then we need to pray that the Lord would grant us the grace to experience Him.

Many Christians do not know the Christ revealed in Colossians and Philippians. They know the Lord Jesus as their Savior and Redeemer and also as their joy, peace, and rest. But they have not yet come to know Him as the portion of the saints, the image of God, the Firstborn of all creation, or the Firstborn from among the dead. Oh, how we all need the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!

To know Christ in all these aspects is truly to experience Him and enjoy Him. We need to enjoy the fellowship of Christ's sufferings that we may be conformed to His death and know the power of His resurrection. For this, we need to forget the things which are behind and stretch forward to the things which are before (v. 13). May we all forget the things behind and go on to something higher, deeper, and more profound concerning Christ.

MORE KNOWLEDGE FOR MORE EXPERIENCE

In verses 7 through 11 Paul brings us higher and higher. These verses are not all on the same level, but are like ascending steps of a staircase. Each verse brings us higher and higher until we reach the peak in verse 11. I

would encourage the saints to consider the points in these verses carefully and in detail. We need to ponder them with much prayer and pray-reading so that our knowledge may increase more and more. We should not be content with simply an elementary knowledge of spiritual things. We need to learn what is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and what it means to count all things to be refuse; what it is to gain Christ and be found in Him; what it is to know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. We also need to grasp what it means to be conformed to the death of Christ. We need to ask the Lord to show us all these things. We need to inquire of Him concerning every matter in these verses. Because these matters are deep, we cannot understand them quickly or easily.

We should not be satisfied to remain superficial Christians. The book of Philippians is not an elementary writing; it is a book in the "graduate school" of spiritual experience. Thus, we should not be content merely with a general knowledge of this book. On the contrary, we need to become familiar with the extraordinary expressions Paul uses in this Epistle. Before we can have the experience, we must become familiar with Paul's expressions. This will bring us out of our oldness and save us from being so common and general in speaking of Christ. May the Lord grant us mercy that we may have more knowledge of Christ in order to have more experience of Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S DEATH TO ATTAIN TO THE OUT-RESURRECTION FROM AMONG THE DEAD

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10b-11; John 6:57; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52; Heb. 11:35; Eph. 2:5-6; Rom. 8:6, 11

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

It is easy to see that material things may be substitutes for Christ in our lives or may frustrate us from enjoying Him. But it is not easy to see that things that are not material, such as religion, philosophy, and culture, may also be substitutes for Christ. Throughout the years, I have met a good number of spiritual people from different nationalities who were genuine seekers of the Lord. However, although they were progressing spiritually to a certain extent, hardly any lived outside their national culture. For example, among all the true seekers of Christ in China, very few lived outside their Chinese ethical philosophy. This philosophy had been wrought into them. For this reason, not even the best Christians were free from its influence. This is not to say that these ethical teachings are wrong. They were used to preserve people for centuries. The point is that such ethical teachings are something other than Christ Himself. It is not God's desire that we live according to certain ethical teachings. Ethics is not part of the new creation. It is not something of Christ, of the Spirit, or of resurrection life. Anything that is of Christ must be in resurrection, in the new creation, and of the Spirit.

Brother Nee was one who could discern between ethics and Christ. I have never met a person who knew more

clearly than he the difference between Christ and ethics. One time he had a thorough fellowship with me concerning the difference between Christ and the ethics developed according to the teaching of Confucius. However, many seeking Christians among the Chinese cannot discern this difference. The problem is not simply that they do not live outside their Chinese ethical philosophy. A more serious problem is that they do not know the difference between Chinese philosophical ethics and Christ.

Regarding this, I am concerned about many of the saints in the Lord's recovery. Although they have been under this ministry for years, they still have not acquired the proper discernment between philosophical ethics and Christ. Furthermore, even those who have some measure of discernment may still unconsciously and subconsciously live more in the realm of ethics than in Christ. Our ethics may be very good, but such an ethical living is not a living in resurrection. It has nothing to do with Christ, the Spirit, or the new creation.

I can testify that by the Lord's mercy I can discern between Christ and ethics. Christ is altogether apart from Chinese ethics. Christ has nothing to do with ethics, and ethics has nothing to do with Christ. But although I have this discernment, I do not have the assurance that in my daily living I am altogether outside the realm of ethics and wholly in Christ. It is very possible that at least to some extent I am still under the influence of ethical teachings. Only when I have been fully brought into resurrection and raptured will I have the assurance that I am altogether in Christ. At present, I can testify only that I have the discernment, not that I live apart from the sphere of ethics and fully in Christ. No doubt, ethical teachings are very good, but these teachings are not Christ. A first step toward living apart from ethics and in Christ Himself is to develop the discernment between ethics and Christ.

What is true of Chinese Christians concerning ethics is also true of Christians of different nationalities concerning their cultures. Years ago I was invited to stay as an

honored guest in a place in England known for the spirituality of the Christians there. While I was there, I noticed that the saints in that place lived very much according to British diplomacy. This was especially true of the elders. The elders were obedient to the leading elder. When they were with him, they were kind and polite. But on occasion they spoke negative things concerning him. Although this place was the source of many books about spiritual things, the believers there actually did not express much genuine spirituality. Instead, they lived according to their type of diplomacy. There can be no doubt that they loved the Lord. But in their daily life they practiced diplomacy instead of living in Christ. Just as the Chinese philosophical ethics has been wrought into the very fiber of the Chinese people, so British diplomacy had been wrought into the being of those saints in England.

I use these illustrations to point out the fact that no matter how earnestly the believers may seek the Lord, they are still under the influence of their national characteristics. In their daily living, they are influenced more by their culture than by Christ. When Paul said that he counted all things loss, he meant not only material things, but also things such as religion, philosophy, and culture. We may be willing to count material things as loss for Christ, but we may not count as loss our culture or our national characteristics. But religion, culture, and national characteristics were among the things Paul counted to be trash, refuse, in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. These things may be very good, but they are not in resurrection and they are not in the new creation. Moreover, they are not of Christ or of the Spirit.

THE NEED FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Even though we may love the Lord very much and daily take time to pray ourselves into the Spirit, in our actual living we may live in things other than Christ. The Chinese

saints may live in their ethics, and the British saints may live in their diplomacy. We live this way automatically and spontaneously. How we need a vision of the excellency of Christ. If we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we shall see that He far surpasses the best national characteristics. We shall know that Christ is far superior to every element of our culture. Only the excellency of the knowledge of Christ will rid us of the influence of all the things that are not Christ Himself.

It is rather easy for us to apply Christ as our peace, joy, and rest. But when we consider higher aspects of Christ, we find them rather difficult to apply. For example, Christ is the mystery of God's economy. Although we may know Him as the mystery of God's economy, it is not easy for us to apply Him in this aspect in our daily walk. The gap between such an aspect of Christ and our daily living is extremely great. We also find it difficult to experience Christ as the body, the reality, of all the positive things. There is an urgent need for us to pray concerning this.

Although the light is shining brightly among us, there seems to be too little effect in our daily living. In the meetings, under the shining of the light, we may be impressed with the excellency of Christ, but when we go home after the meeting, we are very much the same. We desperately need to pray that we may see the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. If we have such a knowledge in a real and practical way, all the elements of our human living which are not Christ Himself will be put to death. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ annuls the influence of our national characteristics and domestic philosophy. From my experience I can testify that the excellency of the knowledge of Christ kills all the good things that replace Christ in our daily living.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

In 3:10 Paul speaks of the power of Christ's resurrection. The power of Christ's resurrection is His resurrection life that raised Him from among the dead

(Eph. 1:19-20). Christ's divine life includes the element of resurrection. Even before He was resurrected, He could say to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The reality of Christ's resurrection life is the Spirit. Resurrection is abstract and mysterious; no one can define it. But we can know the Spirit as the reality of resurrection. The Spirit of Christ is the reality of the resurrection of Christ. Thus, where the Spirit of Christ is, there is resurrection. Because this Spirit is now within us, the power of Christ's resurrection is within us also.

We should not be affected or influenced by the Pentecostal concept that if we fast and pray for a period of time, we shall suddenly be endued with spiritual power. According to this concept, divine power suddenly falls upon those who seek it by prayer and fasting. This is not according to the true spiritual way revealed in the New Testament. According to this spiritual way, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we are regenerated, and the Spirit is imparted to us and becomes in us the power of resurrection.

We may use a carnation seed to illustrate the way resurrection life is released. Although a carnation seed is very small, it contains the life power capable of producing a carnation plant. Since this life element is already in the seed, there is no need for power to be added to the seed from without. The only thing necessary is that the seed fall into the earth and die. Should the seed pass through death, its shell will be broken, and life will be released, not from on high, but from within the seed.

CONFORMITY TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST

This illustration of a carnation seed is in keeping with the revelation of the New Testament. As reborn ones, we have the seed of God within us. According to 1 John 3:9, the seed of God remains in all those who have been born of God. This seed contains the divine life, and this life is the power of resurrection. In order for resurrection life to be

released from within the seed, the outer shell of the seed must be broken. This requires suffering.

In 3:10 Paul goes on to speak of the fellowship of Christ's suffering and of being conformed to His death. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is our participation in His sufferings. During His entire life, Christ underwent a process of breaking so that the life power could be released from within Him. In particular, He was broken when He died on the cross. The divine life seed has been planted into our being. Now we also need to be broken that the life power within the seed can be released. If our outer man is broken, the seed within us will be able to release its life power.

Eventually, this process of the breaking of the outer man will result in full conformity to the death of Christ. In this way the death of Christ becomes a model, or pattern, for our breaking. Then in our daily life we shall be able to apply Christ to our every need. If we need power, He will become power to us. If we need patience, He Himself will be our patience. This is to know Christ, to experience Him, and to enjoy Him.

In 3:10 Paul uses the expression "being conformed to His death." This expression indicates that Paul desired to take Christ's death as the mold of his life. Christ's death is a mold to which we are conformed in much the same way that dough is put in a cake mold and conformed to it. Paul continually lived a crucified life, a life under the cross, just as Christ did in His human living. Through such a life, the resurrection power is experienced and expressed. The mold of Christ's death refers to the continual putting to death of His human life that He might live by the life of God (John 6:57). Our life should be conformed to such a mold--dying to our human life in order to live the divine life. Being conformed to the death of Christ is the condition for knowing and experiencing Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.

In our daily living we should be "dough" conformed to the mold of Christ's death. If we allow our circumstances to

press us into this mold, our daily life will be molded into the pattern of Christ's death. This was Paul's concept when he spoke of being conformed to the death of Christ.

LIVING THE DIVINE LIFE BY THE HUMAN LIFE

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived a crucified life. Christ had two lives--the divine life and the human life. It was God's desire that the man Jesus live the divine life by means of His human life. God did not want Him simply to live out the human life. Rather, it was God's intention that the Lord Jesus live the divine life through the channel of the human life.

This kind of living can be illustrated by what happens when a branch from one tree is grafted into another tree. The branch that has been grafted into the tree does not live out its own life; instead, it lives the life of the tree into which it has been grafted. This means that the life of the tree flows out through the branch which has been grafted into it.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He always put His human life to death so that the divine life within Him could be lived out. This is the pattern of Christ's death. In the eyes of man, the Lord Jesus was crucified at the end of His ministry. But in the eyes of God, He was crucified throughout His life on earth. This is proved by the fact that He was baptized when He came forth to minister, as an indication that He had put Himself into death. The Lord's baptism by John indicated that He was living His human life under the killing power of the cross. His was a life in which the human life was crucified, so that the divine life could be lived out. What a wonderful living the Lord Jesus had!

This wonderful living implies the pattern of Christ's death. According to this pattern, Christ continually put to death His human life so that His divine life could flow out. This is the mold of the life of Christ and the death of Christ.

There can be no doubt that the human life of the Lord Jesus was excellent. But even such an excellent human life was put to death for the sake of the release of the divine life. Please pay attention to the fact that the Lord's human life was not put to death because it was wrong in some way; it was put to death so that the divine life could be lived out. This was the reason the Lord's human life had to be rejected, broken, and put to death. The principle should be the same with us today. As those who believe in Christ and who have been regenerated by the Spirit, we have both the human life and the divine life. No matter how good our human life may be, it must be put to death if the divine life is to be lived out.

However, most Christians think that only the negative elements of the human life need to be put to death. According to their understanding, a person would not need to put his human life to death if every aspect of it were good. This understanding is wrong. Every aspect of the human life, the good as well as the bad, must be put to death so that the divine life can be released. This means that even such elements of the human life as Chinese ethics and British diplomacy must be put to death. As long as something belongs to the human life, it must be put to death in order for the divine life to be lived out. Daily we need to live such a crucified life, a life in which the human life is always put to death so that there may be an opportunity for the divine life within us to be lived out. This is what it means to be conformed to Christ's death.

Do not think that a believer is conformed to the death of Christ only at the time of martyrdom. No, being conformed to Christ's death should be our experience day by day. As we speak with our husband or wife, with our parents, with our children, or with those around us at work or school, we must put our natural life to death and not live according to it. If we put to death our natural life, we shall have the consciousness that we have another life, the divine life, within us. Once our outward natural life is put to death, the inner divine life will be released. Then in our

experience we shall be conformed to Christ's death.

A SERIOUS PROBLEM

Most Christians only put to death the negative aspects of their natural life. They treasure the good aspects and seek to preserve them. Those of every nationality treasure their own national characteristics and philosophy. The Chinese may pride themselves on their philosophical ethics, whereas Americans may boast of their frankness and openness. Hardly any Christians are willing to drop their national characteristics in order to live out the divine life. Although we may be willing to put so many other things to death, we hold these national characteristics as a priceless treasure. If we do not treasure these characteristics consciously, we do so subconsciously. As a result, a basic element of our natural life is not put to death. This element then becomes a huge rock hindering the release of the power of Christ's resurrection from within us.

Treasuring part of our natural life creates a serious problem with respect to the experience of Christ. We are not willing for a certain part of our being to be put to death and conformed to the death of Christ. Thus, this part of our natural life remains as a frustration to the release of the divine life. This is the reason that, after years of seeking the Lord and experiencing Him, we may reach a place where we find ourselves stopped and unable to go on. In the early stages of our Christian life, we may have grown rather quickly. But because the "rock" of our national characteristics remains within us, our growth in life is now held back. Many of us can testify that this is precisely our situation.

Some saints have been stopped by this "rock" for a long time. Year after year has passed, but they remain the same. They have not made any further spiritual progress. The reason for this shortage is that they have not put to death their national characteristics and counted them as refuse. These saints may be willing to count everything else as refuse, but not their national characteristics. Some

may proclaim that they count all things as refuse, but at least this one matter remains, hidden within them. May the Lord shine on us and show us our lack and the reason for it!

The reason for our lack of progress is that we have not been conformed to Christ's death in a full way. Years ago, you may have had much more conformity to Christ's death than today. Because you have not progressed in being conformed to the death of Christ, your growth in life has been held back, and your experience of the power of Christ's resurrection has been severely limited. This hinders you from further and higher experiences of Christ. Thus, instead of speaking of up-to-date experiences, you try to live on your past experiences and speak of them again and again.

PROCESSED IN RESURRECTION

In verse 11 Paul goes on to say, "If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." To attain means to arrive at. This requires us to run triumphantly the race for the prize (1 Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

The out-resurrection from among the dead denotes the outstanding resurrection, the extra-resurrection, which will be a prize to the overcoming saints. All believers who are dead in Christ will participate in the resurrection from among the dead at the Lord's coming back (1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52). But the overcoming saints will enjoy an extra, outstanding portion of that resurrection. This is the "better resurrection" mentioned in Hebrews 11:35. The better resurrection is not only "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6), "the resurrection of life" (John 5:28-29), but also the out-resurrection, the resurrection in which the Lord's overcomers will receive the reward of the kingdom, which the Apostle Paul sought after.

To arrive at the out-resurrection means that our entire being has been gradually and continually resurrected. God first resurrected our deadened spirit (Eph. 2:5-6). Then from our spirit He proceeds to resurrect our soul (Rom. 8:6)

and our mortal body (Rom. 8:11), until our entire being--spirit, soul, and body--is fully resurrected out of our old being by His life and with His life. This is a process in life through which we must pass and a race for us to run until we arrive at the out-resurrection as the prize. Hence, the out-resurrection should be the goal and destination of our Christian life. We can only reach this goal by being conformed to the death of Christ, by living a crucified life. In the death of Christ we are processed in resurrection from the old creation to the new.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

GAINING CHRIST BY PURSUING HIM

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:12-14

I. NOT YET PERFECTED, BUT PURSUING

In 3:7-11 Paul gives us the way to experience Christ. In verses 12 through 14 Paul applies to himself the things presented in verses 7 through 11. In verse 12 he says, "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." The Greek word rendered perfected also means completed or matured in life. Paul's meaning here is that he was still growing, for he did not regard himself as one who had reached maturity. If Paul needed to say that he had not already obtained or was not already perfected, even though he had so much growth in life and so much experience of Christ, how much more should we have such an attitude about ourselves!

In verse 12 Paul says, "I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." The Greek word translated "lay hold of" may also be rendered gain, grasp, or get possession of. It may even be rendered seize. For simplicity, in this message we shall use the word gain. Paul aspired to gain that for which he had been gained by Christ Jesus. At the time of his conversion Paul was gained by Christ. Christ had gained Paul with the intention that Paul would gain Him.

Not many Christians speak of their conversion in the way Paul spoke of his. Have you ever heard anyone say that at the time he was converted Christ gained him so that he might gain Christ? We need to realize that Christ has gained us that we might gain Him. Then we need to

use Paul's expression to uplift our conversation about conversion. Christ gained us not merely for the sake of forgiveness, redemption, salvation, or heaven. I repeat, He gained us for the definite purpose that we might gain Him.

Do you realize that you have been gained by Christ? At the time of your conversion, Christ laid hold of you, seized you, grasped you. When you were converted to Christ, He took full possession of you. Now it is impossible for you to escape His grasp. The Lord holds the whole earth in His hands. How do you expect to be able to run away from Him? The Lord is very patient; He is not easily offended or angered. Sometimes Christians misrepresent the Lord Jesus and give others the impression that He will immediately become angry if they do something wrong. However, the Lord may bear with you quite a long time without becoming angry with you. He is not troubled by your attempts to escape from Him. He knows that once He has gained you, you cannot get away.

When we first called on the name of the Lord Jesus for our salvation, we were "hooked" by the Lord. It is a very important matter to call on the Lord, for when we call on Him, we are gained by Him. Once the Lord has gained us, there is no escaping from Him. Some have testified that they tried to get away from the Lord for many years, but eventually had to return to Him.

The Lord has taken possession of us so that we might take possession of Him. This was His purpose in grasping us. Christ wants us to gain Him. The Lord's aim in His salvation is to seize us that we might take full possession of Him. Not even when Paul was writing to the Philippians did he regard himself as having gained Christ in a full way. Rather, he was still pursuing Christ in order to gain Him.

In Philippians 3 Paul uses three Greek words that are rendered gained, obtained, and laid hold of. The meaning of these words is very close, for to obtain is to gain, and to gain is to lay hold of. The strongest of these expressions is lay hold of. Christ has laid hold of us that we might lay hold of Him. He has gained us that we might gain Him.

Thus, the Christian life is a life of gaining Christ. How much have you gained of Christ? This is a crucial question. We grow in life by gaining Christ. The degree to which we have gained Christ is the degree to which we have grown with Christ. We all need to gain Christ in order to grow in life. Spiritual growth is measured by how much we have gained of Christ.

I hope that the saints will use 3:12 to improve their vocabulary concerning conversion and salvation. According to this verse, conversion means that Christ gains a person so that this person may gain Him. Gaining Christ is a lifelong matter. Day by day our goal should be to gain Him. Even during his imprisonment, Paul was pursuing Christ in order to gain Him.

Paul's use of the little word "if" in verse 12 indicates that he was not certain about his growth in life. It is right to be sure of our salvation, but not to be certain of our growth in life. If we have the assurance that we have grown in life to an advanced degree, we probably have not grown to that extent. We should join Paul in saying, "*If* also I may lay hold...."

In verses 13 and 14 Paul goes on to say, "Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing--forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Even though Paul had experienced and gained Christ tremendously, he did not consider that he had experienced Him in full or gained Him to the uttermost. For this reason he was still advancing toward the goal--the gaining of Christ to the fullest extent.

In verse 13 Paul speaks of forgetting the things behind. In order to gain Christ to the fullest extent, Paul not only forsook his experience in Judaism, but also refused to dwell on his past experiences of Christ and be limited by them. To dwell on our past experiences, no matter how real they may have been, frustrates our further pursuing after Christ.

In verse 13 Paul tells us that he was stretching forward to the things which are before. He knew that Christ is unsearchably rich, that there is a vast territory of His riches to be possessed. He was stretching forward to gain these riches and to advance further into this territory.

Paul was pursuing toward the goal for the prize. Christ is both the goal and the prize. The goal is the fullest enjoyment and gain of Christ, and the prize is the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom as a reward to the victorious runners of the New Testament race. In order to reach the goal for the prize, Paul was exercised to forget the things which are behind and to stretch forward to the things which are before. This is the way to gain Christ by pursuing Him.

Even though Paul was a matured saint and a very experienced apostle, he tells us that he had not already obtained and had not yet been perfected. He did not regard himself as one who had obtained the full enjoyment of Christ or the full maturity in life. He, of course, had obtained the common salvation by the common faith (1 Tim. 1:14-16), but he was still pursuing Christ in order to gain Him. Furthermore, Paul was also seeking Christ in order to have the extra portion of resurrection. In order to have this portion of resurrection, called the out-resurrection, we must pursue, run the race, and finish our course triumphantly.

Like Paul, we have been regenerated, but we are not yet perfected, or matured, in life. At the time of our conversion, we were gained by Christ so that we may gain Him. Now as those who have not yet obtained and who have not yet been perfected, we are pursuing Christ.

II. THE WAY TO PURSUE

The first aspect of the way to pursue Christ is that we do not consider ourselves to have gained. Following this, we need to do one thing: forget the things which are behind and stretch forward to the things which are before.

The goal toward which we are pursuing is the full enjoyment of Christ, and the prize is the extra enjoyment of Christ. I believe this extra portion of the enjoyment of Christ will be in the millennial kingdom. In the millennial kingdom the overcomers will enjoy Christ in an extraordinary way. This extraordinary enjoyment of Christ corresponds to the out-resurrection in verse 11. This out-resurrection can be illustrated by the experience of a few members of a high school graduating class. At the time of graduation, a few outstanding students will enjoy an extra portion. Although hundreds of students may graduate at the same time, only a small number will enjoy this special portion. In like manner, all believers who die before the Lord comes back will be resurrected, but some will enjoy an extraordinary resurrection, an outstanding resurrection. Paul speaks of this as the out-resurrection from among the dead, a prize to those believers who are successful in running the New Testament race.

Many Christians hold the concept that as long as they are resurrected when the Lord comes back, they will not have any problems. This concept is wrong. The Bible reveals that all unbelievers will be resurrected. According to John 5:28-29, there are two classes of resurrection: the first class is resurrection to life, and the second is resurrection to condemnation. All the believers who have died will be resurrected unto life, that is, unto salvation. However, the unbelievers will be resurrected after the millennium unto condemnation, unto perdition. In light of the principle that there is more than one kind of resurrection, we should not say that simply because a person will be resurrected he will not have any problems. Resurrected believers as well as unbelievers may still face a problem. There will be a distinction not only between the resurrection of the believers and the unbelievers, but also a distinction among Christians at the time of resurrection. Yes, we shall all be resurrected. But many will participate in resurrection merely in a common way; they will not enjoy the out-resurrection. They will be like the majority of

a high school graduating class. Others, however, will enjoy the extra portion of resurrection. They will be like the few out of the graduating class who enjoy an outstanding graduation.

Some Christians may not agree with the interpretation that the goal and the prize in 3:14 are related to the millennial kingdom. But no matter how we interpret this verse, the fact remains that there is a goal for us to reach and a prize for us to gain. I do not insist on my interpretation of this verse, but I would point you to the goal and the prize. In order to reach the goal and gain the prize, you must run in a proper way. Otherwise, you will come short of the goal and fail to receive the prize.

Do not be content with the fact that, as a believer, you will be resurrected. Yes, you will "graduate" in resurrection, but will you have the extra portion of resurrection? Do not be under the influence of the teaching popular with Christians today that all believers will be kings in the millennium. All true believers are eternally saved. However, not all Christians will be on the same level as far as reward is concerned. The time Christ comes back will be the time of reward. Whether or not we receive a reward from Him depends on how we run the race today.

III. THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING

We have pointed out that the goal is the full enjoyment and gain of Christ and that the prize will be the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom as a reward to the victorious runners of the New Testament race. This prize is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The Greek word rendered high means above. The high calling is the calling by God from above, from the heavens. It is a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), corresponding to the heavenly citizenship in verse 20, not an earthly one like that given to the children of Israel in the flesh. This high calling is to take possession of Christ, whereas the earthly calling to the children of Israel was to take possession of a physical land.

We have received not an earthly calling, but a high calling, a heavenly calling. God has called us to gain

Christ as our real land. In typology, God called Israel with an earthly calling to gain the good land. Now God has called us with a heavenly calling to gain Christ.

Once again I wish to emphasize that we need to take care of certain facts in 3:14. No matter how we may interpret Paul's word concerning the goal and the prize, we cannot deny that both are facts with certain points. Even if you do not agree with the interpretation that the prize is the top enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom, you still need to take care of the fact that there is a prize for you to obtain. To receive the prize we must reach the goal, and to reach the goal we must run the race. These facts are of great importance.

As we consider these facts, we need to apply them to our situation according to the context of Philippians 3. In this chapter Paul shows us our need to gain Christ. Christ is the goal and also the prize. Do not be distracted by the effort to understand just what kind of prize you will obtain when you reach the goal. What is crucial is that you realize that, according to the divine revelation, God has set forth Christ as your goal and prize. Furthermore, He has called you to stretch forth toward the goal.

Some Christians may argue that the prize in 3:14 does not refer to enjoyment in the millennial kingdom. Again I say, even if you disagree with this interpretation, you cannot avoid the fact that God does have a prize for us. According to the context of Philippians 3, both the goal and the prize are Christ. Otherwise, why would Paul say that Christ had gained him so that he might gain Christ? In verse 12 he says, "I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Then in verses 13 and 14 he continues, "Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing--forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." I urge you

to care for the fact that God has set up a goal and prepared a prize. I also urge you to care for the need to run a good race and to pursue Christ by forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forth to the things which are before. I believe that the things which are before are things concerning Christ and His Body, the church. Let us all forget the things behind and pay attention to the bright future ahead of us, a future of gaining Christ and experiencing Him to the uttermost in His Body.

We should not be satisfied simply with Bible knowledge, not even with the knowledge of Philippians 3. We need to have the actual pursuing of Christ. The Greek word for pursue can also be translated persecute. Before Paul was saved, he was persecuting Christ in a negative way. After he was saved, he pursued Christ to such an extent we may even say he persecuted Christ, but in a very positive way. To persecute a person is to trouble him and refuse to let him go. Before Paul was saved, he bothered Christ and would not let Him go, persecuting Him negatively. But after he was saved and had been gained by Christ, he still persecuted Him, but positively, for he refused to let Christ go. We also should persecute Christ in this way. This is to pursue Christ in order to gain Him. Do not let Christ go. Bother Him, persecute Him, in order to gain Him. To persecute Christ in this way is exhausting. As we persecute Christ, we should spend ourselves completely. Our whole being with all of our strength should be consumed in pursuing Christ. I hope that many among us will be impressed with the need to pursue Christ and be stirred up to seek Him even in a persecuting way. Do not allow Christ to get away from you, but seek Him, pursue Him, persecute Him in such a positive way. Then you will gain Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

HAVING THE SAME MIND AND WALKING BY THE SAME RULE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:13-16

In this message we shall be concerned mainly with 3:15 and 16. In verse 15 Paul says, "Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you." The Greek word rendered "full grown" means mature, perfect. Maturity is a matter of stages. We may be mature, but not mature in full. In verse 15 Paul uses the expression "full grown" in a relative sense, meaning relatively mature, neither childish nor absolutely mature. Hence, further pursuing, further growth, is needed.

Those who are full grown still need a mind to pursue Christ. At the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was full grown. However, he was still growing. This confirms that even the matter of full growth, or maturity, may be relative. Today none of us can say that we have reached the goal. Although we may not be childish and may actually be somewhat full grown, we still have not reached the goal.

THIS MIND

According to verse 15, "as many as are full grown" should have "this mind." This book's dealing with the Philippian believers is focused on the mind, the leading part of the soul. It charges them to strive together for the gospel with one soul (1:27), to think the same thing, to be joined in soul, even to think the one thing (2:2; 4:2), to let the mind which was in Christ be in them (2:5), and to have this mind, a mind focused on the pursuing and gaining of

Christ to the uttermost. When our mind is thus occupied, we have the same mind, thinking the same thing, even thinking the one thing--the fullest gain of Christ--joined in soul, like-souled (2:20), and with one soul.

Paul's word in verse 15 implies that if we do not have this mind, we may be childish. Not having this mind is a sign that we are not full grown. As we consider the situation among Christians today, we see a great deal of childishness. Not many believers have this mind, the mind to seek after the fullest enjoyment and gain of Christ. Imagine how marvelous the situation would be if all seeking Christians had a mind focused on pursuing Christ for the full enjoyment and gaining of Him. If the seeking Christians were like this, the situation on earth would be excellent and wonderful. However, the situation among Christians today is confused and complicated. This is due to the fact that seeking Christians do not have this mind. Instead of seeking God's unique goal, they pursue other goals. These different goals cause trouble. We in the Lord's recovery should have one goal, and this goal should be to pursue Christ that we may have the fullest enjoyment of Him and may gain Him in full.

GOD'S UNIQUE GOAL

In 3:15 Paul says that "if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you." Pursuing after Christ must be our goal. We should not be otherwise minded. God wants always to adjust our mind to His center by revealing to us the need of such a mind, a mind focused on the pursuing of Christ.

Paul's word in verse 15 indicates his assurance that there was just one goal. Because of this assurance he could say that if in anything we were otherwise minded, this also God would reveal to us. Paul did not mean that Christians did not have other goals. What he said was that God would reveal this to them.

We all need to see God's unique goal. We thank the Lord that throughout the years God's goal has kept us from

being distracted. It is very easy to be distracted in the Christian life, for there are many distracting factors surrounding us. If we do not have a fixed goal, the unique goal, the goal set up by God in eternity, and hold to it, we shall eventually be distracted. The only thing that can keep us on God's way is His unique goal--Christ for our highest enjoyment and ultimate gain. If we take this goal as our ultimate goal, we shall be preserved.

ONLY THIS

In 3:16 Paul goes on to say, "Only this, whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk." It is rather difficult to translate the Greek word rendered "only this" in a definite way. It may also be rendered but rather, nevertheless, or however. It is a concluding word to the preceding verses, charging us with only this: to walk by the same rule. The words "whereunto we have attained" modify walk.

WALKING BY THE BASIC PRINCIPLE

In verse 16 the Greek word for walk is *stoicheo*, which means to walk orderly. It is derived from *steicho*, which means to range in regular line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety, as used in Romans 4:12; Galatians 5:25; 6:16. It is different from the word walk in Philippians 3:17 and 18, which means to live, to deport oneself, to be occupied with, to walk about, as used in Romans 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:16; and Ephesians 4:1, 17. By this word the apostle charges us to walk and order our lives by the same rule, in the same line, in the same path, in the same footsteps, whereunto we have attained, at the state to which we have attained. Whatever state we have attained to in our spiritual life, we all must walk by the same rule, in the same path, as the apostle did; that is, to pursue Christ toward the goal that we may gain Him to the fullest extent as the prize of God's calling from above.

The Greek word *stoicheo* is a verbal form of the noun

which means element. We do not have an English equivalent for this word. In English we can use element as a noun, but not as a verb. One version adopts the rendering "observe the elements." This conveys much of the original meaning; however, I do not care to use the word observe here. Perhaps the Greek should be rendered "walk according to the elementary principles," since the meaning is that the elementary principles become our walk. Among the ancient Greeks, there were, as there are today, societies or organizations which followed certain basic principles. There are also basic principles, basic elements, involved in being a Christian. These elements should become a Christian's walk. This was Paul's concept in using this particular word for walk in 3:16.

We have pointed out that this word is derived from a word which means to range in regular line or march in military rank. Paul uses this term in Romans 4:12, where he speaks of "those who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham." To walk in the steps of Abraham's faith is to conform to his faith, to conform ourselves to certain virtue or piety. This Greek word is very rich in meaning.

GAINED BY CHRIST TO GAIN CHRIST

Paul's main thought in 3:16 is that, as Christians, the most important principle of our Christian life should be to pursue Christ. Pursuing Christ, therefore, should be the major principle according to which we walk. Paul has already indicated this in verse 12 by saying that he pursues in order to lay hold of that for which he has also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. According to this verse, the principle of our conversion and salvation is that we have been gained by Christ in order to gain Him. This principle must become a basic and governing element in our Christian walk.

Unfortunately, many of today's Christians do not follow this governing principle. Instead of pursuing God's unique goal, they seek other things. For example, those in the

Pentecostal movement or charismatic movement may seek power or spiritual gifts. They may pursue speaking in tongues, healing, or manifestations of other gifts. Those who have such pursuits are not following the basic principle of the Christian life. This principle is to pursue Christ that we may gain Him.

Christ has gained us not that we may gain gifts, but that we may gain Him. In one of his best hymns, A. B. Simpson says:

> Once it was the blessing,
> Now it is the Lord...
> Once His gift I wanted,
> Now, the Giver own;
> Once I sought for healing,
> Now Himself alone.
> (*Hymns*, #513)

As this hymn indicates, the governing principle of the Christian life is not gifts or healing--it is Christ Himself. Realizing this, A. B. Simpson also put out a tract on this theme entitled "Himself."

THE SAME PATH

It is crucial for us to see that the basic and governing principle of the Christian life is that we gain Christ. As many as are full grown, let us walk according to this rule, this elementary principle. Perhaps path is a better word than rule in verse 16. If we use this word, the verse will read "by the same path let us walk." This understanding is also based on the various meanings of the Greek word: to range in line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety. Paul's use of this Greek word indicates that by the same path we should walk according to the elementary principle.

A NUMBER OF EXTRAORDINARY EXPRESSIONS

In 3:7-16 Paul uses many unusual terms and expressions. In verse 7 he says that certain "things were

gains," and he speaks of having counted such things loss on account of Christ. In no other book does Paul use these terms. In verse 8 he speaks of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," a new and extraordinary expression. In this verse he says that he counts certain things to be refuse in order to gain Christ. The term "refuse" and the expression "gain Christ" are also unusual. In verse 9 Paul goes on to speak of being "found in Him" and in verse 10 of knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. Verse 10 also uses the extraordinary expression "conformed to His death." In verse 11 we find a unique term for resurrection--"the out-resurrection from among the dead." The unique expressions in verse 12 include "not that I have already obtained," "already perfected," "I pursue," "lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of." In verse 13 Paul says, "forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before," and in verse 14, "I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The expressions in these verses are also new and even extraordinary. In verse 15 Paul declares, "Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind." The phrase "this mind" is unique. Can you find such an expression in any of Paul's other Epistles? By "this mind" Paul means a mind focused on pursuing Christ, a mind centered on enjoying Christ and gaining Him. In verse 15 Paul goes on to speak of being otherwise minded, and in verse 16 he uses the phrase "only this." Both are new terms used here for the first time.

PURSUING CHRIST

As we have pointed out, in verse 16 Paul speaks of walking by the same rule. We have also seen that the Greek word for walk in this verse means to walk according to the elementary principles. The governing principle of our Christian life should be the pursuing after the enjoyment of Christ and the experience of Christ. This principle will preserve us in the proper oneness. In the past we have said

that the genuine ground of oneness keeps us in the real oneness. This is true, and we continue to proclaim this teaching today. However, the ground of unique oneness may be considered somewhat as an outward matter. Along with this, we need something inward to govern us and preserve us in the oneness. This inward matter is what Paul describes as "this mind"; it is also the unique path for our Christian walk. Both the unique mind and the unique path are related to pursuing Christ. Pursuing Christ in order to experience Him and enjoy Him should be the basic and elementary principle of our Christian life.

How wonderful it would be if all Christians had this mind and walked in this path! The reason for the confusion and the divisions among Christians today is that so few are willing to walk according to this basic principle. Here in Philippians Paul did not deal with the problem of the church. His burden was to point out that our need is to pursue Christ. I believe that as Paul was writing this Epistle, he exhausted the vocabulary available to him to express his burden concerning the Christian walk. As Christians, we need to walk in a particular lane--the lane, the path, of pursuing Christ. We should care for "only this," this "one thing," not so many different doctrines and practices. But today believers are distracted by things such as prophecy, head covering, foot washing, the mode of baptism and the kind of water used, the type of bread used at the Lord's table, and even the size of the cup used to contain the wine or grape juice. How poor is such a situation! If, by contrast, we would see that God has set up a goal for us and has prepared a prize for us, and if we would have the mind to pursue Christ, the world would be turned to the Lord, and the Lord Jesus would have a way to come back soon.

Today's Christianity is without impact, power, and authority because it has been cut into pieces and made subject to confusion. What is the remedy for such a degraded situation? The remedy, found in the Lord's recovery, consists simply in pursuing our wonderful Christ.

If we would all set our mind on pursuing Christ, there would be no problems.

Only Christ can enable believers of different nationalities and cultures to be truly one. Let us all pursue Christ to such an extent that we are willing to count as loss even our national philosophy and characteristics on account of Him. We should not allow these things to remain as rocks hidden deep within us, occupying a place which belongs to Christ. As we have pointed out elsewhere, our national characteristics are used by the enemy, Satan, as substitutes for Christ. The enemy uses them to keep Christ from having adequate ground in our being. May the Lord have mercy on us that we would have a mind to pursue Christ to the uttermost and to walk according to the elementary principle of the Christian life! This principle is that we pursue Christ, forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the goal established by God that we may obtain the prize He has prepared for us.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

AWAITING CHRIST FOR THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR BODY

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:17-21

In order to have an adequate understanding of 3:17-21, we need to know Paul's basic thought in these verses. This requires experience and insight.

PAUL'S BASIC THOUGHT

In chapters one and two Paul's intention was to have communication, fellowship, between him and the believers in Philippi that he might share his experience of Christ so that the believers might be encouraged to have a full participation in his enjoyment of Christ. At the beginning of chapter three, Paul changes his emphasis. Although it is rather difficult to trace Paul's thought in this chapter, my burden in this message is to consider Paul's basic concept in Philippians 3.

If we read this chapter carefully, we shall see that Paul refers to two groups of people who were exerting a strong influence in the Mediterranean area. The first group was the Judaizers, the Jewish religionists, who were zealous for their traditional religion. In verse 2 Paul speaks of them as dogs, evil workers, the concision. The second group consisted of those who held to the Epicurean philosophy, which promoted indulgence in the pleasure of eating and drinking and self-gratification in other things, all of which are contrary to the cross of Christ (vv. 18-19). From verse 2 we see that Judaizers were causing damage to the Philippian believers. From verse 18 we see that those who practiced according to the Epicureans were also causing damage to them. The former was of Jewish origin; the

latter, of a heathen source. Paul's underlying thought in this chapter is related to these two groups. As we shall see, in speaking of the Judaizers, Paul deals with the soul, especially with the mind, but in speaking of the Epicureans, he deals with the body.

The Judaizers did not promote the enjoyment of material things. Rather, they zealously promoted their particular religious philosophy. Both religion and philosophy involve the mind. For the most part, religious people and philosophical people are not occupied with material things. They do not care to indulge themselves in such things as eating and drinking. On the contrary, they may even restrict themselves in these matters. As we have pointed out, the things to which Paul refers in verses 3 through 7 are not material things, but things related to religion, philosophy, and culture, things which have much to do with our mind.

The believers in Philippi had been saved and regenerated in spirit, but there was still the need for them to care for their soul and body in a proper way. As Paul was writing chapter three, deep within him was the intention to give certain instructions to the Philippian believers concerning how to deal with the soul and the body. Therefore, he first spoke of the Judaizers in order to edify the Philippians in dealing with the soul. Then he referred to the Epicureans in order to instruct the believers in dealing with the body.

TRANSFORMATION AND THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

If we would deal with the soul, we need to count as refuse all religious matters, philosophical things, and cultural elements. The main ingredients of religion, philosophy, and culture are things which appeal to thoughtful people. This indicates that religion, philosophy, and culture are intimately related to the soul and to the psychological world.

In the past we have spoken very much about transformation. We even have a hymn on the subject of

transformation (*Hymns*, 750). However, it is still possible that many do not realize that transformation involves the renewing of the mind. According to Romans 12:2, the renewing of the mind is a basic aspect of transformation. The transformation of our soul depends to a great extent on the renewing of our mind. If our mind is not renewed, our soul will remain unchanged.

To say that our mind is renewed means that a change has taken place in our way of thinking. The thoughts of many believers are still occupied with religious, philosophical, and cultural things, the very things mentioned by Paul in 3:7 and 8. These matters are related to the psychological world, to the world of the soul. Many are also taken over by a natural way of thinking. Such saints may be good, but they are the same in soul today as they were many years ago. A primary reason for our lack of transformation is that a huge rock, the rock of national characteristics, is occupying our soul, taking the place that belongs to Christ. In the case of every one of us, national characteristics occupy our soul. Our soul has been taken over by this rock.

THE NEED FOR SURGERY ON OUR SOUL

We may also liken national characteristics that occupy our soul to a tumor which grows in a person's stomach until there is room for little else. In our psychological stomach a tumor has grown and has taken over nearly all the room which should be reserved for Christ. For this reason, our inner being cannot contain much spiritual food and it cannot function normally. Believers from every country, and even from different regions in a particular country, have a tumor characteristic of them. This tumor grows especially in our natural mind. It has grown to such a degree that it has become part of our very constitution.

From years of experience I can testify that, without exception, all believers have such a tumor in their psychological stomach. The only difference among us regarding this tumor is its size. Only the most skillful

Surgeon--the Lord Jesus Himself--is able to remove the tumor hidden within us.

In 3:1-16 Paul deals with this tumor; he operates on our soul, especially on our thinking. When he was Saul of Tarsus, Paul had a large tumor in his soul. This tumor influenced Paul's thoughts about the Jewish religion, law, circumcision, and tradition. But one day the Lord Jesus, the greatest Surgeon, operated on Paul, and a huge tumor was removed from his mind. However, with most of us, this surgery has not yet taken place. The tumor is still in our soul.

For a number of years I was bothered within by a question for which I was not able to find an answer. Why do Christians who truly love the Lord and seek Him earnestly go on year after year without growing in life? Even though they read the Bible faithfully, they do not see anything. Now I have at least part of the answer. The lack of growth in life and shortage of revelation in reading the Word are caused by a tumor in their psychological stomach. Realizing the seriousness of this, I am burdened to emphasize again and again that in 3:7 and 8 Paul refers not to material things, but to religious, philosophical, and cultural things, in particular to thoughts, concepts, and ideas that occupy our soul. Because such things have grown within us like a tumor, we are in desperate need of surgery. We need a thorough dealing with the soul, especially with the mind.

In 3:15 Paul says, "Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind." If we would have "this mind," we must have a mind without a tumor, a mind filled with Christ and occupied with seeking Christ, gaining Him, and enjoying Him. In order to have such a mind, we must be operated on by the Lord and have our psychological tumor removed. Oh, may the Lord show us how we need such a mind!

THE PHYSICAL BODY AND ITS ENJOYMENT

After dealing with the soul in 3:1-16, Paul goes on to

deal with the body in 3:17-21. These five verses deal with physical enjoyment, especially as practiced by the Epicureans. As genuine seekers of Christ, we need surgery to eliminate our religious and philosophical thoughts, and we also need a proper dealing with the physical body. In verse 19 Paul speaks of those "whose God is the belly," but in verses 20 and 21 he says that we are awaiting the Lord Jesus Christ, "Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory." In these verses Paul deals with the physical body and its enjoyment. We should not think that Paul deals only with the soul and leaves the body free to indulge itself in its lusts. In dealing with the soul, Paul does not touch physical things. But in dealing with the body, he does touch these things.

Once again I wish to point out that, after his fellowship with the believers in chapters one and two, Paul gave them instructions in chapter three concerning how to deal with the soul and the body. To deal with the soul, they had to count as refuse all religious, philosophical, and cultural things and not treasure them. Nothing religious should be regarded as a treasure. Nothing philosophical can compare with Christ, and no cultural element should be allowed to be a substitute for Him. We must condemn all religious, philosophical, and cultural things and count them as refuse in order to gain Christ in our soul and to be filled with Him in our soul, especially in our mind. This is the way to deal with our soul.

Turning to the matter of physical enjoyment, Paul says in verse 17, "Be imitators together of me, brothers, and observe attentively those who thus walk as you have us for an example." The example here does not refer to what Paul has covered in the foregoing verses. Instead, it is the example set by those who deal with the physical body in a proper way. How do we know that verse 17 refers not to the things of the soul, but to the things of the body? We know it by the fact that verse 18 begins with the word "for," indicating that this verse is an explanation of verse

17. Verse 18 says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." They were enemies of the cross of Christ, which has terminated the indulgence of the lusts of the physical body.

As we have pointed out, the Epicureans care for indulgence in the enjoyment of eating and drinking. Paul refers to this in verse 19, which says, "Whose end is destruction, whose God is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." These are those who worship their belly and serve their stomach; their belly was their god. In promoting the enjoyment of eating and drinking, the Epicureans were more concerned with physical indulgence than with ethics or morality. Today many take the way of the Epicureans to indulge in physical enjoyments. On the weekends some are so given to sports and physical pleasures that they forget everything else. Of the Epicureans Paul also says that they "set their minds on earthly things." By earthly things he means physical things, material things, matters of eating and drinking.

According to the book of Colossians, Paul did not agree with asceticism, with the practice of treating the body severely. But neither would he agree with the Epicurean indulgence in physical enjoyment. We need such things as food and clothing. Without them, we cannot live. However, we should not indulge ourselves in these things.

In 4:11 Paul says, "I have learned in whatever circumstances I am to be content." The Greek word rendered content is a Stoic term, indicating a practice opposite to that of the Epicureans. The Stoics taught that a person should be content in all circumstances, caring neither for enjoyment nor for suffering. Paul used this expression in testifying that he had learned the secret to be content. In principle, we Christians agree neither with the Epicureans nor with the ascetics. In a sense, we may somewhat stand with the Stoics.

As Paul was writing to the Philippians, deep within him

was the realization that both the Judaizers and the Epicureans were a cause of damage to the church life. There was the danger that the believers would be misled by the Epicureans into the indulgence of physical enjoyment. As we have indicated, Paul wrote Philippians 3 to help the believers deal with both the soul and the body. We today need such a word of instruction. Concerning our soul, we should not hold on to religious, philosophical, and cultural things. Rather, we must be willing to have the tumor of national characteristics removed. May we allow the heavenly Surgeon to operate on our soul and to rid it of any tumor. It is crucial that our soul be dealt with in this way. Concerning our body, we need to eat properly and be nourished in order to have a long life for the Lord's expression. But we should avoid indulgence or excessive enjoyment of physical things. We should not practice Epicureanism. We need clothing, a house, and transportation. But we should not indulge in these things. On the one hand, we must reject the Judaizers; on the other hand, we must also avoid the Epicureans. In these matters we should follow Paul and imitate both him and those who followed him.

CITIZENSHIP IN THE HEAVENS

In verse 20 Paul goes on to say, "For our citizenship is in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." The Greek word rendered citizenship may also be rendered commonwealth or associations of life. Our national life is not in any earthly country; it is in the heavens. Our real citizenship, our true commonwealth, is in the heavens. Sometimes as I am traveling, people ask me where I come from. Although I may have to tell them that I come from China, I prefer to say that I come from the heavens and that my citizenship is in the heavens.

Because our citizenship is in the heavens, we should not be occupied with earthly things, with the physical things needed for our existence. We should not place such a high value on material things. This does not mean, of course, that we should not have proper food, clothing,

housing, and transportation. We definitely need these things. But anything that goes beyond need falls into the category of indulgence. Such indulgence is to be condemned. If we love the earthly things needed for human life, this is an indication that we do not treasure our heavenly citizenship. May we all remember that our citizenship is in the heavens and that we are a heavenly people sojourning on earth. If we have food, clothing, housing, and transportation to maintain life, we should be content. Let us not indulge ourselves in any earthly, material things.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE BODY

From the heavens we are eagerly awaiting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who "will transfigure the body of our humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory, according to the operation of Him Who is able even to subject all things to Himself." The transfiguration of our body will be the ultimate consummation of God's salvation. In His salvation God first regenerated our spirit (John 3:6), now He is transforming our soul (Rom. 12:2), and, consummately, He will transfigure our body, making us the same as Christ in all three parts of our being.

In verse 21 Paul refers to our body as "the body of our humiliation." This describes our natural body, made of worthless dust (Gen. 2:7) and damaged by sin, weakness, sickness, and death (Rom. 6:6; 7:24; 8:11). But one day this body will be transfigured and conformed to the body of Christ's glory. Christ's body of glory is His resurrected body, saturated with God's glory (Luke 24:26) and transcendent over corruption and death (Rom. 6:9).

No matter how we may feed and clothe our body and no matter what kind of automobile we use to transport it or dwelling place to house it, it is still a body of humiliation. You may allow your body to rest on the best and most expensive bed, but it is nonetheless a body of humiliation. However, we should not hate or despise our body. If we despise our body, we shall practice asceticism. In a very real sense, we should love our body for the Lord's sake. We

need to care for the body without allowing it to indulge itself. One day, the Lord Jesus will come and transfigure the body of humiliation and conform it to the body of His glory.

In verse 21 Paul says that the transfiguration of the body of humiliation is "according to the operation of Him Who is able even to subject all things to Himself." The transfiguration of our body is by the great power which subjects all things to the Lord (Eph. 1:19-22). This is the almighty power in the whole universe.

I believe that now we can grasp Paul's basic thought in Philippians 3. In this chapter Paul instructs us both concerning how to deal with the soul and how to deal with the body. To deal with the soul, we must count as loss all religious, philosophical, and cultural things so that Christ may occupy our entire being and that we may gain Him to the uttermost. To deal with our body, we should take care of our physical need, but not indulge in excessive physical enjoyment. Our aim should be to care for the body in a proper way that it may be healthy for the Lord's expression. But our intention should not be to glorify the physical body through the over-enjoyment of physical things. Our body is not to be glorified in this way, but is to be glorified at the time of the Lord's coming back. At that time, He will transfigure our body of humiliation. Thus, we are waiting for Christ to come back that we may be brought into the ultimate consummation of God's salvation--the transfiguration of our body.

While we are waiting for the Lord's coming, we should take care of our physical needs without indulging in material things. At the same time, we should deal with our soul, counting as loss all religious, philosophical, and cultural things so that our soul may be transformed in full. Day by day, we are undergoing the process of transformation in our soul as we are waiting for the Lord to come to transfigure our body and thereby to bring us into the ultimate consummation of God's salvation.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

THINKING THE SAME THING AND REJOICING IN THE LORD

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:1-4

In reading the Bible we should not take anything for granted. We should not take one sentence, or even a phrase or word, for granted, assuming that we understand it. If we take things for granted when reading the Bible, we shall deceive ourselves. In my reading of the Word I always exercise not to take anything for granted. In particular, I pay attention to those things which are rather puzzling. Before we go on to 4:1-4, I would like to point out some of the puzzling elements in 3:7-16.

SOME PUZZLES IN PHILIPPIANS 3

In verse 7 Paul says, "But what things were gains to me, these I have counted loss on account of Christ." What does Paul mean by gains and by loss? Furthermore, why does he speak of gains in the plural and loss in the singular?

In verse 8 Paul continues, "But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of Whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them to be refuse that I may gain Christ." Paul's use of the word excellency is puzzling. What does he mean by this word? And what is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ"? In reading this verse, many think of excellent knowledge rather than of the excellency of the knowledge. There is a great difference, however, between excellent knowledge and the excellency of the knowledge. In this verse Paul also speaks of suffering loss and counting certain things to be refuse. Why does he use the word refuse? Why does he

not say, "I counted them to be nothing"? Furthermore, what is the difference between loss and refuse?

In verse 9 Paul says, "And be found in Him." What does it mean to be found in Christ? Why does Paul not say "known in Christ" or "seen in Christ"? Why did he use the word found?

Verse 10 says, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." We have pointed out that to know Christ means to experience Him and enjoy Him. Why does Paul not use the words enjoy and experience here? We also need to pay more attention to the expression "the power of His resurrection." I do not believe that we yet have an adequate definition of this. We should also inquire about "the fellowship of His sufferings." To what does this refer? Some may say that the fellowship of Christ's sufferings denotes our participation in these sufferings. But what does Paul intend by the word fellowship here? Furthermore, why does he use the word conformed? We need to study carefully Paul's word about being conformed to Christ's death and solve the puzzle raised by this expression.

In verse 11 Paul continues, "If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." Paul's use of the term "out-resurrection" is puzzling. Even the words "by any means" require careful consideration.

In verse 12 Paul says, "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Why does Paul use the word obtained here instead of gained? Also what does he mean by laying hold of that for which he had been laid hold of by Christ Jesus? All these matters are puzzling.

In verses 13 and 14 Paul goes on to say, "Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing--forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

Jesus." What does Paul mean by the word reckon here? Also we need to ask how it is possible to forget the things behind. It seems we can forget things only when we do not want to forget them. But when we try to forget something, we remember it all the more. How then are we to understand Paul's word about forgetting? Can we forget our national characteristics, when they are with us wherever we go? Paul's expression "stretching forward" is also unique and worthy of close examination. What does it mean to stretch forward to the things which are before? We also need to ponder the goal and the prize in verse 14, not assuming that we have a full understanding of these two items. We also need to consider Paul's word concerning the high calling. Why does he not speak of the calling from above or the calling from the heavens? Why does Paul say that the high calling of God is in Christ Jesus? Why does he not say that it is in Jesus Christ? In other words, why does he put the title Christ before the name Jesus? Surely the order is significant and meaningful. Moreover, why does Paul speak not of the high calling *by* God, but of the high calling *of* God? Some may say that this is simply a matter of idiom. But this does not resolve the puzzle. In Greek Paul could have said it either way. There must be a reason he said of God here and not by God. If we ask questions such as these, we shall learn not to take things for granted in reading the Bible. As we read the Word, we need to realize how little we actually understand it.

Verse 15 continues, "Let us therefore, as many as are full grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you." Why does Paul use the term "full grown"? This expression signifies life, for anything that grows must be living. Although we may have some understanding of the expression "full grown," it is still rather puzzling.

In verse 15 what does Paul mean by "this mind" and by "otherwise minded"? These simple words convey important concepts.

Finally, in verse 16 Paul says, "Only this, whereunto we

have attained, by the same rule let us walk." What is the meaning of "only this" and of "whereunto we have attained"? In this verse almost every phrase is a puzzle.

The Bible is God's word; it is the divine breath, the breathing out of God Himself. Thus we should not read it the way we read a newspaper or magazine. Instead, we should not take anything for granted, but, by asking questions, earnestly seek out the meaning and significance of the words, phrases, and sentences of the Bible. If we pay attention to all the puzzling elements in 3:7-16, we shall receive more spiritual riches.

TWO DEALINGS

In the first two chapters of Philippians we see the fellowship, the spiritual traffic, between the apostle and the believers. As we have pointed out, the third chapter is concerned with two kinds of dealing--the dealing with the soul and with the body. According to Philippians 3, to deal with our soul in a proper way is to count as loss, even as refuse, all religious, philosophical, and cultural things. We may not realize that such things have been wrought into our soul. Our soul is not only filled with these elements, but even constituted of them. These things may be useful for society, but they are damaging to the Christian life. They are rocks occupying room in our being that belongs to Christ. Although you have received Christ, you may confine Him to your spirit and not allow Him to spread out into your soul. In your soul there may be no room for Christ. Your soul may have been filled with the things of religion, philosophy, and culture, in particular with your national characteristics. Both in the Orient and the West, I have seen that every saint has been constituted of these things in the soul. But Paul was rescued by counting these things to be refuse. No longer would he treasure anything of religion, philosophy, or culture. In order to gain Christ, he was absolute in counting other things to be refuse.

As we have indicated, in Philippians 3 Paul deals with the body as well as the soul. He points out that the

believers should not have excessive enjoyment in physical things.

A CONCLUDING WORD

After writing chapter three, Paul's burden was discharged. Therefore, chapter four serves as a conclusion. In this conclusion, Paul does not present any additional main points. The contents of chapter four are related to what Paul has already written and are a confirmation of these points. Furthermore, the points in chapter four function as a charge to the believers.

Philippians 4:1 says, "So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, beloved." The words "so then" indicate that what Paul is about to say is a conclusion.

Here Paul speaks of the brothers as the "beloved and longed for," his "joy and crown." These words indicate that Paul was filled with emotion, full of feeling. Twice he uses the word beloved. After referring to the believers as his beloved, he again addresses them as beloved ones. The believers were his joy within and his crown without. Joy is inward, whereas a crown is manifested outwardly. In this verse Paul was saying that the believers were both his inward happiness and his outward glory.

In 4:1 Paul charges the believers to "so stand firm in the Lord." The expression "so stand" means to stand in a particular way, in the way presented in the foregoing chapters. In this verse Paul was urging the believers in Philippi to stand in the way he had shown them.

THINKING THE SAME THING

In verse 2 Paul continues, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord." This verse indicates that these two sisters were dissenting from one another. They were not of the same mind. Hence, there was the exhortation to strive together with one soul for the gospel (1:27), to be joined in soul, thinking the one

thing (2:2), and to have the same mind to pursue after Christ (3:14-15).

According to verse 3, these were very good sisters who had been helpful to Paul. Paul says of them that they "contended with me in the gospel, with both Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life." The Greek word rendered "contended" is an athletic term; it means to labor with, to strive together for, to wrestle in company with, as a team of athletes. These sisters were a help to Paul and the other workers, contending with them in the gospel. However, even these sisters needed help to be one by thinking the same thing in the Lord. According to the foregoing chapters, to think the same thing is related to pursuing Christ in order to gain Him and enjoy Him in full. Euodias and Syntyche were not pursuing Christ to the uttermost. Any who are tempted to be dissenting should heed Paul's word to these sisters to think the same thing.

GENUINE YOKEFELLOW

In 4:3 Paul uses the term yokefellow. In ancient times farmers used two oxen to pull a plow. The term yokefellow thus refers to being yoked together with another to bear a common burden. In writing to the Philippians, Paul was seeking a genuine yokefellow, one who would bear the same burden as he, under the same yoke. If we do not seek Christ to the uttermost, we have not yet been yoked. Rather, we are still quite free in our thinking. If we have truly been yoked, we shall think the same thing as Paul. Those who had not been yoked together with Paul would not have been able to help him with Euodias and Syntyche. Paul was burdened to help these sisters to think the same thing--to pursue after Christ that they might gain Him and experience Him. But because Paul was in a Roman prison far away from Philippi, he needed someone there in Philippi to be yoked together with him to bear this burden. Paul expected that among the saints in Philippi there

would be at least one who was the same as he was in pursuing Christ. Because Paul had been yoked, he had no freedom in his thought or concept. His mind had been yoked to think the one thing.

At any cost and by any means, Paul wanted to pursue Christ to the uttermost. This was his mind. Hence, his mentality had been absolutely yoked by Christ. Apart from Christ, he had no liberty to think anything. His mind had been fully yoked by Christ, in Christ, and with Christ. As he was writing to the Philippians, he was looking for at least one saint who could work together with him to help the two dissenting sisters to think the same thing. This was a very practical word with which to conclude this Epistle.

In speaking of a "genuine yokefellow," it seems as if Paul was saying, "I have written you this Epistle, but I don't have the assurance that this letter will do the full job. I need someone among you who is genuinely yoked under the same mind to seek Christ. Such a one will be able to help these sisters to think the same thing. Anyone who wants to help them must first be yoked under the same mind as I have." To have "this mind" and "to think the same thing" is to be a genuine yokefellow.

Today there is also the need for a genuine yokefellow. The Lord's ministry is hated and rejected by many. You may accept this ministry and even love it, but to love the ministry is one thing, and to be yoked under the mind to pursue Christ is another. We all need to be yoked by having "this mind."

Considering Paul's word about a genuine yokefellow should remind us not to read the Bible in a superficial way and not to take things for granted. Paul's expression "genuine yokefellow" may seem insignificant; actually it is extremely important, for it is related to his charge to the Philippian believers to have this mind, to think the same thing, even to think the one thing. After issuing this charge, he mentions two sisters who were dissenting. Then he goes on to urge someone to labor together with him as a genuine yokefellow to assist Euodias and Syntyche to think

the same thing, to turn from their dissension and set their minds on the pursuing of Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REJOICING IN THE LORD

In 4:4 Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Whether or not the believers were dissenting, they all had to rejoice. Those who would not rejoice were wrong, but those who could rejoice were right. I do not believe, however, that dissenting ones can rejoice very much. According to Paul's word here, we should rejoice in the Lord always. This rejoicing affords us the strength for the oneness spoken of in verses 2 and 3. In order for Euodias and Syntyche to think the same thing, it was necessary for them to learn to rejoice. Rejoicing in the Lord is also the secret of having the excellent characteristics listed in verses 5 through 9. If we would have the virtues found in these verses, we need to rejoice in the Lord. To rejoice in the Lord is a very important matter.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

EXCELLENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:5-9

In reading the book of Philippians it is important to find out what are the basic factors which motivated Paul in his writing. In chapter three the motivating factors are the need for the dealing with the soul and with the body. We have seen that Paul referred to two groups of people, the Judaizers and the Epicureans, in giving instructions to the saints concerning how to deal with the soul and with the body. As we come now to 4:5-9, we find eight excellent characteristics. We need to ask why at this point in his writing Paul mentions these characteristics.

Chapter four is a word of conclusion. As he was composing this concluding word, Paul was still motivated by those factors which caused him to write the first three chapters. He was still considering such matters as thinking the same thing by pursuing Christ and rejoicing in the Lord in order to enjoy the riches of Christ. In the first three chapters of Philippians Paul refers to the inner reality of the experience of Christ. But prior to chapter four, he does not give any illustrations of the outer expression of this reality. If we enjoy Christ and experience Him, we shall have a certain inner reality. Such an inward reality invariably issues in an outward expression. In 4:5-9 we find a full expression of this inward reality, a full expression of a life that lives Christ.

In 1:21 Paul declares, "To me to live is Christ." This statement is a testimony of Paul's inner reality. But what

is the real expression of a life that lives Christ? This expression is found in the virtues listed in 4:5-9. In the same principle, in chapter two Paul sets forth Christ as our pattern. Suppose we take the crucified and exalted Christ as our pattern. What will be the expression of a life which lives according to this pattern? The expression is in 4:5-9. The same is true with respect to Paul's word in chapter three concerning counting all things loss, even refuse, in order to gain Christ. What kind of expression will there be in a person's life if that one condemns philosophy, rejects culture, and renounces religion, counting them as refuse in order to gain Christ? What kind of life will such a person live, and what will be the practical expression of this life? Once again we would point out that the expression is seen in 4:5-9.

Although Philippians is a short book, the factors which motivated the writing of this book are rich and profound. In these messages we have been exercised to dig into the depths of Philippians and bring these factors to light. This is also our purpose in considering chapter four. What was the factor which motivated Paul to write this concluding chapter in the way he did? Why immediately after speaking of rejoicing in the Lord does he go on to speak of forbearance and anxiety? Why does he continue with naming certain virtues, and why do these virtues not include such things as holiness, victory, and patience? The basic factor within Paul motivating him to write this concluding word was the need to show the expression of a life that lives Christ, that takes Christ as the pattern, that counts all religious, philosophical, and cultural things as refuse, and that enjoys Christ as everything. With this as his motivation, Paul composed chapter four as a concluding word to this Epistle.

The title of this message is "Excellent Characteristics of the Christian Life." But it could be entitled "The Expression of a Life Which Lives Christ" The latter title is deeper and more profound than the former. This portion of Philippians presents the expression of a life that lives

Christ--a life that takes Christ as the pattern and counts all things refuse in order to gain more of Christ.

I. FORBEARANCE

The first aspect of the expression of a life that lives Christ is forbearance. Philippians 4:5 says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men." Later we shall see that a second aspect is the absence of anxiety. In a life that lives Christ there will be forbearance, but no anxiety, no worry. Paul considers forbearance and the lack of anxiety as the first two aspects of the expression of a life that lives Christ.

A life that lives Christ is calm, tranquil, peaceful, and quiet. A life of turmoil, on the contrary, is a life that lives Satan. Forbearance is the most important element of a tranquil life. Forbearance is reasonableness and consideration in dealing with others. To have forbearance is to deal with others without strictness of legal right. If we would live a calm life, we must have forbearance.

Forbearance includes patience and moderation, but goes beyond them. If you have forbearance, you will not argue with others, fight with them, or debate with them. You may have a great deal to say, but you will have patience and moderation in dealing with others and will not say anything in response to provocation or irritation.

Suppose a group of sisters live together. The most precious sister will be the one who is the most forbearing. When difficulties arise, she will be calm and quiet. Even if others offend her, she will not retaliate. Sisters who lack forbearance, however, may easily react when they are offended. In their living there is no calm, no tranquility, no moderation. A proper Christian life is a life of calm. To live such a life means that we do not argue with people or fight with them.

Forbearance is versus rivalry and vainglory, two negative things mentioned by Paul. Forbearance is also opposed to murmurings and reasonings. Some saints are given to the pursuit of rivalry and vainglory, whereas others are given to murmurings and reasonings. Whenever

we have rivalry, vainglory, murmurings, and reasonings, there is no calm, no tranquility, no forbearance.

From my experience I have learned that the first aspect of a life which lives Christ is tranquility. If we live Christ, we shall not argue with others. We shall know what is the right time to speak even a calm word. Even a calm statement made at the wrong time can contribute to an argument. If you reply as soon as someone offends you, your word will not be one of forbearance. If someone is angry with you, it is best not to say anything. Exercise forbearance and wait for the right time to utter a calm word. It is especially important for married brothers and sisters to practice this. If your husband or wife is argumentative, be careful about the way you speak. It may be wise not even to call on the Lord aloud. Such a calling may stir up trouble. Instead of speaking outwardly, calm yourself, call on the Lord inwardly, and wait until the situation is tranquil before you say anything.

It is easy to teach this, but it is quite difficult to practice it. To live in this way requires grace. When a brother's wife is angry with him, it is very easy for him to be stirred up. He may bristle with anger, and his emotions may boil over. At such a time it is extremely difficult to calm down and be tranquil. For this, we need the Lord's grace. It takes much grace to be forbearing in this kind of situation. But if we exercise to be calm by the Lord's grace, the atmosphere will eventually become tranquil. Then there will come a proper time to speak a calm word.

I have wondered why after covering such profound matters in the first three chapters, Paul says in 4:5, "Let your forbearance be known to all men." Compared with what Paul has already covered, forbearance seems to be a secondary matter. However, in a very practical way, forbearance is a test of whether or not we live Christ.

In 4:5 Paul also says, "The Lord is near." Many readers of Philippians take this as a reference to the Lord's coming. I do not say that this does not refer at all to the coming of the Lord; however, I believe that it does not mainly refer to

His coming. On the contrary, it refers primarily to the Lord's presence with us. The Lord is near; He is with us. When we live Him, taking Him as our pattern and counting all things loss in order to gain Him, we sense that He is present with us. He is near both in space and in time. In space, He is close to us, ready to help; in time, He is at hand, coming soon. Since the Lord is near, what need is there for us to be troubled and stirred up?

When we live Christ, knowing that He is near, we should let others know our forbearance, our moderation. Again I say, this is the first aspect of the expression of a life which lives Christ. Be assured that whenever you live Christ, you will show forth such a forbearance, such a moderate and tranquil attitude. But when you are striving in rivalry for vainglory or when you are murmuring or reasoning, you do not have this forbearance. This lack of forbearance proves that you are not living Christ. The first test of our living Christ is whether or not we express forbearance.

Paul had no intention to be like Confucius in teaching us to be patient and to bear difficulties. The factor which motivated him to write these verses was his desire to show the expression of a life that lives Christ. Thus, in 4:5-9 we see a picture of a life that lives Christ. If we are living Christ, we should let others know our forbearance. They should see that we are calm, tranquil, and moderate and that nothing can disturb our inward calm. However, when we are not calm, we surely are not in Christ. Then in our experience the Lord is not near. Instead of calm, we may have anxiety, which destroys our tranquility and causes us to lose the inward peace. Whenever we lose our tranquility, we are unable to live Christ. It is not possible to fight with others or to argue and at the same time to live Christ. Living Christ requires absolute tranquility, absolute calm.

II. WITHOUT ANXIETY

In verse 6 Paul goes on to say, "In nothing be anxious." Often when we hear bad news, we worry and fall into

anxiety. Anxiety undermines the living of Christ. Instead of being anxious, in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving we should make our requests known to God. Then the peace of God will guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus (v. 7). The peace of God saves us from worry and anxiety. Paul's word here proves that our interpretation of these verses according to our experience is correct. Being free from anxiety is for the purpose of keeping us calm and tranquil.

In verse 6 Paul charges us "in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." The words "in everything" refer to the many different things which happen to us day by day. Under the Lord's blessing, many positive things happen, and we hear good news. However, we also experience negative things and hear bad news. Nevertheless, in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, we should make our requests known to God. Prayer is general with the essence of worship and fellowship; petition is special for particular needs. Notice that Paul says "with thanksgiving," not "and thanksgiving." This indicates that both our prayer and petition should be accompanied by thanksgiving to the Lord.

It may seem easy to understand Paul's word, "Let your requests be made known to God." But we should not take this word for granted, assuming that we understand it. I have spent considerable time studying the phrase "to God." It may also be rendered "before God" or "in the presence of God." The Greek preposition is *pros*, often translated "with" (John 1:1; Mark 9:19; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Cor. 16:6; 1 John 1:2). It denotes motion towards, in the sense of a living union and communion, implying fellowship. Hence, the force of "to God" here is in fellowship with God. We should let our requests be made known to God in such a fellowship, in such a union and communion. This requires that we pray to contact God.

In our prayer to God there must be the essence of worship and fellowship, and also petitions for particular

needs. Even if we do not have specific needs, we still need a time of prayer day by day to worship the Lord and have fellowship with Him. As we worship the Lord and have fellowship with Him in prayer, we enjoy communion with Him and practice the organic union with Him.

The issue, the result, of practicing the organic union with the Lord is that the peace of God guards our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus (v. 7). The peace of God is actually God as peace (v. 9), infused into us through our fellowship with Him by prayer. This peace is the counterpoise of troubles and the antidote to anxiety (John 16:33).

Bad news or difficult situations may cause us to worry or to be anxious. We find the antidote to this anxiety when we pray, practice communion with God, and enjoy the organic union. Then spontaneously, even unconsciously, the peace of God is transfused into our inner being. This transfused peace becomes the counterpoise of trouble and becomes the antidote to anxiety. From experience we know that through prayer we receive this antidote to anxiety when the peace of God is infused into us. Having the peace of God as the counterpoise to our troubles does not mean that the troubles will disappear. The troubles remain, but we have a counterpoise. Furthermore, the poison of anxiety is still within us, but we have an antidote--the peace of God transfused into our being through our fellowship with God in prayer. When we enjoy God as our peace, we are made calm within.

In verse 7 Paul says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus. The Greek word rendered "guard" may also be rendered "mount guard over." The God of peace patrols or stands guard before our hearts and thoughts in Christ. The heart is the source, and the thoughts are the issue. The peace of God guards both our hearts and our thoughts. This means that in Christ Jesus the peace of God patrols as a guard who goes back and forth before our hearts and our thoughts. The peace of God which patrols within our inner being in such a way keeps us calm and tranquil. Even though we may have

many troubles and much anxiety, nothing will disturb us. This is not a mere teaching, but a word which corresponds to our experience. From experience we know that the peace of God infused into us keeps us calm.

Toward man we need the forbearance mentioned in verse 5, and with God we need the fellowship to which Paul refers in verses 6 and 7. As two leading aspects of the expression of a life that lives Christ, forbearance and fellowship cause us to remain calm inwardly. In this way we shall become a tranquil people. This does not mean, however, that nothing negative will happen to us. Rather, it means that we need not be disturbed by negative things. Do not complain about your living situation. Live Christ! The first expression of your living of Christ will be forbearance.

To say that we should be forbearing and free of anxiety does not mean that every day we shall receive only good news. Quite often Satan will send us bad news. But we need not be troubled by this bad news, for we have the peace of God, God Himself as peace, within us, guarding our inner feelings. However, if we would experience this peace of God, we need to pray and have fellowship with God.

In 4:5-7 Paul does not mention a third thing apart from forbearance and not having anxiety. Instead, he simply points out two important aspects of a life that lives Christ--that we have forbearance, but no anxiety. When we are forbearing and free from anxiety, we are kept tranquil and in a calm atmosphere. Then we can live Christ and have the full enjoyment of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

EXCELLENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:5-9

In the foregoing message we began to consider certain excellent characteristics of the Christian life, pointing out that in 4:5-9 we have the expression of a life that lives Christ. From verses 5 and 6 we saw that such a life exhibits forbearance, but has no anxiety. In this message, a continuation of the preceding one, we shall go on to see six governing aspects of a life that lives Christ.

III. THE REST

Paul gives us these governing aspects in verse 8: "For the rest, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is well-spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things."

A. Whatever is True

The first governing aspect of a life that lives Christ is "whatever is true." The word true here means truthful ethically, not merely true in matter of fact. In the expression of a life that lives Christ there can be no falsehood, no lying. Everything we do or say must be truthful. No one who lives Christ should practice falsehood of any kind. A life that is the expression of Christ is a truthful one.

B. Whatever Is Honorable

The second aspect is "whatever is honorable." The

Greek word rendered honorable means venerable, worthy of reverence, noble, grave (1 Tim. 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2), implying the idea of dignity, which inspires and invites reverence. A life that lives Christ will be honorable, noble, grave, solid, weighty, and dignified.

We should not think that only older people should be weighty. All the young people, even the teenagers, should also have dignity. Even a young brother in junior high school should have dignity, for he has God within him. He is a vessel containing God as his worth, weight, and dignity.

To have dignity is not to act important; it is to live God. A jewelry box containing a diamond ring has dignity not because of the box itself, but because of the diamond. It is the diamond in the box which gives dignity to the box. In like manner, we are a vessel containing Christ. If we live Him, we shall have true dignity. When others see us bearing such a dignity, they will have a deep respect for us. The dignity implied in the Greek word for honorable always inspires a profound respect. This dignity is the second governing aspect of the expression of a life that lives Christ.

C. Whatever Is Righteous

In verse 8 Paul also speaks of "whatever is righteous." This refers to what is right (not just) before God and man. Doing what is right is another governing aspect related to the living of Christ.

D. Whatever Is Pure

The word pure in the expression "whatever is pure" means single in intention and action, without any mixture. To be pure in this way is to have no pretense. Purity is also a governing aspect of the life that lives Christ.

E. Whatever Is Lovely

Yet another governing aspect of such a life is "whatever is lovely." The word "lovely" means lovable, agreeable, endearing.

F. Whatever Is Well-Spoken Of

Next Paul goes on to mention "whatever is well-spoken of." This means whatever is of good repute, renowned, attractive, winning, and gracious. The Greek word means sounding well.

In verse 8 Paul does not mention kindness, patience, or holiness. Instead, he mentions six items which are governing aspects of a life that lives Christ. If we live Christ, we shall surely have a life that is an expression of all these aspects. In our living there will be no falsehood, looseness, or lightness. Instead, our living will be honorable, pure, right, lovely, and well-spoken of. Of the many, many Christian virtues, Paul selected these six as governing aspects.

Here I wish to point out that all human virtues were created by God. According to Genesis 1:26, we were made in God's image. Our human virtues are a vessel made to contain the divine virtues, just as a glove is made in the image of a hand to contain the hand. The Bible reveals that the image of God is Christ (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, to say that man was made in the image of God means that he was made according to the form of Christ. Man was created according to Christ so that he could contain Christ and express Him. A glove is designed in the pattern of a hand so that it can contain the hand. Likewise, man was designed by God to bear the pattern of Christ. When Christ comes into a person, that person becomes a vessel containing Christ.

Romans 9 indicates that we are vessels to contain the glory of God. The glory of God denotes the expression of God, and this expression is Christ. Human virtues such as truthfulness, dignity, purity, and loveliness are all aspects of man as a vessel to contain Christ as the reality.

On the basis of Paul's word, "To me to live is Christ" (1:21), we can rightly say that the virtues in 4:8 are aspects of the expression of a life that lives Christ. Since Paul himself lived Christ, he certainly would not charge the saints to live something else instead of Christ. Therefore,

the virtues he mentions in 4:8 must be the expression of the reality lived by Paul and by other saints. This reality is Christ Himself.

Furthermore, in chapter two we see Christ as the pattern, and in chapter three, the pursuing of Christ with a view to gaining Him. In order to gain Christ, Paul counted all other things as refuse. How then could he exalt human virtues in chapter four? This is another indication that the virtues in this chapter are not something apart from Christ Himself. Rather, these virtues must be the very expression of the Christ lived by the believers.

If we consider carefully the virtues listed in 4:8, we shall have to confess that there is no way for us to live such a life in ourselves. The ethical teachings of Confucius are very high, but they are inferior to Paul's instructions here in Philippians. I studied Confucius' writing entitled *The Highest Learning*, but it cannot compare to the virtues mentioned by Paul. In ourselves it surely is impossible to have such a life with such an expression. Therefore, we must go on to 4:13, where Paul says, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me." All the virtues in 4:8 are the expression of the very Christ in whom Paul could do everything. Based on the whole context of the book of Philippians, we can say that the six virtues in 4:8 are the expression of the living of Christ. These are not mere human virtues, not even the virtues developed according to the teachings of Confucius. These virtues are the expression of the very Christ whom we live.

G. If Any Virtue and Any Praise

Toward the end of 4:8 Paul changes his expression and says, "If there is any virtue and if any praise." The Greek word for virtue here means excellence, that is, ethical energy exhibited in vigorous action. Praise refers to things worthy of praise, as the companion of virtue. The first six items are categorized as "whatever is"; the last two are categorized as "if any." This indicates that the last two are

a summing up of the six foregoing items, in all of which are some virtue or excellence and something worthy of praise.

Virtue and praise are not two additional aspects, but values of the six aspects already mentioned. Virtue is a general term rather than a specific aspect. There is virtue in truthfulness, dignity, purity, loveliness, rightness, and being well spoken of. The principle is the same with praise: there is something worthy of praise in all these six aspects of the Christian life.

How excellent is the expression of the life that lives Christ! The six aspects in verse 8 certainly are excellent characteristics of the Christian life. It is excellent to be truthful, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good report. In each of these excellent aspects there is some virtue and something worthy of praise. We should "take account of these things"; that is, we should think on them, ponder them, consider them.

IV. THE THINGS LEARNED, RECEIVED, HEARD, AND SEEN IN THE APOSTLE

In verse 9 Paul concludes, "The things which you have also learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things." Not only should the believers think on the things mentioned in verse 8; they should also practice the things which they have learned, received, heard, and seen in the apostle. To be sure, Paul lived in such a way as to express all the aspects listed in verse 8. Hence, the believers had learned of him, had received from him, had heard of him, and had seen certain things in him. For this reason, Paul charged them to follow him in practicing these things.

Verse 9 closes with the word, "And the God of peace shall be with you." This is both a blessing and a promise. The God of peace is the source of all the things mentioned in verses 8 and 9. By fellowshipping with Him and having Him with us, all these virtues will issue forth in our life.

In verse 7 Paul speaks of the peace of God, and in verse

9, of the God of peace. First he says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and thoughts, then that the God of peace Himself will be with us. Actually the peace of God and the God of peace are one. When God is with us, peace is with us also. The genuine peace we enjoy is God Himself. The way to enjoy the God of peace is by praying to have fellowship with Him.

If we did not have these verses in Philippians 4 concerning the expression of a life that lives Christ, we would not know what kind of life this is. The pattern of such a life was established by the Lord Jesus during the years He lived on earth. If you read the four Gospels carefully, you will see that the Lord lived a life absolutely outside religion, culture, and philosophy. Apart from the Lord Jesus, there has not been another person whose life was so pure and so free from the influence of religion, culture, and philosophy. In His living the Lord was wholly occupied by the Father. He was not occupied in the least by the elements of religion, culture, philosophy, habit, custom, and tradition. In His soul--in His mind, emotion, and will--there was no place for religion, culture, and philosophy. His entire inner being had been taken over by God the Father. Therefore, the Lord could live a life that was free of the influence of religious, cultural, and philosophical things. His life was the full expression of the divine life. This was the reason He could say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), and, "The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father Who abides in Me, He does His works" (John 14:10). In His living on earth, the Lord Jesus lived the Father and expressed Him.

I would encourage you to read through the four Gospels once again under this light. The Gospels speak of a life, the living of the Lord Jesus, which was occupied purely and entirely by God the Father. When the Lord Jesus spoke, God the Father was spoken forth. Whatever the Lord Jesus did was the expression of a certain attribute of the Father. The Lord never expressed anything of religion, culture, or

philosophy. He did not live out habits, customs, and traditions. Rather, He was occupied by the Father, lived the Father, and expressed the Father.

The life of the Lord Jesus has set up a pattern for us. If we live according to this pattern, we shall count as loss, even as refuse, all religious, cultural, and philosophical things. Furthermore, we shall count as loss the things of habit, custom, and tradition so that we may be fully occupied by Christ. Then whatever we live out day by day will be Christ and Christ alone.

Years ago, along with many other Christians, I considered Philippians 4:5-9 simply as an exhortation regarding ethics and behavior. I heard sermons on these verses which treated them in an ethical way. Even unbelievers quote Paul's word favorably. Paul's word surely is marvelous, far better than anything spoken by Confucius or Socrates. However, even when I was young, I was troubled deep within when I heard others quoting these verses with the intention of applying them merely as ethics or principles of behavior. But only after many years did I gain the proper understanding of these verses.

One day the Lord pointed out to me that what we have in 4:5-9 is the expression of a life that lives Christ. According to the context of the book of Philippians as a whole, these verses must be interpreted in such a way. As we have pointed out, in 1:21 Paul says, "To live is Christ." In chapter two he goes on to present Christ as our pattern. Then according to chapter three, we see that we must count all things loss and as refuse that we may reach the goal and gain Christ to the uttermost. Finally, toward the end of this Epistle, Paul testifies that he can do all things in the One who empowers him. But between Paul's word about pursuing Christ and his word about being empowered by Christ, he indicates that we should have a living that expresses Christ. To be sure, this expression should not simply be the expression of human ethics or morality. Rather, it must be the expression of the very Christ whom we are living out.

Suppose we have a kind of forbearance, prayer to deal with anxiety, and also have the six wonderful human virtues mentioned in verse 9, but we do not have Christ inside of us. If this is our situation, we are still empty and altogether lacking in reality.

It certainly would not be logical for Paul to speak so much about the experience of Christ and then in chapter four mention human virtues in a purely ethical way. The excellent characteristics of the Christian life given in these verses must be more than natural human attributes--they must be the very expression of the Christ who lives in us.

As we have indicated, these excellent characteristics may be likened to a glove which expresses a hand, and Christ may be likened to the hand which fits into the glove as its content. Human virtues were created by God as a "glove" to contain the divine attributes as the reality. Using another term, human virtues are a vessel to contain Christ as the divine content. We have such virtues as forbearance, truthfulness, and dignity. But these are shadows, not the reality; they are vessels or containers, not the content. The divine forbearance, truthfulness, and dignity are the reality and substance of human forbearance, truthfulness, and dignity. Our virtues are an empty vessel, an empty glove, until Christ comes into us and occupies every part of our being. But after Christ has occupied us inwardly, filling every part of our inner being, then the "glove" is filled with the living "hand." A glove without a hand is empty and lifeless. Not only is there nothing living in the glove; there is not even the appearance of livingness. But when the hand gets into the glove, the glove is still the glove, but now it has something living in it. After the hand enters into the glove, the glove begins to have a living expression. In principle, the same is true of our virtues. Unless our virtues are occupied by Christ and express Him, they are empty and devoid of true life. But when they are occupied by the living Christ, they are filled with reality and become His expression.

It is important for us to see the difference between a living that is according to ethical teachings and a living that is the expression of Christ. Probably the best ethical teachings are those of Confucius, who taught people to cultivate, to develop, their human virtues. But it was not possible for Confucius to add anything to people. All he could do was to teach them to develop the virtues they already possessed.

There can be no doubt that as human beings created by God we have certain virtues. The best of these virtues Confucius called the "bright virtue." He learned that within man there is a virtue which is bright and shining. According to his teaching, the highest learning was to cultivate and develop this bright virtue.

How different this is from God's economy! God's economy is not to develop our virtues, but to add Christ to them. When Christ is added to our virtues, they are no longer empty, but are filled with Christ as their content and reality. Once again, we wish to emphasize the fact that human virtues are a vessel, a container, to express Christ as the real content.

In giving this word I am especially burdened for the young people. The young people may not realize how much they are blessed to receive such a word concerning the Christian life. More than fifty years ago, many of us were earnestly seeking the Lord, but had no opportunity to hear the word you can hear today. If we had had the opportunity, we would have been willing to pay any price for such a word. But year after year went by, and I collected little more than husks. Young people, how richly you have been blessed! Even to know the term "organic union" is a blessing. When I was young, I did not know anything organic with respect to the Christian life.

How wonderful it is to realize that 4:5-9 shows us the clear expression of a life that lives Christ! In this portrait we see that we need forbearance and also an antidote for anxiety. Moreover, we need the six governing aspects of a life that lives Christ. It is truly marvelous to see these

things! I hope that many among us, especially the young people, will pray about these matters, pray-read the verses which speak of them, have fellowship concerning them, and testify to one another about them. Here in Philippians there is a vast territory for us to explore and inexhaustible riches for us to search out and experience.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

THE APOSTLE'S SECRET OF SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:10-13; 3:9

In this message we shall consider Paul's secret of sufficiency in Christ. Paul had learned the secret of sufficiency, of satisfaction, of contentment. This secret is actually Christ Himself. In chapter one, Christ is the life for us to live; in chapter two, Christ is the pattern for us to follow; and in chapter three, Christ is the goal and the prize for us to pursue. Now in chapter four, Christ is the secret and also the power for us to enjoy. In doing many things we must first know the secret and also have the power, the strength, the energy, to accomplish those things.

LEARNING THE SECRET

In teaching people to do things, even insignificant things, we mainly teach them the secret. This is true, for example, in teaching someone the art of barbecuing meat. If a person does not learn the secret of barbecuing, he may ruin the meat. One side may be overdone, and the other side raw. Likewise, we may not know the secret of sufficiency in Christ found in Philippians 4. We may talk a great deal about the book of Philippians, but not know the secret of experiencing Christ. To change the figure of speech, because we do not have the key, we cannot open the door to the experience of Christ. I say again, in chapter four we have the secret and the power. On the one hand, Paul says, "I have learned the secret" (v. 12); on the other hand, he testifies, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me" (v. 13).

In verse 11 Paul says, "Not that I speak according to want, for I have learned in whatever circumstances I am to be content." To what word should the phrase "to be content" be joined? This phrase should not be connected with "I am," for the words "I am" are related to the expression "in whatever circumstances." Rather, "to be content" should be connected to "I have learned." Paul had learned to be content in all circumstances. He could say, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."

In verse 12 Paul continues, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want." The words "I have learned the secret" are an interpretation of the Greek word which means "I have been initiated." The metaphor is that of a person being initiated into a secret society with instruction in its rudimentary principles. Paul had not only learned a secret; he had been initiated and had learned certain basic principles.

Among the Greeks there were a number of secret societies. Anyone who was to become a member of such a society had to learn the rudimentary principles of that society. Others had to initiate him into the society by instructing him in its principles. By using this metaphor, Paul was saying that a church, which is rather mysterious, has certain basic principles. After Paul was converted to Christ, he was in a sense initiated into the church life. This means that he was instructed in the secret of how to enjoy Christ, how to take Christ as life, how to live Christ, how to magnify Christ, how to gain Christ, and also how to have the church life. These are the rudimentary principles of the church life.

Although the church, the Body of Christ, is somewhat mysterious, the church definitely is not a secret society. On the contrary, the church is a bright city set on a hill. Furthermore, the church is open to all who are willing to come. But because the church has a mysterious aspect, there is the need of a spiritual initiation in order to learn the principles of the church life.

The basic principles of the church life are altogether different from the basic principles of the world. We may know all the rudimentary principles of the world and yet not know anything of the church life. Thus, when we are saved and come into the church, the Body of Christ, we need to be initiated by learning certain basic principles. The secret of the Body is to take Christ as our life, to live Christ, to pursue Christ, to gain Christ, to magnify Christ, and to express Christ. These are the basic principles of the church, the Body of Christ. As one who had been initiated into the Body, Paul had learned the secret.

Many Christians today have not been initiated into the church life in such a way. Although they have been converted to Christ, baptized, and have joined a denomination, they have not been initiated into the Body of Christ. They have not learned how to take Christ as life, how to live Christ, how to take Christ as their pattern, and how to count all religious, cultural, and philosophical things as refuse in order to gain Christ. In contrast to Paul, they have not learned the secret of experiencing Christ. Paul had been initiated both into the proper Christian life and into the proper church life.

APPLYING THE SECRET

According to 4:10-13, Paul applies the secret he has learned to his circumstances in prison. As a prisoner in Rome, he was far away from many of the believers and from many churches which had been raised up through his ministry. No doubt, during his imprisonment, he suffered both psychologically and physically. He was in need of a material supply. It certainly was not easy for him to be in prison under such circumstances.

According to the record in the New Testament, when Paul was journeying in Europe for the ministry, the church in Philippi was unique in taking care of Paul's material needs. In 4:15 he says, "And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when

went out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the account of giving and receiving but you only." Paul's use of the word "account" here indicates that the Philippian believers' supply of material things to the apostle opened an account with him. As we shall see more fully in the next message, the believers in Philippi had opened an account with Paul in a way similar to opening an account in a bank today. More than once, the Philippian saints had made deposits into this account. In verse 16 Paul reminds them, "For even in Thessalonica you sent both once and again to my need." In verse 17 Paul again refers to the account the believers had opened with him: "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your account."

We have pointed out that the Philippian believers had opened a heavenly account with Paul and were known for the way they had supplied his material needs. However, when Paul was in prison, he had certain physical needs. Because Paul was still human, he expected the Philippians to continue remembering him. But for a period of time, the Philippians did not do this. This is implied by Paul's word in verse 10: "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you caused your thinking for me to blossom anew; wherein you did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity." Notice the words "at length" and "blossom anew." For some time, the Philippians' thinking of Paul had been dormant; it might even have withered. Their thinking for him certainly was not blossoming. But when Paul wrote this verse, winter had passed, and spring had come. He could now say that their thinking for him had begun to blossom anew. Paul was very kind in saying, "You did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity." In Paul's words, however, there is the implication that before this blossoming anew of their thinking for him, Paul had hoped to receive from them some material supply. He had hoped to be supplied by the church which was unique in having opened a heavenly account with him. But for a period of time, no deposits came in. The "blossoms" had

withered during the winter. But now that spring had arrived, there was a new blossoming.

It was sovereign of the Lord that the material supply from the Philippians had stopped temporarily. Yes, they had opened an account with Paul, but what is the use of an account if no deposits come in? This time when there was no supply was a time of testing for Paul, a time for him to be abased. No doubt, when Epaphroditus came with the supply, making a large deposit into the heavenly account, that was the time for Paul to abound. Therefore, in verse 12 he could declare, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." He knew both how to be humbled and be in lowly circumstances and also how to live with abundance.

In verse 12 Paul uses some puzzling expressions. He says, "in everything and in all things." What, we may ask, is the difference between everything and all things? Are not these identical terms? Also, at the beginning of the verse Paul says that he knows "both how to be abased" and "how to abound." But toward the end of the verse he reverses the order and says that he has learned the secret "both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want." In studying the Word we must pay attention to matters such as these.

In these verses Paul indicates that he was in want; he needed a material supply. When he was in want, he was abased. In the presence of the jailers, the guards, and even the whole praetorium he was in want and was abased. Perhaps others said of him, "Poor prisoner! No one takes care of him, and nothing comes as a supply to him." Then suddenly Epaphroditus arrived with a gift from the Philippians. In verse 18 Paul says, "But I have all things and abound; I have been filled, receiving from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." Now that Paul had received their rich supply, he was not lacking in anything. He could say, "I have all things and abound."

Before Epaphroditus came, Paul was abased. After he

came with the supply, Paul was abounding. But he did not know how long this abounding would last. He knew that probably the time would come when once again he would be in want. He had been in a low situation; now he was at a peak. But perhaps in not too long a time he would be low again. This was the reason he first said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." But because Epaphroditus had arrived with the supply, Paul then changed the order and said, "I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want." Knowing that his circumstances could change again very soon, Paul said that he knew not only how to be abased and how to abound, but also how to abound and how to be in want.

GOD'S SOVEREIGN ARRANGEMENT OF OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

My reason for dwelling on this matter is to point out that our circumstances are always sovereignly arranged by God. Sometimes His sovereign arrangement puts us in a low situation, and at other times in circumstances that are quite good. Paul realized that even though the supply had come from the church at Philippi, his circumstances were still in the hand of God. In God's sovereign arrangement, the Philippian church did not send the supply until now. Perhaps they had the heart to send him a gift, but not the opportunity until Epaphroditus could come. When the opportunity was available, the Philippian believers sent a gift to Paul. This supply brought him out of the condition of humiliation, want, and abasement and set him on a peak. But he did not know how long that would last. Nevertheless, he had the assurance that he knew both how to be abased and how to abound, both how to abound and how to be in want. He had learned the secret; he had been initiated into the basic principles of Christ and the church.

In verse 13 we find a basic principle related to the apostle's secret of sufficiency in Christ: "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me." Paul was a person in Christ (2

Cor. 12:2), and he desired to be found in Christ by others. Now he declared that he could do all things in Him, in the very Christ who empowered him. This is an all-inclusive and concluding word concerning his experience of Christ. It is the converse of the Lord's word concerning our organic relationship with Him in John 15:5: "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

DOING ALL THINGS IN HIM WHO EMPOWERS US

In 4:13 Paul refers to Christ as the One who "empowers me." To be so empowered is to be made dynamic inwardly. Christ dwells in us (Col. 1:27). He empowers us, makes us dynamic, from within, not from without. By such inward empowering Paul could do all things in Christ.

In 4:13 we find the secret to which Paul refers in verse 12. Here Paul says that he is in Christ, in the One who empowers him. In chapter three Paul testified that he pursued Christ in order to gain Him and be found in Him. Now in 4:13 Paul says that he is in Him. In Christ as the One who empowers him Paul could do all things. He could say, "Christ is my secret of sufficiency. As long as I have Him and as long as I am in Him, I can do all things in Him."

To appreciate Paul's word we need to join the phrase "in Him" in 4:13 to the same phrase in 3:9. In 3:9 Paul aspired to be found in Him; in 4:13 Paul declared that being in Him he could do all things in the One who empowered him. This is the secret.

Have you seen the secret? Do you have this secret? Our circumstances may change. In certain circumstances we may abound, and in others we may be abased. But whether we abound or are abased, the enjoyment of the Lord is the same. It may even have been the case that Paul enjoyed Christ more when he was abased than when he was abounding. Perhaps he enjoyed more of Christ when he was poor than when he was rich. This, however, is my understanding. Perhaps Paul would say, "No, I enjoy Christ equally when I am abased and when I am

abounding. It makes no difference to me whether I am rich or poor, high or low. The enjoyment of Christ is the same." Even though the enjoyment might be the same, the taste might still be different. Whether or not there was any difference in enjoyment or in taste, it is certain that Paul had learned the secret.

COUNTERACTING ANXIETY

If we have learned the secret, we shall know how to counteract anxiety. If you are in poverty, there is no need for you to be anxious or to worry. The Lord is still at hand, and He will take care of you. By nature, we are given to worry, to anxiety. This is true as much of the rich as it is of the poor. Those who are poor have their particular worries, and those who are rich have theirs. Only those who are truly in Christ in their experience and who are inwardly empowered by Him have no need to worry or to be anxious.

We have pointed out that when the church at Philippi did not have the opportunity to supply Paul, he was in want. He was humiliated and abased. Do you think that during that time of abasement Paul was worrying? We may have the ground to answer this question with both a yes and a no. On the one hand, we can say that Paul was not worried, for he tells us that he had learned the secret both to be abased and to abound. On the other hand, there is an implication that, in referring to his situation, he must have had some human feeling of worry or anxiety. If Paul did not have any worry, why then did he refer to his situation? When he was in want, he must have had some feeling about it. Otherwise, he would not have told the Philippians that he rejoiced in the Lord greatly that "at length" they had caused their thinking for him to blossom anew. This positive word implies that, prior to receiving the supply through Epaphroditus, Paul was concerned. It seems as if Paul was saying, "Your thinking for me has blossomed anew. For a period of time, you may have forgotten me and did not care for me. Your thinking concerning me passed through a time of winter. But now I rejoice that your thinking for me has blossomed anew."

If Paul did not have any feelings of worry or anxiety, why would he find it necessary to write such things in his Epistle to the Philippians? As a human being, Paul did undergo suffering with respect to material needs. Paul was not an angel, and he was not like a lifeless statue without feelings. No doubt, he had learned the secret of sufficiency in Christ. When he was in want and was tempted to worry about his situation, he applied this secret. Then, in his experience, this secret eliminated his worry. Therefore, he could have the boldness to testify that he knew both how to be abased and how to abound. The very fact that Paul knew how to be abased indicates that he experienced feelings of abasement. He knew what it was to have worry and anxiety in times of suffering. But at those times he applied the secret of the indwelling Christ. He applied the very Christ in whom he could be found. This Christ is real, living, near, available, and prevailing. This was the Christ who was Paul's secret.

Using a Stoic term, Paul could say that he had learned, in whatever circumstances he was, to be content. Although Paul used a Stoic word, he was by no means a Stoic. On the contrary, he was a person in Christ, and he experienced Christ and applied Him in all circumstances. Paul could be content not because he had been instructed by the Stoics, but because he applied the very Christ in whom he lived and in whom he remained. Again I say, this Christ became Paul's secret.

DAY AND NIGHT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In the Christian life we experience both night and day. According to Genesis 1, night comes before day. When Paul was abased, he was in the night, and when he was abounding, he was in the day. Just as day follows night, night in turn will follow day. This means that after the night of abasement came the day of abounding. Paul realized, however, that this day would eventually be followed by another night. We cannot change the principle of God's universe. In the universe there is night and day, day and night.

The Christian life does not stay on one level; it has many ups and downs. It is normal to be up and down, down and up. It is not normal to remain on one level and not experience ups or downs. Likewise, it is not normal to experience day and not night. Whose spiritual day is two hundred hours long? I do not have such days. I have nights as well as days, downs as well as ups. However, our account should be balanced: the ups should equal the downs, and the debit should equal the credit. When we have such a balance in our experience, we are normal.

According to the Lord's sovereign arrangement, we need both the ups and downs in order to experience Christ. I thank the Lord for all the valleys through which He has taken me. But with the valleys, there have also been hills. The Christian life is not one vast plain; it is a land with many hills and valleys. It is by the hills and valleys that we experience Christ.

Young people, do not dream that your life will be level and plain. On the contrary, you will face many valleys and many hills. You will encounter all kinds of circumstances. But in these circumstances you may apply Christ as your secret and experience Him. It is crucial that we learn to apply Christ.

IN EVERYTHING AND IN ALL THINGS

Earlier we pointed out that in verse 12 Paul uses the puzzling expression "in everything and in all things." What is the difference between "everything" and "all things"? We experience one thing at a time. We cannot experience all things at once. Therefore, according to our experience in time, it is everything. But after a long period of experiences has gone by, the everything becomes all things.

We need to recall that the book of Philippians was written according to experience. In time we experience one thing after another. This fact is denoted by the word "everything." But after a prolonged period of experience,

the everything becomes all things. The words "in everything" refer to a particular time when we experience a certain thing of the Lord. The words "all things" refer to a broad range of experiences over a period of time. Paul could say that both on a particular occasion and on all occasions, both at a certain time and throughout the course of his life, he had learned the secret. Paul experienced Christ moment by moment. On the one hand, he experienced Christ in particular things at particular times. On the other hand, he experienced Christ in all things and at all times.

What a blessing it is to receive such a word concerning the experience of Christ! I hope that the young people especially will realize how blessed they are and will pray, "Lord, even in my youth I desire to seek You, pursue You, and experience You in the way presented in the book of Philippians. As far as the normal experience and enjoyment of Christ are concerned, I want to be today's Paul. I do not seek to be a great apostle, evangelist, or a worker for Christ. But I do desire to be a normal Christian experiencing You and enjoying You in everything day by day, even in all things, for my whole life." May we all aspire to enjoy Christ to such an extent.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY

THE BELIEVERS' FELLOWSHIP IN THE APOSTLE'S NEED

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:10, 14-20

In this message we shall consider the believers' fellowship in the apostle's need. In their giving, many Christians do not have fellowship. By fellowship we do not simply mean communication or mutual participation. Fellowship also involves the ministering of life. When we have fellowship with one another, we minister life to one another. When many Christians give something as a gift, they do not have the deep sense that in this transaction there is the ministry of life. But if we pray-read the verses listed above, we shall touch the ministry of life, both from the side of the apostle and also from the side of the believers who sent a gift to him. No doubt, the saints in Philippi not only sent the material supply to Paul, but also ministered life to him. Thus, between the two parties, the apostle and the believers, there was the fellowship of life and the mutual ministry of life. It is important that we learn to give in such a fellowship of life and ministry of life.

I. THE APOSTLE REJOICING IN THE LORD FOR THE BELIEVERS' RENEWED CONCERN

In 4:10 Paul says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you caused your thinking for me to blossom anew." It might have been circumstances which kept the Philippian believers from continuing to send the material supply to Paul. When they sent a gift with Epaphroditus, Paul considered this the blossoming again of their thinking for him. According to Paul's feeling, the sending of a gift with Epaphroditus was the blossoming again of their concern for him.

The words "blossom anew" are a beautiful expression, rich in their implication. How can something blossom without life? Paul's use of the word blossom implies that the believers' thought of him was a matter of life, something that expressed life. Furthermore, "blossom anew" implies that the believers' concern for Paul had been dormant for a time, having passed through a winter season. For a plant to blossom anew requires that it undergo a period of withering or dormancy during the winter season. This winter season, during which the saints lacked the opportunity to care for Paul, was a time of suffering for him. But this suffering afforded him the opportunity to experience Christ in a richer way.

II. THE BELIEVERS' THINKING FOR THE APOSTLE

In 4:10 Paul also says to the Philippians, "You did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity." These words show Paul's experience and maturity. There were times that he rebuked the saints. For example, in writing to the Corinthians he rebuked them and asked if they wanted him to come with a rod (1 Cor. 4:21). In writing to the Philippians, however, he speaks in a very positive way, telling them that at length they caused their thinking for him to blossom anew, that they indeed did take thought, but lacked opportunity.

As we have indicated, the words "blossom anew," a literal translation of the Greek, imply that the giving of material things is a matter of life and of the ministry of life. If this were not so, Paul would not have used such an expression.

We must pay careful attention to the word blossom. This word implies that our giving of material things to any church, to any servant of the Lord, and to any of the saints must be something living that is able to blossom. This fellowship involves more than participation; it involves the circulation of the current of life. According to the Bible, fellowship always comes from life. First John 1:2 and 3

reveal that fellowship issues from life. The source of fellowship is life. For this reason, in Philippians 4:10 Paul uses the word blossom, and in verse 14, the word fellowship: "Nevertheless you did well to have fellowship with me in my affliction." It seems as if Paul is saying, "You ministered life to me and helped to sustain me in my imprisonment. When I was suffering, you helped me by ministering life to me. Surely you will receive a supply of life in return."

The fellowship in life can be illustrated by the circulation of blood in the human body. On the one hand, as the blood circulates, it flows out; on the other hand, it returns. In like manner, our fellowship in life always has a going out with a return. Any outflow without a corresponding inflow is not true fellowship. Fellowship always involves circulation. The life goes out, and the life also returns. The life goes with a supply to the other party, and then it comes back with a supply from this party. Whenever we give material things under the leading of the Lord, we should experience such a fellowship in life. There should be the blossoming and the mutual supply of life.

The fellowship the believers in Philippi had with Paul was for the furtherance of the gospel (1:5). Their sending of the supply of material things was for the furtherance of the gospel. As we have pointed out, the gospel here equals God's move on earth for His economy. The gospel includes not only the good news of salvation, redemption, forgiveness, justification, and eternal life. Especially in a book like Philippians, the gospel signifies the move of God in His economy. Therefore, fellowship, even in the sending of a material supply, is for the furtherance of God's move in His economy.

III. THE APOSTLE'S REMEMBRANCE OF THE BELIEVERS' SUPPLY IN THE PAST

In 4:15 and 16 Paul refers to those times in the past when the believers in Philippi supplied him materially. Then in verse 17 Paul goes on to say, "Not that I seek the

gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your account." Why does Paul refer to their giving in the past? Surely this was not written by accident, for Paul would not write anything without a purpose. Whatever he wrote was with a purpose and according to a burden. The secret to understanding Paul's purpose in these verses is in the word account (vv. 15, 17). The Philippian believers' supply of material things to the apostle opened an account with him. In verse 17 Paul refers to the account opened in verse 15.

In the Bible we have a revelation of the heavenly banking system. In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus speaks of making a deposit in our spiritual bank account. According to His word, we need to make deposits into our account in the heavens. In Matthew 6, of course, the word account is not used. In this matter also, the revelation in the Bible is progressive. Hence, in the Epistle to the Philippians Paul deliberately uses the word account in referring to the heavenly banking system.

In 4:15 Paul says, "And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I went out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the account of giving and receiving but you only." This verse indicates that the church in Philippi was unique in opening an account with Paul. With this account there is the side of giving, and the other side of receiving. Here we have a double entry account, an account of both giving and receiving. To be sure, in the account opened with Paul, the Philippian believers gave a great deal. The church in Philippi had opened an account to care for the needs of the apostle. This account, reflected in verse 15, was kept in the heavenly bank. They sent gifts to Paul, and in return they received God's repayment.

Paul speaks of this in verse 19: "And my God shall fill every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." In the apostle's experience, he had the conviction and assurance that God was his God through his being one with Him. Since he considered the Philippians' material gift to him a sacrifice to God, he assuredly

believed that God, who was one with him and who was his God, would richly repay the Philippians. On behalf of God, the believers sent something to God's servant. For this, God would be sure to pay them back. He would not owe the believers anything. The heavenly account would enter both a credit and a debit for the Philippian believers.

Which side of the ledger do you think would be bigger--the debit side or the credit side, the giving side or the receiving side? It is always the receiving side which is greater. For example, on behalf of God you may give ten dollars, but God may repay you a thousand dollars, that is, a hundredfold. Thus, in your account you have a balance of nine-hundred ninety dollars. This indicates that you are not actually the giver; God is the One who gives. Would you not like to have such an account? No earthly bank account can compare with it. However, if you open such an account with the intention of enriching yourself, God's repayment may not be given to you in this age. Rather, He may wait until your greediness has been dealt with before He repays you.

Although the Philippians had opened an account with Paul and even in Thessalonica had sent "both once and again" to his need, there was a period of time when no transactions took place. For this reason, Paul referred to the believers' giving in the past. He expected that the transactions would not cease, but that there would be a continual giving and receiving. As Paul says in verse 17, he did not seek the gift, but the fruit which increases to the believers' account. This refers to the increase on the credit side. In these verses Paul was encouraging the believers to keep their account active, to have no gaps in the giving and receiving. Then there would be fruit which increased to the believers' account.

IV. THE PHILIPPIANS' SUPPLY TO THE APOSTLE THROUGH EPAPHRODITUS

In verse 18 Paul continues, "But I have all things and abound; I have been filled, receiving from Epaphroditus the

things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." The "things from you" were the material things given as a supply to the apostle. Receiving these things, Paul could say that he was fully supplied. He regarded the things sent to him as "a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." The Greek term rendered "fragrant odor" is the same as that used as sweet-smelling savor in Ephesians 5:2. It is a fragrant odor of sacrifices offered to God (Gen. 8:21). The Philippians' material gift to supply the apostle's need was considered by him a sacrifice to God, acceptable and well-pleasing (Heb. 13:16). Paul indicates in his appreciation that what the Philippians did to him was actually done to God. This implies his assurance that he was one with God and that his work was by God and for God.

In verse 19 Paul says that his God will abundantly repay the believers. In his experience Paul had the conviction and assurance that God was his God. He could say, "And my God shall fill every need of yours." God was Paul's God because Paul was one with Him. Thus, Paul regarded the material gift sent to him from the Philippian believers as a sacrifice to God. Furthermore, he believed with assurance that God would richly repay them. Here we see that whenever we receive a gift, we need to have the assurance that this gift is presented not only to us, but also to God. Then we need to have the conviction that God will repay the one who gives this gift. In His repayment, God will fill every need of the giver, fully supplying that one and satisfying him.

Paul told the Philippians that God would fill every need of theirs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Because the Philippians cared for God's sent one, God would care for their every need. Furthermore, Paul indicates that God supplies our need according to His riches, not according to our needs. His riches exceed our needs.

The phrase "in glory" in verse 19 requires careful consideration. This phrase modifies fill; it does not modify "His riches." Glory is the expression of God; it is God

expressed in splendor. God's rich supply to the believers, who are His children, expresses God and bears the glory of God. The apostle assured the Philippians that God would abundantly supply all their needs so as to bring them into His glory.

Here Paul is not saying that God's riches are the riches of glory. Rather, he is testifying that God's repayment to the giver is in glory. In glory God will fill every need of the Philippians. In doing so, He will show forth the splendor of His glory and bring the givers into this glory.

At this point let me share from my experience how God meets our needs in glory according to His riches. In January 1937 I received a cable from Brother Nee to come immediately to Shanghai to a very important conference of co-workers. After that conference, I visited a number of cities before returning home in the north of China. However, I had very little money with me to cover my travel expenses. Moreover, because the message to come to Shanghai was urgent, I had to leave my wife and children at home. On the one hand, I had very little money to take with me on the train. On the other hand, my wife had very little at home to take care of the needs of the family. However, we both trusted in the Lord. Not long after I left home, my wife's supply of money was exhausted. Having learned the lesson not to tell others of the need, she called the oldest child and prayed together with her concerning the need. Later that day, in the evening, an elderly sister came to visit my wife, telling her that the Lord had stirred within her to give a certain amount of money to my wife. This elderly sister did not know that I was away from home and that my family was in need. When that sister departed, my wife wept before the Lord. This was the experience on her side.

Let me now share the experience on my side. After that conference in Shanghai, I went to Nanking, where I was ministering in some meetings. Suddenly the news came that the wife of a particular co-worker was seriously ill and that he needed to return home immediately to care for her.

After I heard the news, something within told me to give this brother a certain amount of money. I hesitated, realizing that I needed this money for a train ticket. I wondered how I would be able to buy the ticket if I gave this money to the brother. But I could not argue with the Lord. I knew that I could not have peace unless I obeyed Him and gave that money to the brother. The Lord impressed me not to trust in the amount of money I had, but to trust only in Him. Telling the Lord that I trusted Him, I proceeded to give the money to the brother. As a result, on the one hand, my burden was gone, but, on the other hand, I became anxious concerning how I would purchase the train ticket. Later that day, in the evening after the meeting, I received a gift from someone. That gift was several times the amount I had given to the brother. When I opened the envelope and saw the amount of the gift, I was greatly surprised. Of course, my anxiety disappeared, but in its place was a feeling of shame. I felt so ashamed that I found it difficult even to give thanks to the Lord. In repaying me several times what I had given to the brother, the Lord acted in glory according to His riches. Yes, I did feel shame at first, but what the Lord did eventually brought me into His glory and strengthened me. Truly the Lord's repayment of those who make deposits into the heavenly account is always according to His riches and in glory.

Philippians 4:19 indicates that the Lord's repayment is also "in Christ Jesus." The phrase "in Christ Jesus" also modifies fill. Christ is the all-inclusive One as the base, the element, the sphere, and the channel in which and by which God cares for His people according to His riches and in glory.

Again and again we have pointed out that the book of Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. Whatever is written here must be related to the experience of Christ. If we do not apply this principle to the matter of giving and receiving, we shall not have a full understanding of what Paul says concerning giving and receiving in 4:10, 14-20. In these verses Paul speaks of blossoming, fellowship, a

sacrifice to God, a sweet odor, and God supplying every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. All these terms and expressions indicate that even the giving and receiving of material things is intimately related to the experience of Christ. On our side, it is related to life; on God's side, it is related to His glory. We give and receive in the way of life, in the fellowship of life. When we do this, there will be the blossoming in life, the sign that life is flourishing, that there is a normal circulation of life in the Body of Christ. The issue of this giving and receiving in the fellowship of life is the glory of God.

Among most Christians today, there is no trace of such blossoming, fellowship, sacrifice, and glory. But in Paul's writing concerning the giving and receiving of material things, he uses such expressions as blossom, fellowship, sweet odor, sacrifice to God, according to His riches, and in glory. All this points to the experience of Christ. No doubt, when those saints in Philippi sent material gifts to Paul, they did so in life and with Christ. Thus, when Paul received their gifts, he enjoyed the ministry of life and comfort. Paul responded to the Philippians by writing them this Epistle. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians ministered life not only to them, but to countless believers throughout the centuries. If we had been in Philippi receiving this Epistle, we might have read it more than a hundred times.

In giving to the apostle, the believers participated in the ministry of life. Paul's answer upon receiving their gift was also a ministry of life, both to the believers in Philippi and to all the saints who read this portion of the Word. By this we see that even the giving and receiving of material gifts can become a rich experience of Christ which issues in the glorification of God. God comes in to visit both the ones who give and the one who receives in such a way as to express His splendor, His glory. Thus, the fellowship in the matters of giving and receiving not only ministers life to all concerned, but also brings all parties into the glory of God.

Philippians 4:19 and 20 are composed in a wonderful

way, in a way that is subjective, intimate, and glorious. In verse 19 Paul tells the saints that his "God shall fill every need of yours." What they gave to Paul was actually received by God. Thus, it was not Paul who was in debt to them, but God. Hence, God was obligated to pay back the believers. God and Paul were in partnership. Paul was one with God in God's heavenly enterprise. God's economy is His heavenly corporation. In this corporation God and Paul were partners. For this reason, when the Philippian believers gave something to Paul, it was God who became indebted to them. Paul knew that God would repay them.

It is important for us to realize, however, that it is only when we give in Christ that God becomes indebted to us. If we do not present our gifts in Christ, God will not be obligated to repay us. But whenever in Christ we give something to the church, to the needy saints, or to the Lord's work in His recovery, God becomes indebted to us. The reason for His indebtedness is that by giving something in Christ to the church, the saints, or the work, we are actually giving to God Himself and to His concern, to His economy.

Because Paul was one with God and could speak of Him as "my God," he could tell the believers that God would fill every need of theirs according to His riches. Paul did not have anything with which to repay the saints. However, God would repay them, not according to what they gave Him, but according to His riches. Furthermore, He might even repay them a hundredfold.

As we have pointed out, God will also fill our needs in glory and in Christ Jesus. Glory is God expressed in His splendor to bring us into the enjoyment of His expression. When God repays us in glory, He brings us into His splendor. I strongly encourage you to experience Christ in this way. Everyone who lives Christ and magnifies Him should have the experience of giving something to God for His interests and of being repaid by Him according to His riches and in glory, being brought into the enjoyment of His glorious expression in His splendor.

In verse 19 the word fill is modified by three phrases: first, "according to His riches"; second, "in glory"; and third, "in Christ Jesus." As the all-inclusive One, Christ is the element, realm, channel, and atmosphere of God's repayment.

The matter of giving and receiving in the way described in Philippians 4 is not a matter of natural generosity, of donating something out of a willingness to sacrifice. No, what is described here is an actual experience of Christ. If we give according to Paul's word, we give not in ourselves, but in Christ. When our gift is presented in Christ and through Christ, it becomes something of life that blossoms. Furthermore, it becomes a sweet odor, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. This will cause God's glory to be manifested to us. This is the experience of Christ in giving material things for the Lord's interest.

V. GLORY TO OUR GOD AND FATHER FOREVER AND EVER

Paul concludes this portion of Philippians with the words, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (v. 20). Notice that in this verse Paul speaks of "our God and Father." This indicates that God is not only the apostle's God, but also the believers' God. If Paul had not inserted the possessive pronoun our, there would not have been anything wrong. The use of this pronoun, however, is significant, for it indicates that God is our God.

To our God and Father is the glory forever and ever. As we have indicated, glory is God expressed in His splendor and excellency for our appreciation. For glory to be to God means that God is expressed and praised in this way.

The expression of God in His splendor may be illustrated by the blossoming of a carnation flower. When a carnation blossoms, it is glorified; the blossom brings out all the glory of the carnation flower. Thus, its blossoming is its glorification. In like manner, when we give something in Christ to God for God's interest, this brings in God's glory,

not only for our enjoyment, but also for God's glorification. Therefore, God is glorified, and we gain enjoyment. We enjoy the glorification of God. If we have never enjoyed Christ and experienced Him in giving material things for God's interest, we shall not be able to appreciate the splendor or the excellency of God's expression in this way.

According to verse 20, God is expressed in splendor and then praised by the believers. When we give material things in Christ for God's interest, life is ministered to the Body, and God's glory is brought in. As God's glory is manifested, we appreciate His splendor and excellency. This appreciation is both an enjoyment and an experience. Without such an experience we cannot have this kind of appreciation. God is expressed in His splendor and excellency for our appreciation and satisfaction. On the part of the believers in Philippi, this brought in the full supply; on the part of Paul in Rome, it brought in full satisfaction. Therefore, the result of the believers' fellowship in the apostle's need is life and glory. Life is supplied to man, and God is glorified.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

PAUL'S GREETINGS AND HIS BLESSING

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:21-23

In the closing verses of chapter four Paul extends a brief word of greetings (vv. 21-22) and blessing (v. 23).

I. GREETINGS

A. The Apostle Greeting Every Saint in Christ

In verse 20 Paul exclaims, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." Then in verse 21 he goes on to say, "Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you." Paul's words of greeting here are related to what he says in verse 20 about glory to our God and Father. This indicates that he greeted the saints with the very weight of glory spoken of in verse 20.

When we send greetings to others, or ask others to greet certain ones on our behalf, we may greet them with our best regards or with our love. However, Paul did not greet the saints in Philippi in a superficial way, merely with his best regards or with his love. I believe that what was within him as he wrote this word of greeting was God's rich supply and glory. Paul had just written, "And my God shall fill every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (v. 19). No doubt this was the substance of his greetings to the saints. He wanted every saint to be greeted in Christ in this way.

B. The Brothers Who Were with the Apostle Greeting the Saints

In verse 21 Paul also says, "The brothers who are with

me greet you." The brothers who were with Paul certainly must have greeted the saints in the same way Paul did. This means that they greeted the believers not with their best regards, but with the assurance of God's repayment and with His glory.

We may even say that Paul and those with him greeted the saints in Christ Jesus with the entire contents of the whole book of Philippians. This means that Paul and the others greeted them with all the words in this book. The very fact that Paul simply said to greet every saint in Christ, not specifying in what way the saints should be greeted, implies that he greeted them with all the points covered in this Epistle. Hence, in verse 21 Paul was actually saying, "Greet every saint in Christ according to all the things I have written in this Epistle." Any saint who would not receive all these points could not have a share in Paul's greeting. Those who would participate in his greeting must first enjoy all the points covered in this Epistle. These points were Paul's best regards sent to them. Paul's best regards to the saints were that they would live Christ, magnify Christ, take Christ as their pattern, hold forth Christ, count all things loss in order to gain Christ and be found in Him, pursue Christ, lay hold of Christ, and do all things in Christ. Seen in the context of the whole book, Paul greeted every saint with all the profound aspects of the experience of Christ.

A further indication that this was Paul's concept in sending greetings to the saints is that in verse 21 he uses the expression "in Christ Jesus." This phrase implies the contents of the whole book, for, as we have pointed out again and again, this book deals with the experience of Christ and in Christ. Paul wanted the saints to be greeted in the very Christ whom we live, magnify, take as our pattern, hold forth as the word of life, and pursue. In reading verse 21 we should be impressed not only with the words "every saint," but especially with the expression "every saint in Christ Jesus." Paul and those with him greeted the saints in Christ Jesus with the whole contents of the book of Philippians.

C. All the Saints in Rome, Especially Those of Caesar's Household, Greeting the Saints in Philippi

In verse 22 Paul continues, "All the saints greet you, and especially those of Caesar's household." Caesar's household included all who were attached to the palace of Nero. Some of these were converted through contact with Paul and became believers in Christ in Rome.

The expression "those of Caesar's household" is both puzzling and encouraging. It is puzzling because we are not altogether sure to whom it refers; it is encouraging because it shows the furtherance of the gospel. The gospel had spread even into the household of Caesar Nero. God's move in His economy had gained even some of Caesar's household. Many commentators do not have the boldness to say that certain relatives of Nero were actually saved. Rather, for the most part, they claim that "Caesar's household" refers to Nero's royal guard, for, according to the custom of the time, the royal guard was counted as part of Caesar's household. We need to be clear that this is simply an interpretation. In verse 22 Paul does not say "the royal guard"; he says "Caesar's household." Based upon his use of the word household, we believe that certain members of Nero's family actually were saved. What a tremendous victory! This indicates how worthwhile it is to have fellowship which results in the furtherance of the gospel, in the spread of God's move on earth for His economy.

It is significant that in writing to the Philippians Paul deliberately refers to "those of Caesar's household." I believe that Paul had fellowship with these ones, perhaps even telling them that he was writing a letter to the believers in Philippi. Then those brothers and sisters must have asked Paul to send their greetings to the saints in Philippi. This was the reason Paul could say, "All the saints greet you, and *especially* those of Caesar's household."

II. BLESSING

A. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

In his word of blessing Paul says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Grace is God in Christ as our supply and enjoyment conveyed to us and realized through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (1:19). To experience Christ as Paul did we need this grace.

Throughout the years, we have given a number of definitions of grace. Now we see that, in brief, grace is God Himself in Christ as our life supply and enjoyment. This supply and enjoyment is conveyed to us by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and it is realized by us through this Spirit. When Paul says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit," he means that the supply and enjoyment of the Triune God by and through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ should be with us. When we have such a supply, we enjoy and experience the Triune God all day long.

B. With Our Spirit

According to Paul's word in verse 23, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit. The spirit here is our regenerated spirit indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. It is in this spirit of ours that we enjoy Christ and experience Him as Paul did.

Many Christians today have missed the mark of the regenerated spirit. They speak much about the Holy Spirit, but not of the human spirit. Because of this neglect of the regenerated human spirit, there is very little experience of Christ or enjoyment of the all-inclusive grace.

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (lit.). Love is the source, grace is the course, and fellowship is the flow. Here we have Christ the Son, God the Father, and the Spirit--the enjoyment of the Triune God. Furthermore, in this verse

we have the dispensing of the Triune God into us as love, grace, and fellowship. However, these three are actually one; they are all related to the enjoyment of the Triune God. By means of love as the source, grace as the course, and fellowship as the flow, the Triune God dispenses Himself into our being to become our enjoyment. This is the grace which is with our spirit. How wonderful that the Triune God as the all-inclusive Spirit now indwells our spirit! This marvelous enjoyment is with our spirit.

If we would enjoy the grace which is with our spirit, we need to exercise our spirit. The way to exercise the spirit is to pray, pray-read the Word, and call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Whenever we call on the Lord Jesus or pray to God the Father, we automatically exercise our spirit. This is very different, however, from praying in a religious, formal manner. That kind of prayer does not require the exercise of the spirit, but simply exercises the mentality. In contrast, when we call on the Lord, pray in a proper way, and pray-read the Word, we truly exercise our spirit. Exercising our spirit in this way is the secret to enjoying the grace which is with our spirit. As one who has been reading the Bible and studying it for more than fifty years, I can testify that nothing brings me into more enjoyment of the Triune God than pray-reading the Word. Oh, we all need more exercise of the spirit to enjoy the Lord!

We know that man has three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. Bodily exercise is necessary and profitable. When I exercise physically, I sleep better at night. It is hardly necessary to speak of the exercise of the soul, especially of the mind, since this is emphasized so much in the schools. But there is a great need to emphasize the need to exercise the spirit.

The church is a spiritual gymnasium where we can exercise our spirit. The more we exercise the spirit, the more we shall be healthy and strong in our entire being. Our physical body will be healthy, our mind will be sober and keen, and our spirit will be energized. I can testify that

day by day I have bodily exercise, psychological exercise, and spiritual exercise. Again I say, the exercise of the spirit is the secret, the unique way, to participate in the very grace which is the Triune God as the all-inclusive Spirit. As we enjoy Him, we become healthy and strong in our spirit and in our whole being.

I regret to say that today many Christians are too proud to enjoy the Lord by calling on His name or by pray-reading the Word. We thank God that, in His mercy, He has brought a good number of us into the enjoyment of the Triune God through the exercise of the spirit by prayer, pray-reading, and calling on the dear and excellent name of the Lord Jesus. In this way we have the church life full of rejoicing, full of the enjoyment of the Triune God.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

GRACE, SALVATION, THE SPIRIT, AND CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:7b, 19-21a

In this message we shall consider four very important terms used by Paul in Philippians: grace, salvation, the Spirit, and Christ. In 1:7 Paul tells the Philippians, "Both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all partakers of my grace" (lit.). Notice that here Paul speaks of "my grace." Then in verse 19 he goes on to say, "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." In this verse Paul speaks of salvation and of the Spirit. Then in verses 20 and 21 he says, "Even now Christ shall be magnified in my body...For to me to live is Christ."

In these verses grace, salvation, the Spirit, and Christ are not defined in a doctrinal way. Rather, they are related to experience. When Paul says "my grace," he is referring to grace in his experience. Likewise, when he tells us that for him this will turn out to salvation, he is not speaking of a mere objective salvation, a doctrinal salvation, but of a very experiential salvation. Furthermore, when he mentions the Spirit, he is surely speaking of the Spirit in his experience. Certainly his word about magnifying Christ and living Him is very subjective and experiential. In verses 20 and 21 we do not have an objective Christ, but the subjective Christ in Paul's living.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF SALVATION

Unfortunately, many Christians have the habit of

taking things for granted in their reading of the Bible. Familiar with such terms as grace, salvation, the Spirit, and Christ, they may assume that they understand them. However, if they are asked to explain these things, they may have difficulty. For example, what does Paul mean by "my grace"? Furthermore, what does Paul mean by "my salvation" (KJV)? When Paul wrote this Epistle, he had been saved for many years and had even become an apostle. Why then does he indicate that he still needs salvation? Since we are already saved, why do we still need to be saved? What did Paul mean by saying that all that was happening to him, persecution, imprisonment, and even the dissenting preaching out of rivalry, would turn out for him to salvation? What kind of salvation is he talking about?

It would not at all be accurate to try to answer this question by asserting that salvation is not complete. Rather, we need to point out that, according to the Bible, there is more than one kind of salvation. God's salvation rescues us from His condemnation. As sinners, we were condemned by the righteous God according to His righteous law. Thus, we were in need of salvation. Praise the Lord that we have been saved from God's condemnation by the redemption of Christ! Furthermore, as sinners, we were under the usurping hand of Satan and under the power of death, destined for hell. Therefore, we needed a salvation that could save us from hell. However, in addition to being saved from God's condemnation and from hell, we also need other kinds of salvation. For example, we need to be saved from our temper. Young and old alike need to be delivered from a bad temper. Furthermore, husbands and wives need to experience salvation in their married life. The wives need a certain kind of salvation, and the husbands need another kind of salvation, for both face different situations and problems. By these examples we can see that there is more than one kind of salvation presented in the Bible. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he needed a certain kind of salvation.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE SALVATION NEEDED BY PAUL

The kind of salvation we need depends on our situation. If we are under God's judgment, we need a salvation that rescues us from this. If we are under Satan's hand, we need a salvation appropriate to that situation. Likewise, if we are troubled by our temper or face difficulties in our married life, we need still further kinds of salvation. Because Paul was a prisoner, he needed a salvation that applied to his situation in prison. Paul, a Jew, was not a prisoner in an ordinary jail; he was a prisoner of Caesar's royal guard, the praetorium. Paul's case was extraordinary. He had not committed any crime. His imprisonment was due to the fact that he preached Christ. Because he preached Christ, Paul was arrested and eventually imprisoned. At least part of the time each day, he was chained to a guard. No doubt, Paul suffered there in prison. He must have been despised and treated with contempt. To be sure, he needed a specific kind of salvation. By this I do not mean that what he needed was release from prison. No, he needed to experience salvation there in prison.

He says in verse 20, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death." Here we see that Paul's expectation was that he would not be put to shame. Suppose Paul wept over his situation. Would not that have been a shame? His weeping would have indicated that he was defeated, that he had lost his faith, confidence, and trust in the Lord. Or suppose that Paul became angry with the jailer and argued with him. This also would have been a shame. However, if Paul could rejoice no matter how he was treated, that would be a glory. In order to maintain such a victorious standing as an apostle of Christ, Paul needed a particular kind of salvation.

In verse 20 we see two aspects of the salvation needed by Paul. The first aspect was that Paul would not be put to shame in anything; the second, that Christ would be magnified in Paul's body. Paul expected that his situation

would turn out to his salvation so that in nothing he would be put to shame, but that Christ would be magnified in his body. Here Paul seems to be saying, "I need salvation so that I shall not be put to shame by suffering or persecution. Instead, Christ my Lord will be magnified in my body."

PAUL'S GRACE AND OURS

Let us now consider the meaning of the words "my grace." If we consider this expression in the context of the entire book of Philippians, we shall see that the grace which was Paul's grace was nothing less than the Triune God whom Paul enjoyed and experienced and of whom Paul was a partaker. Thus, Paul's grace was not God in an objective way; it was God subjectively and experientially, the Triune God processed to be his portion. Paul truly enjoyed and experienced the processed Triune God. He was rich in his experience of the Father, Son, and Spirit. This processed Triune God was Paul's grace.

We are familiar with the hymn "Amazing Grace." Although this is a good hymn, it does not speak of the Triune God as our portion for our enjoyment. When this hymn was written, the experiential knowledge of God among the Lord's people had not come to this point. Even as recent as fifty years ago, Christians did not have the understanding of grace as the Triune God experienced and enjoyed by us. But standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, we have come to know that grace is far more than merely unmerited favor. Grace is the Triune God--the Father, the Son, and the Spirit--processed for our experience and enjoyment.

Today our Triune God is no longer the unprocessed God, or the "raw" God. Rather, He has been processed through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Those with a background in systematic theology may be troubled by the expressions "processed God" and "raw God." They may

argue that in the Bible we cannot find such terms. Although these terms are not used, the facts are there. In like manner, we cannot find the terms "Trinity" and "Triune God" in the Bible. However, there is no doubt that the Bible reveals the fact that God is triune. Likewise, we cannot deny that the incarnation was a process. Furthermore, the crucifixion, which led to resurrection, and the resurrection, which led to ascension, were also steps in God's process. God has passed through a process not only to redeem us, but also to make it possible for us to enjoy Him as grace. Today the One we enjoy as our grace is the Triune God who has passed through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. As such a One, He is ready for us to take and enjoy.

John 1:17 says that the law was given through Moses, but grace came through Jesus Christ. When this grace becomes ours in our experience, we then enjoy the Triune God, and we can speak of my grace, our grace. Our grace is the very Triune God enjoyed by us.

Recently my wife and I were praying, thanking the Lord for all the enjoyment of Himself that He has given us. How good the Lord has been to us! We can testify that we have experienced Him and enjoyed Him very much. Because we have partaken of Him, He has truly become grace to us. This grace is now our grace.

In your experience do you not also have your grace? Perhaps you have experienced the Triune God as your grace in the church life and in your daily life. A brother may testify that even in helping to arrange the chairs in the meeting hall he experiences God as his grace. Also, a married sister may testify that in her life at home with her husband and children she experiences the Lord as her grace. It is very good to experience the Lord in this way and testify of it. But these situations can hardly be compared to what Paul faced in prison.

THE DEFENSE AND CONFIRMATION OF THE GOSPEL

Paul experienced God both in his imprisonment and in

the defense and confirmation of the gospel. In 1:7 Paul speaks of "the defense and confirmation of the gospel"; he does not here mention the preaching of the gospel. To preach the gospel is not unusual, but to defend the gospel and confirm it are extraordinary things. Paul defended the gospel, on the negative side, from perverting and distorting heresies, such as Judaism, dealt with in Galatians, and Gnosticism, dealt with in Colossians. Paul confirmed the gospel, on the positive side, with all the revelations of God's mysteries concerning Christ and the church as unveiled in Paul's Epistles. During Paul's time, the gospel had been perverted and distorted by Judaism and Greek philosophy. Because he defended the gospel, he was persecuted. Neither the Judaizers nor the Greek philosophers were happy with him. In addition, Paul confirmed the gospel. He made the goal of the gospel clear to people in a positive way.

The goal of the gospel is Christ and the church. Paul preached message after message telling people about God's economy. He taught that Christ is the mystery of God and that the church is the mystery of Christ. In this way, he confirmed the gospel by making the positive goal of the gospel clear to all who received it.

Today there is also the urgent need for the defense and confirmation of the gospel. Not many Christians are willing to speak concerning the church. As a result, even though they may preach the gospel, many do not know the goal of the gospel. Their goal in preaching the gospel is simply to save sinners, to win souls. Hence, there is the need for us to confirm the gospel by telling others of the goal of the gospel. If we do this, however, we shall meet opposition. Both the defense of the gospel and the confirmation of the gospel are difficult tasks and heavy burdens.

EXPERIENTIAL GRACE

Because of the defense and confirmation of the gospel, Paul was persecuted, arrested, and imprisoned. The

responsibility given to him to defend and confirm the gospel required a divine supply. It could not be carried out by ordinary means. Paul needed the divine strengthening and energizing. This divine strength and energy is the Triune God Himself. As Paul was defending the gospel and confirming it, God was with him to supply him. Furthermore, Paul was suffering persecution, mockery, and ridicule. No ordinary human being can bear such treatment without a special divine supply. But in the midst of imprisonment, Paul could enjoy God and experience Him. Eventually, this processed Triune God experienced by Paul became his grace. The Philippian believers were very blessed to partake of Paul's grace. This means that they partook of Paul's God, the very God he experienced.

Now we understand the meaning of the expression "my grace." This denotes the very God experienced, enjoyed, and partaken of by Paul. It is not objective grace; it is subjective, experiential grace. Such grace is very different from something defined simply as unmerited favor. As we have pointed out again and again, it is actually a living, divine Person, the Triune God, processed to become grace to us.

REJOICING IN THE LORD

The grace experienced by Paul became his salvation. Whatever Paul enjoyed of the Triune God became his salvation. Paul must certainly have been a patriotic Jew, one who loved his nation and intensely disliked Roman imperialism. Because of his preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, he became a prisoner under the control of the Roman imperialists. Actually, it was Paul's countrymen who had handed him over to the Romans. No doubt, as Paul was suffering persecution in prison, he was thinking about his work. Prior to his imprisonment, his work had been marvelous and powerful. It was spreading even in Europe. But now his work had ceased. Certain ones among his contemporaries, out of rivalry with him, were glad that Paul was in prison and restricted from carrying out his

work. If in the midst of such circumstances Paul wept, he would have been defeated and put to shame. However, we know from the book of Philippians that, instead of weeping, Paul rejoiced in the Lord. In this short book Paul speaks again and again of rejoicing. This indicates that when he was there in prison, he was rejoicing in the Lord. The guards did not hear him weeping; they could hear him rejoicing. In this, Paul experienced and enjoyed the Triune God as grace, and this grace became his salvation. Whatever happened to him turned out for his salvation.

When Paul was used of the Lord to bring those in Philippi to Christ, he was no doubt full of rejoicing. However, if Paul could rejoice only in that kind of environment but not in prison, he would not have been a true overcomer. Paul rejoiced not only when the work in Philippi was flourishing, but he also rejoiced in prison when his work for the Lord was restricted. In this we see real victory. This victory is the salvation which was Paul's salvation. Furthermore, as we have indicated, Paul's salvation was his grace, God Himself as his enjoyment. Therefore, Paul's grace was his salvation, and his salvation was the Triune God sustaining him in a most difficult environment. Such a salvation is not objective; it is very subjective and experiential. This is the reason that in the book of Philippians Paul does not speak of God in a theological way, nor in an objective doctrinal way, but in a direct, subjective, personal, experiential way. Paul could say, "My grace is nothing less than my God. God is my grace, and the Lord is my subjective, experiential salvation."

EXPERIENCING THE SPIRIT

The Triune God could become Paul's experiential salvation because God today is the Spirit. For this reason, in the context of speaking of salvation, Paul also mentions the Spirit.

If the Triune God is to be our experience and enjoyment, He must be the Spirit. The Spirit in 1:19 is

actually the very Triune God. John 7:39 says, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." In verse 37 the Lord Jesus had stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink." He also said that those who believed in Him would have rivers of living water flowing out of their innermost being (v. 38). According to verse 39, "This He said concerning the Spirit." The reason the Spirit was not yet was that Jesus was not yet glorified; that is, He had not yet been fully processed. But since the Lord Jesus has now been glorified, fully processed, the Spirit is here for us to enjoy. This Spirit is the very Triune God who has passed through a divine process to become available to us as our bountiful supply.

We can experience the Spirit simply by calling "O Lord Jesus." We testify from our experience that when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, we drink of the Spirit. As we sense freshness within when we breathe deeply in the open air in the morning, we also have an inner sense of freshness when we receive the Spirit by calling on the Lord Jesus.

Receiving the Spirit by calling on the Lord is not the practice of mysticism. No, it is a marvelous spiritual reality, so sweet, refreshing, and enjoyable. We would not have this experience by calling on the name of such persons as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Plato, or Confucius. But what a difference we sense when we say, "Lord Jesus, I love You!" This is not superstition or a mere psychological phenomenon; it is the exercise of our regenerated spirit to enjoy the Lord.

Praise the Lord that He is now in our spirit! Because our God is so subjective to us, He is with us wherever we may be. Simply by calling on Him we receive Him, enjoy Him, and experience Him. By calling on the Lord's name or by praying over even a few words in the Bible, we enjoy the Spirit with His bountiful supply. The Spirit is the One who actually becomes our salvation. We have pointed out that our salvation is our grace and that our grace is our enjoyment of God.

When we enjoy the Spirit and partake of Him, Christ comes forth and is magnified. On the one hand, we enjoy the Spirit; on the other hand, Christ is the One who is magnified. This is true both according to the Bible and according to our experience. When we call "Lord Jesus," we inwardly enjoy the Spirit. But as a result of the enjoyment of the Spirit, Christ is magnified. He becomes our expression.

In our experience, grace, salvation, the Spirit, and Christ actually are one. Our grace is our salvation; our salvation is the Spirit; and the Spirit is the magnified Christ. We may also say that the magnified Christ is the indwelling Spirit, that the indwelling Spirit is our salvation, and that our salvation is our grace, the Triune God whom we enjoy and experience.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST FOR MAGNIFYING CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-20; Exo. 30:23-30

In the foregoing message we considered four important terms: grace, salvation, the Spirit, and Christ. In this message we shall go on to consider the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ for magnifying Christ.

As we have pointed out, many Christians have the habit, perhaps unconsciously, of taking things for granted in reading the Bible. Because they are familiar with the words they read, they take them for granted and assume that they understand them. Not many have developed the habit of inquiring concerning the meaning of different words, terms, and phrases. For example, when we come across the expression "my grace," we should inquire of the Lord concerning its meaning. In like manner, in reading 1:19 we should ask why Paul speaks of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and not of the Holy Spirit nor of the Spirit of God. Why does Paul here speak of the bountiful supply of the Spirit? His use of the definite article here is emphatic. Christians often speak of the Holy Spirit or of the Spirit of God, but rarely of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We should not take 1:19 for granted, but ask why Paul uses a particular term for the Spirit.

Furthermore, in reading verse 20 we should ask why Paul uses the word magnify. Why does he not say here, "Christ shall be expressed"? Why does he say magnified instead of manifested? We all need to build up the habit of asking such questions when we read the Word.

If we develop this habit, in our reading of 1:21 we shall

ask why Paul says "to live is Christ." Why does he not say to behave is Christ, or to walk is Christ? Why does he use the word live? Instead of taking things for granted, we need to ask questions such as these.

A DAILY SALVATION

Philippians 1:18-21 is one long sentence. In this sentence the crucial points are in verses 19 and 20, where Paul says that in nothing he would be put to shame, but that Christ would be magnified in his body. Paul knew that his situation would turn out to be for him a particular kind of salvation, a daily, personal, and instant salvation. Like Paul, we have received eternal salvation. But in addition to this salvation, we still need a daily salvation, a salvation we can experience moment by moment. For example, perhaps a minute ago a brother was very kind to his wife. But now he is just the opposite in the way he deals with her; we may even say that his behavior is devilish. From our experience we know that one moment we may be living the life of a true saint, and the next moment our behavior is like that of a devil. The reason for this is that we lose for a time this personal, daily salvation. However, we may quickly turn to the Lord and continue to experience His salvation moment by moment.

The salvation of which Paul speaks in 1:19 is not eternal salvation; it is not salvation from God's judgment or from hell. On the contrary, it is a daily, continual salvation, a salvation that can be applied at every instant. Experiencing such a salvation, Paul expected that no matter what the circumstances, environment, or suffering may be, he would not be put to shame. Instead, Christ would be magnified in him.

Suppose in the meeting a brother prays in a very released way about living Christ and magnifying Him. However, if this brother, in the presence of guests invited for dinner, expresses unhappiness or anger toward his wife, he will be put to shame. Others will not see on his face the magnification of Christ. But suppose no matter

what the situation is at home, the brother's face is glowing with the Lord. That would be glorious, a true instance of Christ being magnified in the brother.

Whenever we fail to live Christ and magnify Him, we are put to shame. Paul's expectation in Philippians 1 was that his circumstances would turn out for his salvation so that in nothing he would be put to shame, but that Christ would be magnified in him. This was Paul's salvation.

Paul, a typical Jew, was imprisoned by the Roman imperialists. At least part of the time each day, he was chained to a guard. Furthermore, due to imprisonment, he was kept from his work for the Lord. No doubt, in that kind of environment it would be very difficult for anyone to have a shining face. It would be very easy to show sadness or discouragement through his facial expression. If Paul had shown such signs of sadness, he would have been put to shame. But he expected that he would not be put to shame in anything. Instead, the more he was mistreated, the more his face would shine with the Lord. Far from being put to shame, Paul would magnify Christ in his body. This was the salvation he expected to experience in prison.

A few times I have felt ashamed as a dinner guest in a brother's home. Even at the table, the brother lost his temper toward his wife. When that happened, I felt ashamed. The brother was lacking in God's instant salvation. Instead of salvation, there was shame.

In such a case there is definitely a shortage of Christ. However, the shortage is actually the lack of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. If we have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we shall experience instant and constant salvation. Then we shall not be put to shame in anything, but we shall magnify Christ in all things.

To be put to shame is to be defeated. If Paul's face expressed discouragement or sadness, that would have been a sign that he was defeated by the guards, persecution, mockery, and suffering. If that had been his condition, Paul would have been put to shame. But once

again I wish to point out that Paul declared that his situation would turn out for him to salvation. In nothing he would be put to shame, but Christ would be magnified in him.

THE SUPPLY OF THE BODY

In this message we come to the crucial point of how we can have this kind of salvation. Notice what Paul says in verse 19: "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Do not take this verse for granted. Rather, consider what is the significance of the expression "your petition." Many readers may think that this refers only to the prayers of the saints who had a loving concern for Paul. It is correct to say that here Paul is referring to the prayers of the saints on his behalf. Paul's word, however, implies much more than this. To understand the full significance of this phrase, we need to consider it in the light of verse 7, where Paul tells the saints that in the defense and confirmation of the gospel they are partakers of his grace. If we join verses 7 and 19 we shall see that the phrase "your petition" indicates the supply of the Body. Apparently Paul was in prison; actually he was in the Body. Imprisonment did not isolate him from the Body or cut him off from the supply of the Body. Paul had the clear sense within that he was in the Body and that the members of the Body were supplying him, supporting him, and standing with him.

It is worthy of note that in 1:19 Paul speaks first of the saints' petition, then of the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Why does he not mention the bountiful supply of the Spirit first? The reason Paul speaks of the supply of the Body before the bountiful supply of the Spirit is that the Spirit is upon the Body. Psalm 133 illustrates this: the ointment poured upon Aaron's head flowed down to the body. This portrays the fact that the ointment, the bountiful supply of the compound Spirit, is upon the Body. Paul realized that he was not the whole Body, but just a member of the Body. As a member, he needed the Body's supply. If the Body

would be exercised to supply him, the bountiful supply of the Spirit would come to him through the Body.

We may often ask a brother to pray for us. But even if he prays for us and we pray for him, this prayer may have little effect. The reason for this lack of effectiveness is that in praying we may stand apart from the Body. Whenever we stand apart from the Body as we pray, even our prayer will be dry, and our intercession will be ineffective. The anointing is not upon us individually; it is upon the Body.

Paul and the believers in Philippi were in the Body. Because the Body is universal, they were all in one Body even though Paul was far away from Philippi. Through the petition of the members of the Body, the ointment which is upon the Body flowed to Paul, a particular member of the Body, and supplied him. Therefore, Paul could say that his circumstances would turn out to him for salvation through the prayer of the Body and through the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

In speaking of the bountiful supply of the Spirit, Paul uses a particular Greek word, *choragus*. Literally this Greek word refers to the supplying of all the needs of a chorus in ancient times by the leader of the chorus, who was called the choragus. In 1:19 Paul uses this word to describe the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

THE COMPOUND OINTMENT

We see a wonderful picture of this supply of the Spirit in Exodus 30:23-30, a portion of the Word which speaks of the compound ointment. Because spiritual things are abstract and mysterious, we need something more than words to understand them. For this reason, in the Bible the Lord uses pictures as well as direct statements. In the Old Testament we have many types, figures, and shadows of spiritual things. The ointment in Exodus 30 is a type portraying the Spirit.

In Genesis 1:2 we read of the Spirit of God; in Philippians 1:19, of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; and in

Revelation 22:17, simply of the Spirit. The Spirit of God was active in creation. But with respect to the incarnation, the Spirit of God is called the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). The Holy Spirit made the element of humanity holy unto God. This was the reason the term Holy Spirit is used concerning the incarnation. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, this Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the One who had become a man, who had died on the cross, and who is now in resurrection. The Spirit of Jesus Christ is not for creation or incarnation, but for our experience of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. According to 1:19, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the bountiful Spirit.

Thank the Lord for the type of the holy ointment described in Exodus 30:23-30. This ointment is composed not only of oil, but with oil blended with four other ingredients. Olive oil signifies the Spirit of God. The holy ointment was a compound of olive oil with four spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. After these spices were compounded with the olive oil, the oil became an ointment.

Each of the four spices has a spiritual significance. Myrrh signifies the sweetness of the death of Christ, and cinnamon, the effectiveness of Christ's death. Calamus, a reed that grows in a muddy environment, signifies Christ's resurrection. Cassia was a spice used as a repellent; it is a symbol of the power of Christ's resurrection. Therefore, in these four spices we see the sweetness and the effectiveness of the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the power of Christ's resurrection. The fact that these four spices were compounded with the olive oil signifies that after the resurrection of Christ, the Spirit of God became the compound Spirit. In this Spirit we have the sweetness of Christ's death, the effectiveness of His death, and Christ's resurrection with its power.

The numbers used in the account of the holy anointing oil are also significant. In the ointment the number five is implied--the oil plus four spices. One is the number of God,

and four is the number of man as a creature. The number five signifies responsibility: the number one (God) added to the number four (man as God's creation). The number three is implied by the fact the four spices are in three units of five hundred shekels each: five hundred shekels of myrrh; five hundred shekels made up of two hundred fifty each of cinnamon and calamus; and five hundred shekels of cassia. The second and third spices, cinnamon and calamus, form one unit, whereas the first and fourth spices, myrrh and cassia, are each a complete unit. These three units point to the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The fact that the second unit was divided into two measures of two hundred fifty shekels each indicates that the second of the Trinity, the Son, was cut on the cross. Therefore, in the measurements of the spices and in the numbers pertaining to the ointment we have man and the Triune God. We even have the cutting of the second of the Trinity. We have divinity, humanity, crucifixion, the sweetness of Christ's death, the effectiveness of His death, Christ's resurrection, and the power of His resurrection. This is the compound Spirit.

APPLYING THE SPIRIT

The true understanding of the Spirit is lacking among Christians today. Even though many of us have heard messages on the compound Spirit, we may have little more than doctrinal knowledge. We may not apply the Spirit in our situations day by day.

Suppose a brother invites me to his home for lunch. However, he does not notify his wife beforehand that a guest is coming. Not only is she unprepared, but her children are giving her a difficult time. The wife is troubled and offended. How can this situation turn out for the brother's salvation? He simply needs to apply the compound ointment, the compound Spirit. The compound Spirit is in his regenerated human spirit. Instead of considering the situation with his wife and beholding his

difficult environment, he should turn to the spirit, apply the compound Spirit, and behold the Lord with an unveiled face. Then he will reflect the Lord. If this brother applies the compound Spirit and beholds the Lord, the elements of the ointment will be applied to him. Both the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ will operate in him, and he will be anointed with the compound Spirit. In this Spirit is all he needs: the death of Christ and its effectiveness, the resurrection of Christ and its power, and Christ's divine nature and human nature. By applying this compound Spirit, the brother will experience God's instant salvation. Then, far from being put to shame, he will magnify Christ. Furthermore, those with him will want to rejoice in the Lord when they see such a glorious magnification of Christ.

The Bible reveals that Christ has passed through the process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. As a result, the Spirit of God is now the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit who includes the elements of divinity, humanity, death, and resurrection. This is the all-inclusive Spirit. When we exercise our spirit to call on the name of the Lord Jesus, the indwelling all-inclusive Spirit will be applied to our inner being, touching our being with all the elements of the compound Spirit. Then we shall become those who experience Christ's divinity, humanity, death, and resurrection. This anointing of the compound Spirit is our salvation. The more we are anointed with this Spirit, the more we are saved. We are saved not by doctrine or teaching; we are saved by the anointing of the compound Spirit.

It is common for pastors to use Paul's words in Ephesians 5 in giving instructions to a bride and groom during a wedding ceremony. The groom may promise to love his wife, and the bride may promise to submit to her husband. However, in the actual situations of married life, this teaching does not work. But if a brother and his wife both learn how to experience the bountiful supply of the Spirit, they will surely have a proper married life. We all need more experience of the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

THE COMPOUND SPIRIT FOR THE BODY AND FOR GOD'S SERVICE

According to the type in Exodus 30, the compound ointment was used to anoint the tabernacle, God's dwelling place, as well as all furnishings and utensils used in the service of the tabernacle. Furthermore, the priests were anointed with this compound ointment. This signifies that the compound Spirit is for the Body, the church, God's house, and also for God's service. If we are not in the Body or if we do not care for God's service, it will be very difficult for us to partake of this compound Spirit. To enjoy the Spirit we need to be part of the tabernacle and of the priesthood, part of God's dwelling and of His service. Then spontaneously we shall be anointed with the ointment and enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

From our experience we know that if we have a problem with the church or refuse to participate in the service of the church, we do not enjoy the all-inclusive Spirit. Although we may pray very much, our prayer is not effective. Believing in the reality of the compound Spirit, we may cry out to the Lord to have mercy on us, and we tell Him how much we need Him. However, we still do not experience the supply of the Spirit. The reason is that we have severed ourselves from the Body and are not part of the tabernacle in a practical way. Furthermore, we do not partake of the priestly service. According to Exodus 30, the compound ointment was for the anointing of the tabernacle and the priests. It is very important to realize that the compound Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is for the Body, God's tabernacle, and for God's service, the priesthood. Because so many Christians today are cut off from the Body and from the priestly service, it is extremely difficult for them to share the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

We have pointed out that Paul lived in the Body. Although he was a wonderful apostle, he still needed the prayers and petitions of the saints. This is a clear indication that Paul had a right relationship with the Body. Furthermore, Paul also shared in the priesthood.

Because he was in the Body, the tabernacle, and because he was part of the priesthood, God's service, he was in a proper position to receive the flow of the ointment which is upon the Body.

Many of us can testify that before we came into the church, we did not have any enjoyment of the bountiful supply of the Spirit. But after we came into the church life in the Lord's recovery and began to participate in the church service, we had the sense that we were under the flowing of the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

If in the church life we become unhappy with certain saints, especially with the elders, we may cut ourselves off from the Body and withdraw from the priestly service. Although we may still pray individualistically, such prayer is not effective. In fact, the more we pray individualistically, the more dried up we become. We do not experience the anointing of the compound Spirit. But if we are one with the church and stay in the priestly service, we enjoy the rich anointing of the all-inclusive Spirit. Even a little praying or calling on the name of the Lord, perhaps simply saying "amen," causes us to enjoy this anointing.

Suppose a brother is unhappy with his wife. However, during a meeting he turns to the Lord and begins to say, "Lord Jesus, I love You." Because he is watered and anointed, his feeling of unhappiness disappears. When he comes home after the meeting, his face is shining. His wife realizes that her husband has experienced a fresh anointing of the Spirit. When she saw him last, his face was sad, and he was unhappy. But now his face is shining, and he is rejoicing in the Lord. This comes from experiencing the anointing of the Spirit.

EXPERIENCING A GLORIOUS SALVATION

Again and again we need to say, "Lord Jesus, I love You." The more we contact the Lord in this way, the more we sense the anointing and the more we become happy and released. In this country people enjoy taking a vacation. I

can testify that the best vacation is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus and to enjoy the anointing of the compound Spirit in our spirit.

With the Spirit of Jesus Christ there is a bountiful supply. This supply is an all-inclusive drink containing many ingredients. Everything we need is in this divine beverage. Instant salvation always comes from this bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When we pray in a genuine way and when we call on the name of the Lord, the compound ointment is applied to us in our situation, and we enjoy the riches of the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Then instead of being put to shame, we experience a glorious salvation. This salvation causes Christ to be magnified in us. By the petitions of the Body and by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our circumstances turn out to be for our salvation. Then we are not put to shame in anything, but Christ is magnified in us.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

TO LIVE CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21; John 14:17-20; 6:57, 63; 2 Cor. 3:6b, 17a; Gal. 5:25; 1 Thes. 5:17-19

During my early years as a Christian, no one told me what was the goal of being a Christian. Of course I was taught that we were saved in order to go to heaven. The impression I received was that the purpose of being a Christian was simply to go to heaven. Heaven supposedly is the destiny ordained by God for all who believe in Christ. However, I eventually came to see that the goal of being a Christian is to live Christ. Furthermore, the destiny God has ordained for us in His economy also is that we might live Christ. Christ is our way, our goal, our destiny, and our destination.

LIVE CHRIST

I do not believe that even as recently as 1970 Christians were familiar with the term "live Christ." This expression was not known even among us in the Lord's recovery. We had heard of living for Christ, living out Christ, and living by Christ, but not of living Christ. This is a new term. To live by Christ and for Christ and to live Christ out are all somewhat different from simply living Christ.

We can be helped to know what it means to live Christ by reading the Gospel of John. This Gospel reveals that Christ, the Word, is God (1:1). One day, the Word became flesh (1:14); that is, God was incarnated. Referring to the Word made flesh, John the Baptist declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). The third chapter of the Gospel of John speaks of regeneration. Here we see that we must be born of God through the Spirit in our spirit.

In John 14 the Lord Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (v. 9). The Lord also went on to say, "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (v. 11). The Lord Jesus was one with the Father. To see Him was to see the Father. In this chapter the Lord Jesus also spoke of the Spirit of reality, telling the disciples that the Spirit of reality abode with them and would be in them (v. 17). The Lord Jesus indicated that when the Spirit of reality came, He Himself would come also. Verse 19 says, "Because I live, you shall live also." Verse 20 continues, "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." Here we have our living together with Christ. We are in Christ, and Christ is in us. This means that we and He live together. He lives, and we live also. We live in Him, by Him, and with Him, and we even live Him.

In John 15 the Lord gives the very impressive illustration of the vine and the branches. He says, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (v. 5). The branches are the very living of the vine.

RECEIVING THE HOLY BREATH

After the Lord Jesus entered into resurrection, He came to His disciples. According to John 20:22, "He breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit." The Greek word for Spirit, *pneuma*, also means breath. This indicates that the Lord Jesus was telling the disciples to receive the holy breath. The Gospel of John begins with the Word and goes on to speak of the Lamb and the vine. Finally, in John 20:22 we see that the very One who is the Word, God, the Lamb, and the vine is also the breath for us to receive. On the one hand, He breathed out; on the other hand, the disciples breathed in.

In 20:22 the Lord Jesus told the disciples to receive the holy breath, the Holy Spirit. We should not analyze the breath, but receive it by breathing it into us. Unfortunately, many of today's Christians know only to reason and consider; they do not have any experience of breathing the holy breath. A. B. Simpson was one who

knew the experience of breathing in of Christ. The opening lines of one of his hymns read: "O Lord, breathe Thy Spirit on me, Teach me how to breathe Thee in" (*Hymns*, #255).

In the Gospel of John we have a record of the divine process. The Word, who was God, became flesh. Eventually, having passed through crucifixion and resurrection, He became the holy breath for us to breathe in.

If we see the steps of this process, we shall have a proper and thorough understanding of the Gospel of John. According to John 1:1 and 14, the Word, who was in the beginning with God and who is God, became flesh. In verse 29 we see that this Word become flesh is the Lamb of God. On the one hand, He is the Lamb for accomplishing redemption; on the other hand, He is the tree for imparting life. Therefore, we may speak of Him as the Lamb-tree. According to John 15, the branches of the vine are the living of the vine. Ultimately, the Lamb-tree becomes the holy breath. Hallelujah! In our experience we have Christ as the Word, the Lamb, the tree, and the breath. The Word is for expression, the Lamb is for redemption, the tree is for the impartation of life, and the breath is for our living.

We cannot live without breathing. Instead of saying that a certain person has died, the Chinese say that he has stopped breathing. No doubt, to stop breathing is to die. However, to keep on breathing is to live. No matter how many schools we may graduate from, we can never graduate from breathing. No one can say that because he has become so knowledgeable or mature, it is no longer necessary for him to breathe. Rather, the older a person becomes, the more concerned he may be about his breathing. How marvelous that for our spiritual life we have the holy breath for our living!

A LIFE OF COINHERENCE

The Gospel of John reveals that, as those who believe in Christ, we need to live Christ. John 6:57 says, "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me shall also live because of Me." Just as the

Lord Jesus lived because of the Father, we should live because of Him. As we have pointed out, the Lord Jesus, referring to the day of His resurrection, said, "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). He also said that because He lives, we shall live also (v. 19). According to John 14:19 and 20, we live in Christ in the way of coinherence. He lives in the Father, we live in Him, and He lives in us. We not only co-exist with Christ--we coinhere with Him. This means that He lives in us and we live in Him. How wonderful is this life of coinherence!

We have a life of coinherence with Christ because He is not only the Word, the Lamb, and the tree, but also the breath, the Spirit. If He were only the Word, the Lamb, and the tree, we could not live in Him, and He could not live in us. Praise Him that today He is not merely the Word, the Lamb, and the tree, but also the *pneuma*, the breath, the Spirit!

PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul charges us to pray without ceasing. What does it mean to pray unceasingly? Although we may eat several meals a day and although we may drink many times during the day, no one can eat and drink without ceasing. But we certainly breathe unceasingly. Paul's command to pray without ceasing implies that unceasing prayer is like breathing. But how can our prayer become our spiritual breathing? How can we turn prayer into breathing? The way to do this is to call on the name of the Lord. We need to call on the Lord Jesus continually. This is the way to breathe, to pray without ceasing. Because we are not accustomed to this, we need to practice calling on the Lord's name all the time. To live is to breathe. Spiritually speaking, to breathe is to call on the Lord's name and to pray. By calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, we breathe the Spirit.

After Paul charges us to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in everything, he tells us not to quench the

Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19). This indicates that if we do not pray and give thanks, we quench the Spirit. To stop praying is to stop breathing. Thus, to quench the Spirit is to cease from breathing.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19 Paul speaks of the Spirit, not of the Spirit of God nor of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that, according to the New Testament, the Spirit is the Triune God processed to become the life-giving Spirit. If we do not call on the Lord's name, we shall quench the Spirit.

BREATHING TO LIVE CHRIST

Just as we must breathe in order to live physically, we must breathe spiritually in order to live Christ. The way to breathe spiritually is to call on the name of the Lord. From my experience I have learned that the way to live Christ is to call on Him continually. It is not sufficient simply to pray several times during the day, in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night. If we pray at these times but do not call on the Lord continually, we shall quench the Spirit. All day long, no matter where we are or what we are doing, we need to call on the Lord. Whatever we are doing, we should call on the Lord Jesus. I can testify that even when I speak for the Lord I call on Him and breathe of Him deep within.

Call on the Lord's name in every situation, even when you are about to lose your temper. By calling on the Lord, you will live Christ. However, if you make up your mind not to lose your temper, you will be defeated. Your temper will be worse. Instead of trying to control your temper, turn to the Lord and call on Him. Say, "Lord Jesus, I love You. Lord, I am going to lose my temper. Be one with me in this." If you do this, you will be saved from your temper, and you will live Christ.

To pray without ceasing by calling on the Lord's name is to live Him. By calling on the Lord, we automatically take Him as our life and spontaneously live Him. If we pray, we shall not do things by ourselves, apart from Christ. Instead, by praying without ceasing, we shall live Christ.

Christ is not only our life, but also our breath. Have you ever realized that Christ is your breath? If you breathe Him all the time, you will live Him. After years of groping, I have discovered that the way to live Christ is to breathe Him, and the way to breathe Him is to call on Him without ceasing.

In 1 Timothy 6:12 Paul says, "Lay hold on the eternal life to which you were called." We have been called to eternal life. Now we must lay hold on this life by calling on the Lord all day long. By calling on Him, we breathe Him.

The Bible reveals that our God today is very wonderful. He created the universe and all things in it according to His plan. One day Christ, who is the very God, was incarnated, born of a virgin. After living on earth for thirty-three and a half years, He was crucified on the cross to redeem us by taking away our sins. On the cross, the Lord Jesus also destroyed His enemy, the Devil. Then He was buried in the tomb and went into Hades. After touring the region of death, He came forth in resurrection. According to Acts 2:24, Hades exercised its power to hold Him, but to no avail. As the very resurrection life, He could not be held by death. When He entered into resurrection, His physical body was transformed into a glorious spiritual body. It is a fact that Christ in resurrection still has a body. Nevertheless, the Bible also reveals that in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit: "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). This Spirit is now our breath.

Second Corinthians 3:6 says, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." According to Darby's *New Translation*, verses 7 through 16 are in parentheses. This indicates that Darby regards verse 17 as the direct continuation of verse 6. Verse 17 declares, "Now the Lord is the Spirit." The Lord is the Spirit who gives life, and this Spirit is our breath.

On the one hand, the Lord is on the throne in heaven. We worship Him, adore Him, and praise Him as our ascended and enthroned Lord. On the other hand, He is with us on earth. Whenever a person believes in Him, He

comes into that one and seals him. This seal is actually the Lord Himself. This means that when we call on the Lord and believe in Him, He attaches Himself to us and causes us to be attached to Him. From that time onward, He and we are one. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

RECEIVING THE SPIRIT BY CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

Due to their lack of knowledge, some Christians have done strange things in order to experience the Spirit. Some have taught that to receive the Spirit we should jump, cry, quake, or even shake chairs (as practiced by a group of Christians in Taiwan). There is no need to do such things to receive the life-giving Spirit. We simply need to exercise our spirit and call on the name of the Lord Jesus. We may also share in this enjoyment by pray-reading the Word. Again I say, no matter what you are doing, call on the name of the Lord Jesus. If you call without ceasing, you will not quench the Spirit.

I can testify from my own experience that if I do not call on the Lord, I cannot live. But if I call on Him, everything is fine. Often when you greet a person and ask him how he is, he will answer, "Oh, I'm fine." Actually, for the most part, people are not fine. Only those who call on the Lord Jesus without ceasing can truly say that they are fine. Often we are troubled by little things in our daily life. The car may not start, or a shoelace may break. Such things can be aggravating and make us angry. When you are angry over a car that will not start or over a broken shoelace, can you honestly say that you are fine? I repeat, only those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus truly are fine.

There is no need always to call on the Lord purposely or deliberately. We may call on Him subconsciously, unconsciously, and unintentionally. This is true breathing. Breathing is unintentional. Let us practice to build up a habit of calling on the Lord's name until we call unconsciously and unintentionally.

We should be those who do not care for systematic theology, but care for the proper and rich enjoyment of our living Lord. He is God, the Word, the Lamb, the tree, and the life-giving Spirit as our breath, so present and available. He has redeemed us through His blood, and now, as the Spirit, He dwells in us. We abide in Him, and He abides in us. As branches of the vine, we are one in life with the vine and experience the inward flowing of the life of the vine. How marvelous is the salvation we enjoy today! The very Triune God has passed through a process to become our breath. Now by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, we breathe Him in.

When we receive Him by calling on His name, we apply Him to ourselves. Then we have a deep sense that we are enjoying Him. I cannot deny the fact that whenever I call on the Lord Jesus, I have a sweet sense within. Oh, He waters, refreshes, nourishes, strengthens, and enlightens me! He is so enjoyable that sometimes I am beside myself with joy. The processed God is so great, yet He is so enjoyable and obtainable.

I encourage you to call on the Lord, saying, "Lord Jesus, I love You." As you enjoy the Lord in this way, you may weep out of a sense of His sweetness, loveliness, and preciousness. When we call on Him, He touches us inwardly. This is the true experience of living Christ by breathing the holy breath. May we all exercise ourselves more and more to receive and enjoy the holy breath.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

LIVING CHRIST BY RECEIVING THE WORD THROUGH THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:12b-13a, 16a; John 1:1; 6:63; Eph. 6:17b-18a; 5:18-20; Heb. 4:12; Col. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:16a

In 1:19-21a we have salvation, the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the magnifying of Christ, and the living of Christ. In 2:12, 13a, and 16a we have the matters of working out our own salvation, of God operating in us, and of holding forth the word of life. In these two portions of Philippians we have two lines: the first line is salvation, the Spirit, and Christ; the second line is salvation, God, and the word. This comparison is quite revealing.

EXPERIENCING SALVATION

In 1:19 Paul says that his situation, environment, and surroundings will turn out to him for salvation. But in 2:12 he charges us to work out our own salvation. According to Paul's word in 1:19, the difficult situations we face can turn out to our salvation. Whether or not our circumstances turn out for us to salvation depends on whether or not we enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. If we do not enjoy this bountiful supply, our circumstances will turn out to be for shame. Every situation we face will turn out either for salvation or shame. Suppose, for example, a brother's wife gives him a difficult time. For the brother this situation can be either a salvation or a shame. It all depends on whether or not he enjoys the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. If he enjoys the supply of the Spirit, he will experience an instant salvation, and

Christ will be magnified in him. If he does not enjoy the supply, but becomes angry with his wife, he will be put to shame. I repeat, if the brother's situation with his wife turns out to be for his salvation, Christ will be magnified. In a very real sense, the salvation in 1:19 is Christ magnified.

In 2:12 Paul again speaks of salvation. This time, however, he does not speak of his salvation, but charges the saints to work out their own salvation. Concerning himself, Paul says that his circumstances will turn out for salvation. But concerning the saints, he tells them that they must work out their own salvation.

For the problems we face day by day, especially in our family life and in the church life, we need God's salvation. We need different kinds of salvation for different kinds of problems. A brother needs one kind of salvation in his dealings with all the different saints. But he needs another kind of salvation in his relationship with his wife. According to God's ordination, it is not good for a man to be alone. Every brother should have a wife. However, in married life problems are unavoidable. For all these problems we need God's salvation. God ordained marriage so that we might have the opportunity to enjoy Him. If we enjoy the Lord, we shall experience His salvation in our married life.

God's salvation as revealed in the Bible is of many categories. Day by day and even moment by moment we may experience different aspects of God's salvation. Yearly, monthly, weekly, daily, and even moment by moment we need to experience salvation. I simply cannot live without God's salvation.

SAVED FROM MURMURINGS AND REASONINGS

When Paul tells us to work out our own salvation, he is not speaking of salvation from hell nor salvation from God's condemnation. We are not able to work out that kind of salvation. Notice that Paul tells the saints to "work out *your own* salvation." A husband should not pay attention to

the salvation needed by his wife. Instead, he should concentrate on working out his salvation.

Paul's word about working out our own salvation should be considered in relation to his charge concerning murmurings and reasonings in verse 14. In this verse he says, "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." As we have pointed out previously, murmurings are related to the emotions, and reasonings, to the mind. Furthermore, sisters in particular have a problem with murmurings, whereas brothers are troubled by reasonings. I have never heard of a wife who did not murmur. A sister needs to work out her own salvation with respect to her murmurings. She needs salvation from murmuring. Likewise, the brothers need to work out their own salvation with respect to reasonings. If our married life and church life are filled with murmurings and reasonings, this is proof that we are lacking God's salvation. Our family life and our church life should be full of salvation and without any murmurings and reasonings. How marvelous it would be if in the church in our locality there were no murmurings or reasonings, but an abundance of salvation!

GOD'S OPERATION AND OUR COOPERATION

On the one hand, we work out our own salvation; on the other hand, God operates in us. In verse 13 Paul exclaims, "For it is God Who operates in you." God operates in us, and we cooperate with Him. This means that we work out our salvation according to God's operation. At the very time a sister is murmuring or a brother is reasoning, God operates to enable them to work out their salvation from murmurings and reasonings. When we turn to the Lord and say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You," we are saved from murmurings and reasonings.

The Greek word rendered operates can also be translated energizes. God is energizing us from within. Because it is not easy for us to experience God's salvation in many situations, He energizes us. For example, a brother may be very strong in his reasonings. If this

brother is to work out his own salvation from reasonings, he needs God to energize him.

In creating the heavens and the earth God simply had to speak. But to rescue us from murmurings and reasonings, it is necessary for Him to energize us. This indicates that it is more difficult for Him to save us from murmurings and reasonings than it was for Him to create the earth. When God wanted to create something, He simply spoke, and that thing came into being. However, if He tells us not to murmur or reason, we may not pay attention. Thus, there is a wrestling inwardly between us and God. Have you not wrestled with God many times? This wrestling is a proof that it is difficult for God to rescue us. In order to rescue us without damaging us, He energizes within us. The Christian life is a wrestling life, a life of wrestling with the God who operates in us.

The very God who operates in us is the supplying Spirit. Again and again we have pointed out that in 1:19 Paul says that his circumstances will turn out to his salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit. If God does not operate in us, it will not be possible for us to experience the supply from the Spirit. God operates in us in order to bring to us the bountiful supply of the Spirit. This is not mere doctrine; it is a fact of spiritual experience.

CHRIST MAGNIFIED

Through the bountiful supply of the Spirit, Christ is magnified in us. What Paul speaks of in 1:20 is the magnification of Christ, but in 2:16 he speaks of holding forth the word of life. Holding forth the word of life is equal to magnifying Christ. Christ Himself is the word of life. We hold forth the word of life, and this word is Christ.

THE SPIRIT, GOD, CHRIST, AND THE WORD

I am very fond of these two portions of Philippians. On the one hand, we see from chapter one that it is possible for our environment to turn out to our salvation. On the other

hand, we see from chapter two that we need to work out our salvation by cooperating with God's energizing. However, according to our fallen disposition, our tendency is to go contrary to God's desire. We need God to operate in us. Then if we cooperate with Him, we shall work out our instant salvation and hold forth the word of life.

We need to be impressed with the fact that the Spirit in 1:19 equals God in 2:13, and that Christ in 1:20 and 21 equals the word of life in 2:16. Actually, the Spirit, God, Christ, and the word of life are one.

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

We have seen that in order to magnify Christ and to live Christ, we need the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Now we must go on to see that this bountiful supply is stored in the Word. According to the Bible, the Spirit and the Word are one. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus says, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." This indicates that the Word is the Spirit. Ephesians 6:17-18 indicates that the Spirit is the Word. Second Timothy 3:16 says that all Scripture is God-breathed. Every word of the Bible is the breath of God. We have pointed out that this breath is the *pneuma*, the Spirit. Thus, because both the Word and the Spirit are the breath of God, they are truly one. The Spirit is the breath of God, and the Word also is God's breath. Furthermore, God's breath is His *pneuma*, the Spirit. On the one hand, the Word of God is the Spirit; on the other hand, the Spirit of God is the Word.

From our experience we know that we can contact the Spirit and experience the moving of the Spirit within us by saying, "O Lord Jesus, I love You." This inner moving of the Spirit often issues in a word from the Lord. For example, suppose a brother is unhappy with his wife. But he turns to the Lord and says, "Lord Jesus, I love You," and the Spirit moves within him. Then this moving of the Spirit becomes a word to him: "Do not think of your wife in that way." First the brother contacts the Spirit; then the Spirit becomes the word uttered within him. Furthermore, this

word becomes a light shining from within the brother, causing him to hold forth the word of life.

At other times in our experience we first receive the Word, and then the Word becomes the Spirit moving within us. Whether we first experience the Spirit and then the Word, or first the Word and then the Spirit, the Spirit and the Word are one.

GOD REACHING US

The New Testament assures us that the Word and the Spirit are one. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word." But in John 20:22, the Lord Jesus breathed upon the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." At the beginning of the Gospel of John, Christ is the Word, but at the end of this Gospel, He breathes out the Spirit. In 6:63 He says that the Word is the Spirit. Through the Word and the Spirit God reaches us.

If God were not the Word and the Spirit, He could not reach us. The Spirit is God reaching us. Whenever we touch the Lord or the Lord touches us, we experience a divine reaching. God reaches us as the Spirit. However, according to the concept of some Christians, the Spirit is simply a means used by God to reach us. No, the Spirit is God Himself reaching us. We may use the flow of electricity as an illustration. God is like the electricity, and the Spirit is like the electric current. Surely it is wrong to say that electric current is different from electricity itself. When electricity flows, it becomes the current. Hence, the current of electricity is electricity itself in motion. When the current reaches us, it is still electricity, not something apart from electricity. However, some Christians insist that when the Spirit comes to us, God the Father is left on the throne in heaven. No, when the Spirit reaches us, that is God Himself reaching us.

THE ANTENNA AND THE GROUND WIRE

The Spirit is mysterious, abstract, and difficult to understand. But along with the Spirit, we have the Word.

Once again using electricity as an example, we may speak of the antenna and the ground wire. The Spirit can be compared to the antenna, and the Word, to the ground wire. By the antenna and the ground wire we experience the transmission of electricity. If we have the Spirit without the Word or the Word without the Spirit, we shall not be able to receive the divine transmission. Both the Spirit and the Word, both the antenna and the ground wire, are necessary.

TWO EXTREMES

Among Christians today, Fundamentalists represent one extreme and Pentecostalists another. The Fundamentalists care for the Word, but often neglect the Spirit. This is one extreme. On the other hand, many Pentecostalists care for the Spirit, but neglect the Word. This is another extreme. We should not be at either extreme, but should be balanced, caring both for the Spirit and the Word. Within, we have the Spirit, and in our hands we have the Word, the Bible.

RECEIVING THE WORD BY MEANS OF PRAYER

In Ephesians 6:17 and 18 Paul tells us to receive the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition. Here Paul covers the aspects both of the Word and of the Spirit. Furthermore, he tells us to receive the Word of God by means of all prayer, praying at every time in spirit. We may receive the Word of God by means of all kinds of prayer: audible prayer and silent prayer, long prayer and short prayer, quick prayer and slow prayer, private prayer and public prayer.

To take the Word of God by means of prayer is to pray--read the Word. Whenever we come to the Word of God, we should not merely exercise our eyes to read or our mind to understand, but also exercise our spirit. I can testify from experience that if we touch the Bible without prayer, using only our eyes and our mind, the Bible will be dead letters to us. Our reading of the Bible should be mingled with

prayer. This is pray-reading. For example, in pray-reading Genesis 1:1, we may say, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, amen. Thank You, Lord, in the beginning. Oh, God was there in the beginning. Thank You, Lord, that You are the beginning, the origin." When we pray-read the Word in such a way, the Word becomes to us the living breath of God, the Spirit. As a result, we are watered, nourished, refreshed, and enlightened. Far from being a book of dead letters, the Bible becomes in our experience the nourishing Spirit.

In Ephesians 6:17 and 18 Paul definitely charges us to receive the Word of God by means of prayer. Some who oppose the practice of pray-reading insist that these verses cannot be applied this way. However, according to the Greek text, we must say that we should receive the Word of God either by means of prayer or through prayer. Here Paul tells us to receive the Word of God and also gives us the way to receive it--by means of prayer. Therefore, we cannot deny that in the Bible there is such a thing as pray--reading the Word.

We need to read the Word and receive it by prayer. Throughout the centuries many saints have practiced this in principle. Some have said that we need to pray when we read the Bible. Others have pointed out that we should read the Bible prayerfully. To read the Bible prayerfully is to pray-read the Word. Many of the Lord's people have practiced pray-reading without knowing this term. Spontaneously in coming to the Word they have prayed with the Word and over the Word. I believe that before you heard of pray-reading, you may have pray-read John 3:16. You may have read the words, "God so loved the world," and then prayed, "O God, thank You for loving the world. Father, I thank You that You loved me. You even loved me to such an extent that You gave Your Son for me." This is pray--reading.

EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT

When we pray-read the Word, we exercise our spirit. As

saved and regenerated ones, we have the Spirit of God in our spirit. Thus, when we exercise our spirit in pray--reading the Word, we apply the Word to us and mingle the Word and the Spirit. Immediately, we receive the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

THE PRESCRIPTION AND THE DOSE

The Bible reveals that Christ is God and also the embodiment of God. One day, Christ became a man. During His years on earth, He lived the highest human life. Through His crucifixion and resurrection, His humanity was uplifted and brought into divinity. After living a marvelous and perfect life on earth, the Lord Jesus went to the cross and died there for our sins, accomplishing a full, complete, and perfect redemption. On the third day, He was resurrected. In His ascension He was glorified, crowned, and enthroned; He received the headship, the lordship, and the kingship. In addition to these crucial matters, the Bible also reveals that Christ in His resurrection became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Now this life-giving Spirit indwells our regenerated spirit.

The life-giving Spirit contains Christ's divinity, His uplifted resurrected humanity, His perfect human living which was the expression of God, the effectiveness of His all-inclusive death for the accomplishment of redemption, the power of His resurrection which imparts into us the divine life and nature and Christ's uplifted human nature, and His ascension with His headship, lordship, and kingship. All these are elements of the compound Spirit. However, if we did not have the Bible, we would not know about these things. We would not know what ingredients are contained in this all-inclusive dose. Oh, what marvelous riches constitute the bountiful supply of the Spirit! We may apply the riches in the bountiful supply to all our circumstances.

Praise the Lord that we have the Spirit and the Word! As we have pointed out repeatedly, the Spirit and the Word are one. The Word is the prescription, and the Spirit is the

application. Through reading the Word we know what we are receiving in the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Through the Word we realize that we receive Christ's divinity, humanity, human living, all-inclusive death, resurrection, and ascension. Furthermore, we understand that we are one with Christ in His headship, lordship, and kingship. All these elements are included in the compound Spirit. All are aspects of the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Hallelujah, we may now live Christ by receiving the Word through the Spirit!

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

THE RICHES OF THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT EMBODIED IN THE WORD

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19; 2:12b, 16a; Eph. 3:8; 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:6; 6:3

The basic thought of the Bible is that the Triune God desires to work Himself into man so that man may take Him as life and live Him. In order to fulfill this desire, the Triune God has passed through a wonderful process. Both the incarnation and the crucifixion were steps in this process. Through His death on the cross, Christ dealt with sin, sins, and Satan. He also released the divine life. Christ's all-inclusive death was followed by His resurrection. By incarnation, Christ became a man; through crucifixion He dealt with all negative things; and in resurrection He imparted Himself into all those who believe in Him so that they might become one with Him in life and in nature.

MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

By creation man is God's creature. As a creature of God, man does not have the divine life or the divine nature. However, man was created in God's image and after His likeness. God created us in this way because His intention is to come into man and be one with man. For this reason, God created man in such a way that man could receive Him and become one with Him.

The relationship between God and the man created in God's image may be illustrated by a glove designed to contain a hand. The glove is made in the image of the hand for the purpose of containing the hand. When a hand enters into a glove, the hand and the glove become one. In a

similar way, man is a vessel created in the image of God for the purpose of containing God. Romans 9 indicates that we are vessels created to contain God.

ONE WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

On man's side, man was created as a vessel to contain God. On God's side, a certain process was necessary. After passing through the process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, the Triune God was ready to come into man. After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus charged His followers to disciple the nations and baptize the believers into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). To baptize believers into the name of the Triune God is to immerse them into the very Person of the Triune God. The name denotes the person; and the person is the reality of the name. In his Epistles Paul speaks of being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). To baptize believers into Christ is the same as baptizing them into the Person of the Triune God. Those who believe in Christ and are baptized into Him become one with the Triune God in life and in nature.

We praise the Lord that, as believers, we have the divine life and partake of the divine nature. Second Peter 1:4 indicates clearly that we are partakers of the divine nature. Because we partake of the divine nature, it can rightly be said that we are divine. However, this definitely does not mean that we are evolving into God or that we shall ever become God as an object of worship. The Bible does not teach that believers will ever be deified. But, according to the Word of God, we who believe in Christ have truly been born of God. Thus, we are genuine sons born of Him, not adopted sons. Because we are sons of God, we have the life and nature of God. By having the divine life and nature, we are one with God. But we repeat that this certainly does not mean that we shall ever become God Himself as an object of worship.

According to the Bible we teach that we are one with God because, through regeneration, we have the life and

nature of God. Just as a child has the life and nature of his father, so we, as sons of God, have the life and nature of God. But some Christians are humble in a religious way, and, although they confess that they have been born of God, they dare not say that they have God's nature. They will say only that they are sinners who have received God's mercy. They are reluctant to confess that they have God's nature and are one with Him.

Regeneration does not make us part of the Godhead. To say that believers become part of the Godhead as objects of worship is to blaspheme God. We cannot share the Godhead. But we can partake of the divine nature. To share in the Godhead is one thing; to partake of the divine nature is another. What a great blessing it is to be one with God in His life and nature!

PREOCCUPIED BY OUR CONCEPTS

Although this matter is so crucial in the Bible, many Christians today do not pay attention to it because they are preoccupied by ethical, cultural, religious, and philosophical concepts. When they come to the Bible, they are impressed with admonitions such as the command for children to honor their parents, for husbands to love their wives, and for wives to submit to their husbands. Some Christian husbands appreciate the Bible because it teaches a wife to submit to her husband. Likewise, Christian wives may appreciate the Bible because it requires a husband to love his wife. Those who are occupied with ethics and religion will pay attention to those matters in the Bible which they regard as ethical or religious. However, they do not see the basic revelation in the Scriptures.

Suppose that a Chinese hears the preaching of the gospel and believes in Christ. In his reading of the Bible, he may pay special attention to those portions of the Word which seem to be concerned with ethics. He may have very little understanding of Genesis 1:26, a verse which says that God created man in His own image, but he may devour the book of Proverbs, appreciating all its ethical

teachings. Likewise, he may appreciate Paul's words concerning the behavior of husbands and wives, for these sound much like the teachings of Confucius. He may praise the Lord's salvation because it helps him to be ethical and moral. We may say that in his daily life he is a "Confucius Christian," a believer who regards the teachings of the Bible as if they were the same as the ethical teachings of Confucius.

A believer with a different cultural background may appreciate the Bible because it teaches us not to make a display of ourselves. He may pay attention to those matters in the Word which seem to be in line with his national characteristics and cultural background. Thus, living Christ is replaced by ethics and culture.

NOURISHMENT AND REVELATION

When we come to the Bible, we should forget about ethics, culture, and different kinds of national characteristics. With an unveiled face and an inner being that is not preoccupied with anything, we should pray-read the Word. In doing this, we shall receive not only revelation, but also nourishment.

In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul speaks of nourishment: "Being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed." Nourishment is related to life. All the words in the Bible are words of life, words that are nourishing and healthy. Paul even uses the expression "healthy teaching" (1 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:9), referring to teaching that nourishes us and makes us healthy. It is important that we all receive nourishment from the Word of God.

If we would be nourished by the Word, we must be free from all preoccupying concepts. We need to lay aside the veils of culture, domestic logic, and national philosophy. We need to read the Word of God without wearing any kind of colored glasses, that is, without any preoccupying concepts. Then we shall receive both nourishment and revelation.

Often after people are saved, they make up their minds to improve themselves. They may say, "I used to be godless and evil. I mistreated my parents, my brothers and sisters, and my children. From now on I will pray that almighty God will help me to be kind to everyone. I make up my mind never to lose my temper again. Instead, I shall be loving." I believe that virtually every Christian has made a decision like this. However, for believers to make such decisions is not the right way. From experience I have learned that there is no need for us to make up our minds to be good, or to pray that God will help us to improve. What we need is to come to the living Word and receive nourishment.

THE RICHES AND THE SUPPLY IN THE WORD

The Bible reveals that the fullness of the Godhead is embodied in Christ. This means that all the riches of what God has and of what He is are embodied in Christ. Having passed through the process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, Christ is now the all-inclusive Spirit with the bountiful supply. The bountiful supply of the Spirit in 1:19 is nothing less than the riches of Christ in Ephesians 3:8. Paul testifies that he was given grace to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ. With respect to Christ, there are the unsearchable riches, but with respect to the Spirit, there is the bountiful supply. I repeat, the bountiful supply of the Spirit is the unsearchable riches of Christ. Both the riches and the supply are embodied in the Word, in the Bible. If we would touch the unsearchable riches of Christ and partake of the bountiful supply of the Spirit, we must come to the Bible.

God's intention is to impart Himself to us and work Himself into us. He does this by means of the Spirit as the "antenna" and the Bible as the "ground wire." By these means, the heavenly riches are transmitted into us. On our part, we need to turn away from trying to do good and away from taking the Bible merely as a book of ethics and instead come to the Word for nourishment. We should not

simply read the Bible and study it; we also need to pray-read it.

EATING THE WORD

It is not sufficient to understand the Bible--we also need to eat the words of the Bible. Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." Furthermore, Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." The Bible is not only good for reading and studying, but, even the more, it is especially good for eating. Oh, we need to eat the Word of God!

The best way to eat the Word is to pray-read. If we want to enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit, we need to eat the Word. We have pointed out that the bountiful supply of the Spirit is equal to the riches of Christ and that the riches of Christ are embodied in the Word. Therefore, to enjoy the riches we must pray-read the Word.

THE ELEMENTS OF CHRIST'S RICHES

The riches of Christ have certain basic elements. The first is divinity, and the second, humanity. In Christ we have true divinity and a proper, uplifted humanity, a humanity which expresses God. The third element of the riches of Christ is the human living of the Lord Jesus. The human living of the Lord Jesus was altogether wonderful. In His human life on earth God was expressed. The fourth element is His wonderful, all-inclusive death on the cross. The next ingredient is Christ's resurrection. We may use a carnation seed to illustrate resurrection. After a carnation seed is sown into the earth, it sprouts, grows, and develops, and eventually a carnation blossom appears. This is a picture of resurrection. Resurrection is a matter of rising up and growing up in life. After the Lord Jesus was crucified and buried, He rose up. In the illustration of the carnation seed, we see not only the growth of life, but also the life shape, the life function, and the life power. Christ's resurrection with all these aspects is another element of

His riches. Yet other ingredients are Christ's ascension and His glorification, with His enthronement.

The New Testament reveals Christ's divinity, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and glorification with enthronement. Along with these seven basic elements, there are innumerable other ingredients: light, life, love, holiness, righteousness, peace, joy, patience, kindness, wisdom. All these, however, are subordinate elements; the primary elements are divinity, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification.

All these marvelous elements of the riches of Christ are embodied in the Bible. But they are not embodied in the Word in a systematized way. The Word of God simply cannot be systematized. God's riches are too profound for this.

We have pointed out that in the Bible there is embodied the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Furthermore, we have seen that the Spirit and the Word actually are one. Because the Word is the Spirit and the Spirit is the Word, they cannot be separated.

PRAY-READING THE WORD

When we read the Word, we should mingle our reading with prayer. As we exercise our eyes and our mind, we should also exercise our spirit to touch the Spirit. Then all that is in the Word will become in our experience the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

Let us use Psalm 133 to show the difference between analyzing the Bible and enjoying the nourishment contained in it by pray-reading. In their time of personal devotions, some Christians may read Psalm 133. As they read, they may begin to analyze and to ask about the precious ointment, the beard, the skirts, the dew, and Mount Hermon. Instead of receiving the bountiful supply, they are left with many unanswered questions. But if we pray-read Psalm 133, we shall take this portion in the way of life. As we pray-read, we may say, "Behold, amen! How good and how pleasant, amen." By taking the Word in this

way, we shall apply the all-inclusive Spirit to our inner being. By pray-reading we exercise our spirit to receive spiritual nourishment from the Word. Through this nourishment we grow in life. We are nourished with the words of faith and healthy teaching. If we take even as little as ten minutes to pray-read a portion of the Word, we shall receive nourishment. Furthermore, we shall experience the various elements of Christ's riches.

On the one hand, the food we eat each day nourishes us; on the other hand, it contains elements that kill germs. There is no need for us to try to kill the germs in our body. We should simply eat properly and allow the elements in the food we eat to accomplish this work. In like manner, through pray-reading the Word, we experience both nourishment and the putting to death of the negative things within us. As we pray-read, we unconsciously and automatically partake of the basic elements of Christ's riches: divinity, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. On the one hand, the element of Christ's all-inclusive death kills the negative things within us. On the other hand, His resurrection strengthens us and builds us up. This does not come from outward teaching, but from inward nourishing.

LIVING CHRIST AND MAGNIFYING HIM

If we receive the riches of Christ by pray-reading the Word, it will not be necessary for us to decide to do good or to improve ourselves. Spontaneously we shall live Christ. We shall live a life full of the basic elements of Christ's riches. In our living there will be divinity, humanity, the experience of Christ's death, and the strengthening in His resurrection life. To live in this way is to hold forth the word of life and to magnify Christ.

Furthermore, I wish to point out that there is no need for us to make up our minds to magnify Christ. When some hear messages on living Christ and magnifying Him, they may say, "From now on I shall magnify Christ. I shall magnify Him at home, at work, and wherever I may be.

Oh, Lord, I ask You to help me to magnify You." Instead of making this kind of decision and praying in this way, simply come to the Word, to the embodiment of the riches of Christ and of the bountiful supply of the Spirit. As you feed on the Word in a proper way day by day, you will grow. The flesh, the natural man, the self, and different evil tendencies and intents will be dealt with. The bountiful supply of the Spirit embodied in the Word taken by pray-reading will accomplish this work. Furthermore, Christ's resurrection life will release the divine riches into you, strengthen your spirit, and edify your whole being. Spontaneously, unconsciously, and automatically you will live Christ. Living Christ in this way is equal to holding forth the word of life. As you live Christ, having a daily life full of divinity, humanity, Christ's human living, death, and the fragrance of His resurrection, you will magnify Christ. This is what it means to live Christ by the riches of the bountiful supply of the Spirit embodied in the Word.

RECEIVING THE RICHES EMBODIED IN THE WORD

Day by day we should come to the right source--to the Word as the embodiment of the riches of Christ. As we pray-read the Word, these riches will become to us the all-inclusive and bountiful supply of the Spirit. Let us come to the Word every day to pray-read, to eat and absorb the riches of Christ. By pray-reading we shall receive the riches embodied in the Word.

Although I do not know very much about the composition of the physical food I eat each day, I have been eating for more than seventy years. As far as food is concerned, the important thing is not to know--it is to receive the food into our bodies by eating. Then all the elements and ingredients of the food will come into us and function within us to nourish us, strengthen us, build us up, and to kill the germs. Then we shall be healthy and have a proper daily life. As we have pointed out, the same is true of the Christian life. The Christian life is not a life of ethics, religion, culture, or even morality. The Christian

life actually is Christ Himself, who is higher than the highest ethics or the top morality. If we are to live a proper Christian life, God desires that we realize that we have been born of Him and are now His children. As members of Christ, we possess the divine life with the divine nature. Furthermore, we have the Spirit and the Word, the means to receive the divine transmission. Daily we must come to the Word with a praying spirit to receive both the riches of Christ and the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Nourished by the Word in this way, we shall grow and spontaneously live a life full of all the different elements of Christ's riches. In our living there will be an uplifted humanity, the operation of Christ's wonderful death, and the fragrance and power of His resurrection. All the negative things within us--the flesh, the self, and the natural life--will be nullified. Then we shall hold forth the word of life. This is the magnification of Christ.

I praise the Lord and thank Him for showing us this way to take the Word. This is the biblical way, the way of life. How marvelous that the Triune God has wrought Himself into us and has also given us His holy Word without and His Spirit within! Now we can come to the Word and by exercising our spirit receive the riches embodied in the Word and apply the all-inclusive Spirit to our whole being. Then we shall live Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

THE RICH WORD, THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY, AND UNCEASING PRAYER FOR LIVING CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:16-17; Eph. 5:18-20; 1 Thes. 5:17-19; Phil. 1:19-21a

GOD'S ECONOMY VERSUS THE NATURAL CONCEPT

There is a great difference between God's economy and the natural human concept. Our concept is that after we are saved we should make up our minds to improve our behavior. Probably every genuine Christian has made such a decision. According to our concept, we need to improve ourselves. Conscious of our weakness, we beg God to help us. However, God does not answer this kind of prayer. The more we pray that He will help us to improve, the less He will do. On the contrary, our behavior may even worsen. The reason for this is that the concept of receiving help from God to improve our behavior is contrary to God's economy. God's economy is to dispense Himself into us and to work Himself into us that we may take Him as our life and life supply in order to live Him. This is not to have an improved human character; it is to live God. According to His economy, God's intention is to impart His element, His substance, and the ingredients of His nature into our being that we may live Him.

Christians have fallen into the trap of trying to improve their character. We thank the Lord that in His recovery we are being rescued from this trap. Many years ago it was my habit to pray that the Lord would help me to improve my behavior. I wanted to be a very refined human being. Especially, I wanted to have more love for my wife. Realizing my inability, I asked the Lord to help me. Now

instead of praying in this way, I enjoy God's economy. I see that His intention is to dispense, or transfuse, Himself into me that I may live Him.

NOT OUTWARD CORRECTION BUT INWARD TRANSFUSION

We may use other terms to describe God's desire to dispense Himself into us. God wants to water us, feed us, refresh us, and nourish us. These terms indicate that God wants to be our life, life supply, food, drink, and air. He is our food to nourish us; our drink to quench our thirst; our air to refresh us; and our life supply to enrich us. As the divine Being, He infuses us with His elements, causing us to be the same as He in life and nature.

In His economy God does not improve us outwardly. Instead, He transmits all that He is into us. The difference between outward correction and inward transfusion can be illustrated by the difference between applying makeup and having a healthy complexion because of eating properly. Man's way is to apply makeup. God's way is to transform us metabolically; it is to nourish, refresh, water, enrich, and strengthen us. This is God's economy. God is rich in His nourishing, watering, feeding, refreshing, and shining. Oh, His shining brings in His riches! The air, water, and food also supply His riches to us. In the Bible God likens Himself to food, water, air, and sunshine. Psalm 84:11 says that the Lord is our sun. God does not merely teach us; He nourishes us, waters us, and infuses all His riches into our inner being. This is God's way.

CONSTITUTED OF WHAT WE EAT

God's purpose in transmitting His riches into us is that we may live Him. Dietitians tell us that we are what we eat. If we eat a great deal of a certain kind of food, we shall be constituted of that food. When I was young, I noticed that everyone who lived in the home of my grandparents smelled like fish. My mother explained to me that the people in that area eat fish three times a day. Because they

ate so much fish, they became constituted of fish. This illustrates the fact that we are what we eat. If we eat Christ, we shall be constituted of Him.

God's economy is that we eat Christ and become constituted of Him. In John 6 the Lord Jesus says that He is the bread of life, the bread which came down from heaven, and that those who eat Him will live because of Him (vv. 35, 41, 57). Then in John 7 He sounds the call: "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (v. 37). This the Lord Jesus said concerning the Spirit. In Revelation 22:17 the call is sounded once again to come and drink. The Lord calls us to drink of the Spirit, of the processed Triune God. Having passed through the steps of a divine process, the Triune God is now a universal, all-inclusive drink, prepared and available.

Every meeting of the church should be a feast. The Lord calls us to partake of Him as our food and drink. Whether or not a particular meeting is of the Lord can be determined by whether or not there is a "dining table" in that meeting. If you go to a Catholic cathedral, you will find superstition instead of feasting. The church meetings, by contrast, are a feast. In every meeting there is a dining table set for us, and we have the opportunity to eat and drink of the Triune God.

By now it should be clear that what we need is not outward improvement or correction. Our need is to take in the Triune God by eating and drinking of Him. According to God's ordination, the way to partake of Him is to eat Him and drink Him.

THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELLING IN US RICHLY

Now we come to the crucial matter of where to find the processed Triune God as the all-inclusive drink. It is true to say that He is in heaven. It is also true that He is in us. But although the Triune God indwells us as the all-inclusive Spirit, He may not dwell in us richly. In Colossians 3:16 Paul says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in

you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." What does it mean to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly? Years ago I thought that this meant that we should memorize Bible verses and be able to recite them. According to my concept at the time, to let the word of Christ dwell in me richly was to memorize more and more verses. However, this is not the meaning of Paul's word in Colossians 3:16.

For the word of Christ to dwell in us richly means that it inhabits us, indwells us, in a rich way. This can be illustrated by eating. After we eat a meal, the food inhabits us in a rich way. The food contains many rich, nourishing elements. When we take this nourishing food into us and assimilate it, it indwells us richly. In like manner, for the word of Christ to dwell in us richly means that it inhabits us in the way of nourishment and enrichment. This is not a matter of memorizing verses, but a matter of having the Word containing the unsearchable riches of Christ dwell in us in such a way that it nourishes us and enriches us.

I have met some people who had memorized the whole book of Ephesians and even one who had memorized the Gospel of Matthew. But to memorize entire books of the New Testament does not mean that the word of Christ is dwelling in us richly. For example, we may take food into us, but our stomach may not digest it properly. Indigestion indicates that the food does not enter into us richly. The food may be rich in nourishment, but its entering into us is not rich if we suffer from indigestion after eating it. In such a case we do not have the ability to absorb the riches of the food. But if we have a proper metabolism and digest the food we eat, the elements of the food will enter into us richly. We need the word of Christ to dwell in us in this way.

It is possible for the same verse of the Bible to enter into us either in a rich way or in a poor way. At one time you may not be able to digest and assimilate a particular verse. But at another time the Word may be rich in its

entering into you and dwell in you richly. We all need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.

SINGING THE WORD

At this point it is important to consider the way to let the word of Christ inhabit us richly. Paul gives us the way in Colossians 3:16, where he says "in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." Here Paul indicates that we should teach and admonish, not in an ordinary way, but in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Psalms are often rather long, spiritual songs tend to be short, and hymns are usually of medium length. As we admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we should sing with grace in our hearts to God. We need to sing with the exercise of the spirit. The more we sing in this way, the more we shall be inspired and set on fire. By this kind of singing, we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.

Suppose in a meeting we sing a hymn composed of Ephesians 3:16-21. If we sing these verses with the exercise of the spirit, this portion of the Word will inhabit us richly, and we shall receive nourishment. This nourishment is supplied first to the spirit, not to the mentality. By singing with our spirit we have a way to let the word of Christ inhabit us with all its riches to nourish us.

DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

In Colossians 3:17 Paul goes on to say, "And in everything, whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." What does it mean to do all things in the name of the Lord? To act in a person's name is to be one with him and even to become him. If I am not one with a particular person, how can I do anything in his name? If we are to do everything in the name of the Lord, we must be one with Him and even become Him. To do this is to live Christ.

The more we take the Word by reading, pray-reading, and especially sing-reading, the more the riches of the

Word will saturate us and make us one with the Lord. Then we shall do things not in our own name, but in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The way to live Christ is to take the Word by exercising our spirit. It is not sufficient merely to use our mind to read the Word. We must also exercise our spirit by praying the Word and singing it. I hope that in the church meetings we shall spend more time singing the Word of God. Let us first read the Word and then pray-read it. Following this, let us sing the Word. Then we shall become thoroughly saturated with the riches of the Word.

Because the Word is the embodiment of the riches of Christ, to be saturated with the Word is to be infused with and permeated by the elements of Christ. This infusion and permeation causes us to become one with Christ and to do everything in His name. In all that we say and do, we shall be one with Him. As we are permeated by the enriching Word, we become one with the Lord Jesus and do everything in His name. This is the way to live Christ.

God's intention is to have a people who are one with Him, not in His Godhead, but in His life and nature. Those who are one with God in the divine life and nature are able to express Him. What God is seeking today is a group of people who live Christ by taking the rich Word into them.

THE WORD BECOMING THE BOUNTIFUL SPIRIT

Whenever we are saturated with the riches of the Word, the Word within us becomes the bountiful Spirit. This takes place through our unceasing prayer. Perhaps you are wondering what this kind of prayer has to do with singing. Singing is an excellent way to pray. When you sing by exercising your spirit, you pray. Often the best prayer we can offer to God is our singing unto Him. Suppose you sing "Oh, what a life! Oh what a peace! The Christ who's all within me lives." This is an excellent prayer.

We also pray when we thank God. When we do things

in the name of the Lord Jesus, we should also give thanks to God the Father through Him.

By praying, singing, and thanking we are infused with Christ, permeated by Him, and mingled with Him. Many of us can testify that, as we were enjoying a certain portion of the Word, spontaneously a melody welled up from within. Then we began to use this melody to sing the Word to the Lord. By singing, we were saturated with the Word and nourished by its riches. This caused us to be thankful to God. At that time we were truly one with Christ. Whatever we did in word or work was done in the name of the Lord Jesus. Again I say, this is to live Christ.

We need to see that the Word, the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and unceasing prayer with singing and thanking all go together. By our prayer with singing and giving thanks, the rich Word within us becomes the bountiful Spirit. Then because we are one with the Spirit, with the Word, and with Christ, we live Christ, we are truly one with Him in all we say and do.

Every day we must come to the Word and allow the Word to enter into us in a rich way. For this, we need more than just the reading of the Word. We also need praying, singing, thanking, and praising. When we take the Word into us in this way, the Word becomes the Spirit with the bountiful supply. Then we are saturated with the Lord, mingled with Him, and one with Him in a practical way in life and nature. Gradually, the killing element in the Word will deal with the negative things in us--the flesh, the self, and the natural life. At the same time, the Word will nourish, strengthen, and enrich us, supplying us with all the elements we need for our spiritual growth. On the one hand, we are saturated with the Word and the Spirit; on the other hand, the negative things are gradually reduced. This will cause us to live Christ and grow in Him.

Once again I would urge you to combine the rich Word, the bountiful Spirit, and unceasing prayer. Take the Word of God not only by reading, but also by pray-reading and sing-reading. Also praise the Lord and give thanks to Him.

Combine the rich Word and the bountiful supply of the Spirit with unceasing prayer. Then you will enjoy the Lord, partake of Him, be one with Him, live Him, grow in Him, and magnify Him. This is what God desires today.

I hope that we shall all be deeply impressed with the need to practice what has been presented in this message. Do not pray according to the natural, human concept. Rather, exercise your spirit to pray the Word, to sing the Word, and to thank God and praise Him. In this way you will allow the Word to enter into you that you may be nourished with all its riches. These riches will then become the bountiful supply of the Spirit through your unceasing prayer. Then you will enjoy the Lord, be one with Him, and live Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE RICHES OF CHRIST REALIZED IN THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT EMBODIED IN THE RICH WORD OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Col. 2:9; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19; Col. 3:16; John 16:13-15; 6:63

God's desire is that we who have been redeemed, saved, washed by the blood, and regenerated by the Spirit, and have received the life and nature of God should live Christ. It is not adequate simply to improve our behavior or the standard of our living. In a way that is very experiential and practical, we need to live Christ.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE AND EXTENSIVE CHRIST

In order to live Christ, we must realize who Christ is and what Christ is. From the book of Colossians we have seen that Christ is not only all-inclusive, but also extensive. He is both the mystery of God and the mystery of God's economy. Christ is God, man, and the reality of every positive thing in the universe. This, of course, is not pantheism. It is to testify according to Colossians 2:16 and 17 that Christ is the body, the reality, of all positive things.

In Colossians 2:16 and 17 Paul says, "Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." According to the principle set forth in these verses, Christ is the real holiday, or holy day. As our holiday, Christ is our rest, joy, and enjoyment. With Christ every day is a holiday. Without Him, every day is miserable. Even during

difficult times, we may experience a true holiday if we have Christ as our joy, enjoyment, and rest.

Christ is also our new moon. Again and again we all need a new start, a new beginning, as signified by a new moon. Christ is such a new moon to us. Every day in our contact with Him, we may experience a new moon, a new start.

According to these verses from Colossians, Christ is also our eating, drinking, and feast. Words cannot exhaust what Christ is in His extensiveness and all-inclusiveness. Although Christ is so extensive and all-inclusive, He is our enjoyment and experience, and we can live Him.

OUR LIFE AND LIFE SUPPLY

Along with all genuine Christians, we believe that Christ is our Redeemer and Savior. He is God incarnate, and He lived on earth as a man for thirty-three and a half years. Then He died on the cross, shedding His blood to cleanse us from our sins. Now He is our Savior in resurrection. Although we emphatically believe that Christ is our Redeemer and Savior and have experienced Him as such, we have come to realize that Christ is also our life. On the one hand, as life He has been supplied once for all; on the other hand, He is supplied to us continually as life. Life requires a continual supply. If we have life but lack the means to maintain it, we shall die. Breathing, for example, is a necessary matter of life. As such, it must go on continually. Although we may graduate from school, we cannot graduate from breathing and remain alive. Graduation from the matters of life can only mean death. We praise the Lord that Christ is our Redeemer, Savior, and also our life and life supply!

LIVING CHRIST AS SONS OF GOD

As those who have been redeemed, saved, and regenerated, we have God's life and nature. How marvelous that fallen human beings can declare that we have the life and nature of God! We have the nature of God

because we have been born of Him. God is not only our Creator; He is also our Father. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1, lit.). In His love for us the Father has imparted His life and nature to us. Now we are children of God possessing the divine life and nature.

Have you ever realized what kind of status you have as a Christian? You are a son of the almighty God. God is actually your Father. If your father were the President of the United States, you would be very proud. How much more proud we should be of having the almighty God as our Father! We have the right to declare, "Hallelujah, we are sons of the almighty God!"

As sons of God, we should live Christ, not ethics, morality, or behavior. Ethics may be very good and a high standard of morality is no doubt excellent, but there is no comparison between these things and Christ. The standard of the Christian life is Christ Himself; it is not ethics, morality, or high character. In the book of Philippians Paul wants to impress us with the matter of living Christ. Paul could say, "To me to live is Christ" (1:21). It was his expectation that whether by life or by death, Christ would be magnified in him. What a standard! The standard of the Christian life far exceeds that of ethics, morality, or any kind of philosophy. To repeat, the standard of the Christian life is Christ, and we must live Him and magnify Him.

Christ was Paul's goal, and his desire was to be found in Christ (Phil. 3:9). It should also be our desire to be found by others in Christ. Wherever we may be, we should be found in Christ. What a shame to be found in our natural life or in our culture! But how good it is if others could testify of finding us in Christ! Our goal is Christ, and our standard also is Christ. Wherever we are, the people we meet should be impressed with Christ. Then, because we live Christ, we shall be found by others in Him.

If we live a certain thing, we shall no doubt be found in that thing. For example, if we live our culture, others will

find us in culture. Likewise, if we live Christ all the time, we shall always be found in Christ. If we want to be found in Christ, we must first live Christ. Instead of living in a natural way as a young person, middle-aged person, or elderly person, we should live Christ. Oh, it is a great matter to live Christ and to be found in Him!

Living Christ is abstract and mysterious. To live Christ is to live in a mysterious way. On the one hand, this kind of living is real and substantial; on the other hand, it is indefinable. When others find us in Christ, it will be difficult for them to describe us. We shall seem to be quite mysterious. Although as human beings we are not very different from others, there is something mysterious and even special about us. Christ is mysterious, and those who live Him also are mysterious. Because Christ is abstract and mysterious, it is not easy to explain how to live Him.

According to the central thought of the Bible, the Triune God is to be our life, and we need to be in Him. In Matthew 28:19 the Lord Jesus charged the disciples to baptize believers into the name of the Triune God, that is, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To baptize the believers into the Triune God is to place them into an organic union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Before we were saved, the Triune God was altogether objective to us. But through redemption, salvation, justification, and regeneration, He has become subjective. Now we are in Him, and He is in us. The Triune God is in us to be not only our Redeemer and Savior, but also our life and life supply. God's desire is not that we do certain things for Him, but that we be one spirit with Him and live Him. To live the Triune God is to live Christ. It is to magnify Christ, to glorify Him, and to express Him. It is to magnify Christ in the eyes of the people with whom we are in contact. The focal point of the Bible is related to living Christ.

THE HOLY BIBLE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Although living Christ is mysterious, it is not so

mysterious that we cannot understand it at all. As we shall see, living Christ has much to do with the riches of Christ realized in the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit embodied in the rich Word of God. Not only is the Bible God's Word; it is also His speaking, even His breathing. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul says that all Scripture is God-breathed. By God's speaking, by His breathing, many wonderful things are revealed.

If we did not have language, there would be no way for God to speak to us. As the speaking God, He speaks to us through our human language. Language was given to man as a preparation for God's speaking.

We praise the Lord that, as Christians, we have both the Holy Bible in our hands and the Holy Spirit in our spirit and heart. Now we need to consider what the Holy Spirit is and also what the Holy Bible is.

THE TRIUNE GOD REACHING US

When Christians are asked about the Holy Spirit, they often say that the Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead. They point out that the Godhead includes three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Although it is true to say that the Holy Spirit is the third of the Godhead, this understanding is not adequate. It is very important to see that the Father and the Son are fully realized in the Spirit as the third of the Godhead. This means that we cannot separate the Holy Spirit from the Son or the Father.

The three of the Godhead not only coexist, but They also coinhere. Hence, among the Father, Son, and Spirit there are both coexistence and coinherence. God is triune; He is three-one. Coexistence means to exist together at the same time. Coinherence is much more difficult to define or understand. Applied to the Triune God, this term means that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in one another. The Bible reveals clearly that when the Son came, the Father came with Him. Likewise, when the Spirit comes, He comes with the Son and the Father. Furthermore, when

the Son came, the Father came with the Son not in an outward way, but inwardly, subjectively, within the Son.

Regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son and between the Son and the Spirit, the Gospel of John uses a particular Greek preposition, a preposition which can be translated "from with" (6:46; 16:27). The Son came not only from the Father, but even from with the Father. He came from the Father and also with Him. This indicates that when the Son came, the Father came also. The Father came in the Son. Therefore the Lord could say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He could also testify, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (John 14:10). On the one hand, the Father and the Son are two; on the other hand, They are one. Because the Father came not only with the Son but also in Him, the Son, the Lord Jesus, could say, "The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father Who abides in Me, He does His works" (John 14:10). Furthermore, according to the Bible, if we have the Son, we have the Father also (1 John 2:23). Because the Father is with the Son and even in Him, we receive the Father when we receive the Son. Moreover, when the Spirit comes, He comes with both the Son and the Father. Therefore, to have the Spirit is to have the Son and the Father.

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate and consummate reaching of the Triune God to us. Do not think that when the Holy Spirit reaches you, only He, the third of the Godhead, comes, and that the Father and the Son remain in heaven. Some Christians have such an understanding. Instead of believing that Christ is in us, they claim that Christ sent the Holy Spirit to function as His representative in us. This concept is altogether wrong. The Bible does not speak of the Spirit representing the Son in the believers. On the contrary, according to the Scriptures, when the Holy Spirit comes, the Son comes with Him and in Him. The Father also comes with the Son and the Spirit. This means that when the Holy Spirit comes to us, the entire Triune God comes. According to the Bible, we may

say that the Father is the source, the Son is the course, and the Spirit is the flow. How marvelous that the Holy Spirit is the consummate reaching of the Triune God to you and me!

INDWELT BY THE SPIRIT

As those who believe in Christ, we may have the full assurance that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. However, concerning this there is much confusion among Christians today. Some insist that after a person has become a Christian, he must still pray to receive the Holy Spirit. Some go so far as to claim that speaking in tongues is the unique sign of receiving the Spirit. According to the Bible, when we believed in the Lord Jesus, called on His name, and received Him as our Savior, the Holy Spirit entered into us. From that time onward, we have been indwelt by the Spirit. We do not need to speak in tongues as a sign that we have received the Holy Spirit.

One definite indicator that we have received the Holy Spirit is that we have a sweet sense within when we call on God our Father. One day a young man asked Brother Nee about Romans 8:16, a verse which says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God. He wanted help to understand what it means to say that the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit in this way. Since that young man was married, Brother Nee asked him if he sensed the same sweetness when he called his father-in-law "Daddy" as he did when he addressed his own father in this way. The young man testified that he did not have the same sense of sweetness in both cases. Brother Nee pointed out to him that he could call his own father "Daddy" in a sweet way because he had been born of him. Brother Nee then asked him if he had a sense of sweetness within when he called God his Father. The young man said with assurance that he did experience this sweetness. Brother Nee replied, "You are certainly saved. The reason you sense this sweetness is that you have the Spirit within. You now have the spirit of sonship. The sweetness you

experience when you call on God the Father is a sign that you have received the Spirit." Whether or not we ever speak in tongues, we may have the assurance that we have received the Holy Spirit and are now children of God.

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

In the New Testament we see that the Spirit and the Word are one. The Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). We should not separate the Holy Spirit whom we have within us from the holy Word which we have in our hands. These two are one divine reality. Apart from the Holy Spirit, the Bible is empty, altogether without reality. The reality of the Bible is the Holy Spirit. However, if we did not have the Bible, we would not have the embodiment of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Word, there is no embodiment of the Spirit. On the one hand, the Bible is the embodiment of the Spirit; on the other hand, the Spirit is the reality of the Bible. We should never separate the two.

We thank the Lord for two wonderful gifts, the Holy Spirit within and the Holy Bible without. We have seen that the Holy Spirit is the Triune God reaching us in a consummate way. When the Holy Spirit reaches us, the Triune God is with us. The Spirit, however, is abstract and mysterious. Hence, it is important to see that the Spirit is embodied in the Word. Now if we would live Christ, we need to experience the Spirit within and enjoy the Word without. In our experience, the Spirit and the Word must be one. Whenever we read the Bible, we should also pray. This is to pray-read the Word. By pray-reading, we exercise our spirit to contact the Holy Spirit. In this way, we combine the Holy Spirit with the Holy Bible. As a result, in our experience the Spirit and the Word are one enjoyment, and this enjoyment is the Triune God.

THE FULLNESS, THE RICHES, THE SUPPLY, AND THE WORD

Four basic verses in the New Testament are Colossians

2:9; Ephesians 3:8; Philippians 1:19; and Colossians 3:16. In these verses we have four strategic terms. First, in Colossians 2:9 we see that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. Here the crucial term is fullness. Second, in Ephesians 3:8 Paul says that he preaches the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel. Paul's gospel was the riches of Christ. The crucial matter here is the riches of Christ. Third, in Philippians 1:19 Paul speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Fourth, Colossians 3:16 tells us that the word of Christ should dwell in us, inhabit us, richly. For the word of Christ to dwell in us richly means that it inhabits us in its riches and also in a rich way. Therefore, in these four verses we have the fullness, the riches, the bountiful supply, and the Word dwelling in us richly. The fullness is related to the Godhead, the riches are related to Christ, the bountiful supply is related to the Spirit, and the word of Christ indwelling us richly is related to the Word. In brief, we have the Godhead, Christ, the Spirit, and the Word. I strongly recommend that at the first opportunity you pray-read these four verses, enjoying the fullness of the Godhead, the riches of Christ, the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and the word of Christ inhabiting you richly.

The fullness, the riches, the bountiful supply, and the Word are mutually related. The fullness of the Godhead is actually the riches of Christ, and the riches of Christ are the bountiful supply of the Spirit. With the Godhead, there is the fullness; with Christ, the fullness becomes the unsearchable riches; and with the Spirit, the riches become the bountiful supply. Furthermore, this bountiful supply of the Spirit is embodied in the Word. When the Word of God inhabits us with the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, it truly inhabits us richly.

When I was young, I could easily recite many Bible verses. However, although I could recite a verse like John 3:16, this verse did not inhabit me in a rich way. On the contrary, it dwelt in me in a poor way. But now I can testify that this verse, along with a great many others,

inhabits me with all its riches. It dwells in me richly. Whenever I muse upon certain verses, I am filled with the enjoyment of the Triune God. My experience today is very different from what I used to have. Then I could recite Colossians 2:9, but I did not have much enjoyment of the fullness of the Godhead. But when I muse upon this verse today, the enjoyment is exceedingly rich.

PERMEATED WITH THE TRIUNE GOD TO LIVE CHRIST

It is crucial for us to see that the fullness of the Godhead embodied in the Son becomes the unsearchable riches of Christ, that the riches of Christ, the Son, are realized as the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and that this bountiful supply is now embodied in the Word. When we read the Word and pray-read it, we can touch the essence and substance of the Word: the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. If we merely read the Word without prayer, we may not get anything more than objective knowledge. But by praying with the Word we touch the Spirit. As a result, we enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit, the riches of Christ, and the fullness of the Godhead. Perhaps now you can understand why this message has such a long title: "The Riches of Christ Realized in the Bountiful Supply of the Spirit and the Bountiful Supply of the Spirit Embodied in the Rich Word of God."

If we would live Christ, we need to read the Word and pray-read it in such a way that we partake of the fullness of God, the riches of Christ, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Oh, we need to be immersed in and saturated with the fullness of the Godhead, the riches of Christ, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit! Then, having been permeated with the Triune God, we shall live Christ.

We all need to be permeated with the bountiful supply of the Spirit, the riches of Christ, and the fullness of the Godhead. All this is in the Word and in the Spirit. Thus, we must come to the Word constantly and pray unceasingly. By pray-reading the Word, we shall touch the supply of the Spirit, the riches of Christ, and the fullness of the

Godhead. Then we shall partake of all that the Triune God is, and spontaneously we shall live Him. This is to live Christ.

Living Christ is not a matter of making up our mind to have a change in our way of living. We should not say, "Now I have learned what it means to live Christ. I make up my mind to live Him, and I pray that God will help me do this. O God, help me to live Christ." This way does not work. If you pray like this, you will find that immediately after praying you will continue to live yourself. The way to live Christ is to first be permeated by Him with all His riches. Again and again we have pointed out that these riches are in the Spirit and in the Word.

THE ANTENNA AND THE GROUND WIRE

We may liken the bountiful supply of the Spirit to electricity, which reaches us by means of an antenna and a ground wire. The Spirit Himself is like the antenna, and the Bible is like the ground wire. When we have both the antenna and the ground wire, both the Spirit and the Word, functioning together, we receive the bountiful supply of the Spirit as the heavenly electricity. Our experience testifies of this. When we exercise our spirit to pray-read a verse, we have the sense within of being supplied, refreshed, enlightened, watered, nourished, comforted, and strengthened. This is the enjoyment of the divine electricity. Use the antenna and the ground wire, the Spirit and the Word, and you will receive this bountiful supply.

The principle is the same with coming to know the will of God. The way to know God's will is not to pray, "O Lord, you know how foolish I am. Show me Your way." This kind of prayer does not work very well. Instead of praying like this, simply enjoy the Word and the Spirit, allowing the heavenly electricity to infuse you with the Triune God. As you receive the infusion of the bountiful supply of the Spirit, the will of God will become clear to you automatically and spontaneously. You will know that you should not do certain things, for they are not the will of

God. You will also know that you should do certain other things, for they are God's will. You will not need others to tell you what to do. The divine infusion you enjoy inwardly will make you clear. Furthermore, as you are immersed in the Triune God and permeated with the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, you will spontaneously live Christ.

Praise the Lord for showing us the way to live Christ! The way is to enjoy the Triune God by reading and pray-reading the Word. When we touch the bountiful supply of the Spirit, we shall live a life that expresses Christ, a life which actually is Christ Himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT AND ENJOY THE RICHES OF CHRIST BY RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD

(1)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21; 2:12-16; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19; 6:17-18

According to God's economy revealed in the New Testament, the goal of the Christian life is to live Christ. When I was young, I was taught that the central thought of the Bible is related to Christ. Now I realize that the central thought of the Bible is not only Christ, but also to live Christ.

CHRIST ABIDING IN US AND LIVING IN US

Simply to say that Christ is the central thought of the Bible is rather objective. In our experience, Christ should be very subjective to us. For instance, the Lord Jesus says, "Abide in Me and I in you" (John 15:4). This expression is simple, but the meaning is profound. How can we abide in another person and have that person abide in us? With human beings it is impossible for people to abide in one another. But it is possible for the human life to abide in the divine life, and the divine life to abide in the human life. This means that God can abide in us, and we can abide in God.

Some may wonder how we, little human beings, can abide in God, and how the great, almighty God can abide in us. Recently, some tried to tell us that because God is unlimited in His greatness and man is so small, it is

impossible for Him to abide in us. They asked how such a small container could hold such a vast content. Their word indicates that they do not believe what was spoken by the Lord Jesus in John 15. They charge us with heresy and claim that, on the one hand, we reduce God to our scale and that, on the other hand, we teach evolution into God and believe that human beings can actually become God Himself. When we asked them the meaning of the Lord's word, "Abide in Me and I in you," they answered that this refers merely to intimate relationship or fellowship. Their reply shows that, according to the natural human mentality, it is impossible to believe that we can actually abide in Christ and have Him abide in us. Nevertheless, we must believe the Lord's word, "Abide in Me and I in you," and say "amen" to it.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." To say that Christ lives in us is even stronger than to say that He abides in us. When I visit another locality, I may abide in a brother's home. However, I cannot say that I live there. I only abide there temporarily with certain limitations. But when I return to my home, I can live there. To live in a certain place is to have full liberty. Do you abide in your home or do you live there? Of course you would answer that you live at home. But you would not say that you live in a motel. To say that Christ lives in us means that He has the full liberty to speak, act, and behave. He is able to do in us whatever He desires, for He has redeemed us and made us His dwelling place.

CHRIST MAKING HIS HOME IN US AND BEING FORMED IN US

According to Ephesians 3, Paul prayed that the Father would strengthen us through the Spirit in our inner man that Christ may make His home in our hearts. First Christ abides in us, then He lives in us, and then He settles down in us, making His home in our whole inner being. On the one hand, Christ may live in our spirit. But on the other

hand, we may not give Him much room to live in our mind, will, or emotion. From experience we know that sometimes we restrict Christ to our spirit. When He tries to spread from our spirit into our emotion, we may not allow Him to do so. For example, in the morning a brother may pray to the Lord, enjoy Him, and declare, "Hallelujah, the Lord Jesus is living in my spirit!" But, later that day he is tempted to do a certain thing. Even though the Lord who lives in his spirit does not agree, the brother, living according to his emotion, insists on doing that thing. He reasons with the Lord, trying to persuade Him to stay in his spirit and give him the freedom to live according to his emotion. He even promises that the next day he will give the Lord the freedom to spread into his emotion. But when the next day comes, he does not keep his promise. Thus, the Lord is not given the liberty to settle down in this brother's emotion.

Because we do not easily give the Lord the opportunity to make His home in our hearts, it was necessary for Paul to pray that the Father would strengthen us in our inner man through the Spirit that Christ may make His home in our hearts. According to the Bible, the heart is composed of the mind, will, emotion, and conscience. The heart surrounds the spirit and is larger than the spirit. When we received the Lord Jesus, He came into our spirit, and now He lives here. At first, we might not even have given the Lord the freedom to live in our spirit. We simply allowed Him to abide there. Gradually, however, we gave Him opportunity to live in our spirit. But still we were not willing to give Him full access to our inner being. This is why we need our inner man, our regenerated spirit, to be strengthened. Then Christ will be able to make His home in our hearts. He will not only abide in us and live in us, but spread into every part of our inner being and settle down there.

Although I have experienced the Lord a great deal throughout the years, I do not have the confidence to say that Christ is fully settled in my inner being. Perhaps I

have given Him the full freedom to occupy my mind or emotion, but I still may reserve a part of my will for myself.

It is important for us to see that Christ should be subjective to us in our experience. He abides in us, He lives in us, and He desires to make His home, to settle Himself, throughout our inner being.

In Galatians 4:19 Paul says, "My children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you." For Christ to be formed in us means that He abides in us, lives in us, settles down in us, and then saturates every part of our being.

CONSTITUTED OF CHRIST

As Christians, we differ in the measure of Christ we have within us. Some have given more ground to Christ; others have given Him less room to grow in them. No doubt Paul's measure of Christ was full. This means that Christ had been fully formed in him. In Philippians 1:21 Paul could even declare, "To me to live is Christ." Christ had been wrought into Paul and had actually become his constituent. Therefore, Paul was a man completely constituted of Christ. This was the reason he could say that to him to live was Christ.

Dietitians often tell us that we are what we eat. The food we eat eventually becomes our constitution. It is wrought into our fibers and even our cells. If a person eats a great deal of a certain food, he will eventually become constituted of that food.

By the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he had been a believer in Christ for nearly thirty years. Throughout those years, Christ had been more and more wrought into Paul's inner being. Paul was continually eating Christ, partaking of Him. Eventually, having been constituted of Christ, he became a Christ-man. As one who was constituted of Christ, he could testify, "To me to live is Christ."

We today should be the continuation of Paul's testimony. We are here to live Christ, to have Christ

wrought into us until our mind, emotion, and will are constituted of Him.

A METABOLIC CHANGE

In Romans 12:2 Paul charges us not to be conformed to this age, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. To be conformed to this age is to be fashioned outwardly according to the style of the age, according to the trend of the world. To be transformed is to be inwardly and organically renewed. Some have defamed us, accusing us of bending people's minds. We utterly repudiate this false accusation. By the Lord's grace we seek to minister something divine and spiritual which can transform a person's mind. Mind bending is the result of an outward influence on a person's mind, but mind renewing involves inward, organic, metabolic transformation in life. The longer we stay in the Lord's recovery, the more our mind is transformed metabolically. Automatically our thinking is renewed and changed. This happens because a new element is added into our being to discharge the old element and to replace it. This is transformation. Day by day and meeting by meeting, something divine, spiritual, holy, and heavenly is being transfused into us. This element is Christ with His unsearchable riches. As the riches of Christ are infused into us, they become the new element within us which discharges the oldness and causes an intrinsic, inward, metabolic change.

The more we are transformed, the more Christ is given room to settle down in us. In fact, the process of transformation is the process of being occupied and possessed by Christ. For our mind to be transformed means that Christ has taken possession of it and saturated it with Himself. Likewise, when our emotion and will are saturated with Christ, He becomes the very constituent of these inward parts. In this way Christ becomes subjective to us.

THE EXPERIENTIAL CHRIST

For centuries, the subjective Christ has been ignored by the believers. Many devoted Christians have directed their love to the objective Christ. They believe in Him,

respect Him, exalt Him, and take Him as the object of their worship. However, in many cases, they regard Him as One who is far away in heaven. Although they may love Him, they may not experience Him abiding in them. They may work diligently for Christ, but not realize that Christ is not only in heaven, but also dwelling within them. Some have even received the wrong teaching that Christ does not dwell in the believers, but is merely represented in them by the Holy Spirit. They think of the Holy Spirit as an agent sent by Christ to represent Him, to work in them, to move in them, and to inspire them. However, according to the Word of God, the indwelling Spirit is not an agent of Christ; He is actually Christ Himself. According to Christian experience, the Christ who dwells in us is identical to the Spirit who indwells us. The indwelling Spirit is the practical Christ, the subjective and experiential Christ. If we have a proper realization of this, we shall not try to separate the Spirit from Christ. The Three of the Godhead are one. The Father is in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit. When the Spirit reaches us and comes to live in us, all Three of the Godhead come to dwell in us. How wonderful that Christ is in us! Our Christ is subjective and experiential.

If we would live Christ, we must realize that He is subjective as well as objective. As the mighty God, the Lord of all, the One who has ascended to the heavens, and who has been enthroned and crowned with glory, Christ is objective. Of this we should not have any doubt. But Christ is also subjective. He dwells in us, He lives in us, He is seeking to settle Himself in us, and He is also working to saturate our entire being with Himself.

CHRIST MAGNIFIED

Let us now consider Philippians 1:19-21. In verse 19 Paul says that his circumstances will turn out for his salvation through the petition of the saints and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. According to

verse 20, we see that the salvation Paul expected to experience was that instead of being put to shame, in everything Christ would be magnified in him with all boldness. Thus, for Paul's environment to turn out to be for his salvation means that it would turn out for the magnification of Christ in him. Hence, salvation here is actually Christ magnified in him. The words, "To me to live is Christ" in verse 21 are an explanation of what it means to magnify Christ. To magnify Christ is to live Him. On the negative side, Paul expected that he would not be put to shame; on the positive side, he expected Christ to be magnified in him.

According to the context of these verses, salvation here is not salvation from hell. Instead, it is salvation from being put to shame. If Paul had been sorrowful and downcast when he was in prison, that would have been a shame. Suppose Timothy came to visit Paul and found him weeping over his difficult situation. What a shame that would have been to Paul! But suppose Paul rejoiced in the Lord and sang praises to Him. Then Christ truly would have been magnified in his body, even though he was a prisoner in Rome. This is the salvation spoken of here.

Suppose a brother is in a very sorrowful situation, and someone comes to visit him. If that brother is weeping and complaining about his sorrows, that will be a shame. This brother needs to experience God's salvation in his situation. Then should someone visit him, that suffering brother will be able to say to him, "Praise the Lord! The Lord's grace is sufficient. I am in the third heaven. Hallelujah!" What a glorious testimony this would be! We would see that a brother's suffering has turned out to be for his salvation.

Paul's earnest expectation was that instead of being put to shame, he would magnify Christ. What a tremendous salvation it is to magnify Christ in all circumstances! The jailers and the guards could see Paul rejoicing in the Lord. In him Christ was magnified. To magnify Christ in such a way is to live Him.

SAVED THROUGH THE INDWELLING SPIRIT AND THE OPERATING GOD

In 2:12 Paul charges us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. In 1:19-20 Paul speaks of something turning out for salvation, but in 2:12 he tells us to work out our salvation. In verse 13 he goes on to explain, "For it is God Who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." In chapter one salvation comes by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But here salvation comes from the operating God within us. Now we must see that the operating God is actually the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The One who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure is the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ with His bountiful supply.

We should be careful, and even be fearful and trembling, lest we offend the God who is operating within us. This is the reason Paul says in 2:14, "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." Murmurings are found mainly with the sisters, and reasonings, mainly with the brothers. If we murmur or reason, we offend the indwelling and operating God. When we murmur or reason, we may have the sense deep within that we are offending the operating God, grieving the indwelling Spirit. Furthermore, we may have the sense that the indwelling Spirit is telling us not to reason or murmur, but to work out our own salvation. We have received an all-inclusive salvation, which is Christ Himself, but now we must work out this salvation. The very God who is the Spirit with the bountiful supply is operating in us. With fear and trembling, let us respect Him and cooperate with Him to work out our salvation. If we do this, we shall be saved from murmurings and reasonings. This is a practical and instant salvation worked out according to the inward operation of God.

SHINING AS LUMINARIES AND HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

In verses 15 and 16 Paul continues, "That you may become blameless and guileless, children of God without

blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." To shine as luminaries is to magnify Christ. This indicates that the salvation in chapter two equals the salvation in chapter one. The operating God equals the Spirit with the bountiful supply, and shining as luminaries is equal to magnifying Christ.

According to verse 16, the way we shine as luminaries is to hold forth the word of life. It is rather difficult to understand adequately the meaning of the phrase "holding forth." It means to present something to people, to offer them something, and even to apply something to them. To hold forth the word of life is to offer such a word to others, to present it to them, and even to apply it to them. This is to minister Christ to others, to offer Christ to them. What do you offer to your family, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, friends, or classmates? What do you present to them? Your answer should be that you offer Christ to them, present Christ to them, and apply Christ to them in their situation. This is to hold forth the word of life. The word of life is actually the living expression of Christ. To shine as luminaries is to magnify Christ, and to hold forth the word of life is to live Christ.

A DEFINITION OF LIVING CHRIST

Both 1:19-21 and 2:12-16 refer to the same thing. In chapter one Paul says that his circumstances will turn out to his salvation. Then instead of being put to shame, he will magnify Christ. This is to live Christ. In chapter two Paul charges us to work out our salvation according to God's operation within us. Then instead of murmuring and reasoning, we shall shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life. Philippians 2:12-16 is thus a definition of 1:19-21. In 1:19 we have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This Spirit is the very God who operates in us. Furthermore, to magnify Christ is to shine as luminaries without murmuring or reasoning, and to live Christ is to hold forth the word of life.

SATURATED WITH THE WORD OF LIFE

This brings us to a crucial matter: to live Christ we must first receive the word of life and be constituted of it. From the time we were born, we were gradually constituted of culture. Culture was infused into us by our family and our society. Eventually, the culture infused into us became our constitution. Automatically we lived according to the culture which had been constituted into us. We also live what has been infused into us. Children live according to what has been infused into them by their parents. Now that we have been saved, we should no longer live culture. For example, a believer from China should no longer live Chinese culture, philosophy, or ethics. Instead, he should live Christ. But how can we live Christ? If we would live Christ, we need to receive the Word into our being and allow it to saturate us. The Word which is saturating us will gradually replace the culture which has been infused into us. The more we are infused with the Word, the more we shall be transformed. Spontaneously our thought, love, aspiration, and conversation will become Christ. Then instead of living culture, we shall live Christ. The only way to live Christ is to be saturated with His word of life. The word of life infused into us will wash away the elements of culture and become the new constituent in our inner being. Then we shall live Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT AND ENJOY THE RICHES OF CHRIST BY RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD

(2)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21; 2:12-16; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19; 6:17-18

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." Here Paul says that the word of Christ should dwell in us, inhabit us. This implies that the word of Christ is living. In order for something to dwell in us or to inhabit us, it must be living.

A LIVING PERSON

Paul's expression in this verse indicates that the word of Christ is very much like a living person. Paul almost personifies the word of Christ; he tells us to let this word inhabit us, as if it were a living person. The word of Christ is actually the living Person of Christ. Moreover, according to the New Testament, the living Person of Christ is the Spirit. Jesus is the name of this Person, and the reality of this Person is the Spirit. For this reason, whenever we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, it is the Spirit who comes. We have also pointed out that the Word and the Spirit are one. Hence, when the word of Christ dwells in us, the Spirit inhabits us.

IN ALL WISDOM

In Colossians 3:16 Paul tells us to let the word of Christ

dwell in us richly "in all wisdom." Have you ever considered what it means for the word of Christ to dwell in you in all wisdom? If we would understand the meaning of this expression, we must differentiate between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is related primarily to the function of the mind, whereas wisdom is related to the function of our spirit. This means that if the word of Christ is to dwell in us in all wisdom, we need to exercise our spirit. If we use our mind to memorize the Word, the Word will then dwell in us in knowledge. Memorizing Bible verses is a function of the mind related to knowledge, not a function of the spirit related to wisdom. For the Word to dwell in us in all wisdom refers to its indwelling every way possible through the exercise of the spirit. Wisdom is deeper, finer, and more profound than knowledge. It comes from the exercise of the spirit.

The difference between knowledge and wisdom can be illustrated in married life. Suppose a brother's wife is murmuring and even rebukes him. If he fights back by reasoning with her, he will exercise his mind with its knowledge. In this, there is no wisdom. But suppose while his wife is murmuring, he calls on the name of the Lord Jesus and prays. This is wisdom. To reason is related to knowledge, but to pray is related to wisdom. Pray-reading and singing may also be related to wisdom. The brother may also show wisdom by exercising his spirit to share a helpful testimony he heard recently in a church meeting. The point here is that knowledge involves the exercise of the mind, but wisdom involves the exercise of the spirit by such means as praying, pray-reading, singing, and testifying.

When Paul speaks in Colossians 3:16 of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, he does not mention reading, which is an exercise of the mind. Rather, he mentions wisdom, which implies the exercise of the spirit. What issues from the exercise of the spirit is wisdom, but what comes through the exercise of the mind is knowledge.

TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER

In this verse Paul also speaks of "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace" in our hearts to God. Here Paul does not speak of teaching and admonishing in an ordinary way, but of teaching and admonishing in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Furthermore, Paul indicates that it is by singing that we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. We may also teach and admonish by singing.

SINGING TO THE LORD

Because many of us were born into Christianity, raised in Christianity, and even constituted of Christianity, we must admit that, at least to some extent, we are still under the influence of the religion of Christianity, especially in the way we gather together for the meetings. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told that we should gather together and sit quietly, waiting for someone to start the meeting. According to the book of Psalms, when the children of Israel came together for the feasts three times a year, they began their meetings not in the temple, but at the foot of Mount Zion. As they ascended the mountain, they psalmed the songs of ascent (Psalms 120 through 134). Likewise, the church meetings should begin not in the meeting hall, but either in our homes or on our way to the meeting. The meeting should be an exhibition of our daily life, of the way we live at home at school, or at work. The meeting should be full of singing and praising because we sing and praise the Lord day by day. I appreciate the chorus of the hymn, "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long." But where can you find a Christian who praises the Lord all day long? Many Christians who sing this hymn do not praise their Savior in their daily living. But our daily life should be filled with singing to the Lord.

Many of us have read the Bible for years without realizing that we can receive the Word of God by singing. Is

it your practice to take a verse of the Bible not only by reading, but also by singing? Christians have been taught to study the Bible and to read it, but not to sing it. We are thankful for the recovery of pray-reading the Word. Now we must go on to sing-read the Word of God. We need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom by singing. This is not my teaching; it is the charge given by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16.

Even though we have been reading Colossians for years, we have not paid adequate attention to taking the Word by singing. Many Christians claim to be scriptural. But instead of being wholly scriptural, they may be formal and religious. It certainly is scriptural to sing the Word of God.

We should sing the Word not only in the meetings, but especially in our daily life. In particular, we should sing the Word at home. When you are alone in your room or with others at the dining table, sing the Word of God. Singing the Word is an excellent way to exercise the spirit. To pray is to exercise the spirit, but to sing is an especially good way to exercise the spirit.

The longest book of the Bible is the book of Psalms, containing one hundred fifty psalms. This book was composed not merely for reading; it was written for singing, even for psalming. Psalming is more elevated than singing. In Colossians 3:16 Paul mentions psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Spiritual songs are usually short; hymns, of medium length; and psalms are usually longer compositions. We need to sing and psalm the Word of God. Psalming is higher, deeper, and more profound than singing.

SATURATED WITH THE WORD BY SINGING

If we sincerely desire to be saturated with the living Word so that we may live Christ, we need to follow the practice advocated by Paul in Colossians 3:16. This means that we must let the word of Christ inhabit us in a rich way, not by mere knowledge from the mind, but by every kind of wisdom from our spirit, including singing and

psalming. Oh, we need to sing and psalm the Word of God! To sing the Word is better than reading it, and to psalm the Word is even better than singing it. Psalming the Word includes musing upon it and enjoying it. As we psalm the Word, we dwell upon it, muse on it, and enjoy it, thereby giving more opportunity for the Word to saturate us.

If we only read the Word, there is little opportunity for the portion we read to sink into us and saturate our being. But if we sing the Word, and especially if we psalm it, we open our being more fully to the Word and give it the opportunity to sink into us and saturate us. For example, if we sing Psalm 1, we shall enjoy the riches found in this short psalm. Let us sing and psalm the Word of God not only in the meetings. Let us come to the Word daily to sing and psalm it with our whole being. In singing and psalming the Word of God, let us exercise our voice, our mind, our heart, and our spirit.

Furthermore, I hope that from now on in the church meetings more place will be given to spontaneous singing of the Word. Perhaps in a certain meeting we shall sing or psalm the whole book of Ephesians. No doubt, if we spend an entire meeting to do this, we shall touch the riches in this Epistle.

It is surprising that in Colossians 3:16 Paul does not mention reading. Instead, he emphasizes singing. It is possible to read the Word without exercising our spirit and without contacting God. But by praying, singing, and psalming, we are ushered into the Spirit. The best way to receive the word of life and to be saturated with the element of Christ is to sing the Word.

FILLED IN SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:18-19 is parallel to Colossians 3:16. In these verses Paul says, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord." Notice that in Colossians 3:16 Paul tells us to let the word of Christ dwell

in us richly, but in Ephesians 5:18 he tells us to be filled in spirit. When we put these verses together, we see that we should be filled in spirit with the word of Christ. These two portions of the Word have the same goal--that we should have our spirit filled with the Word.

We may compare our spirit to an automobile needing gasoline, and the Word, the Bible, to a gas station. When we sense that we are empty, we should come to the Word to be filled. In the Word we have an inexhaustible supply of spiritual gasoline. The way to pump this "gasoline" into us is by singing and psalming the Word. If we are filled in this way, surely we shall speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We shall also discover that singing and psalming the Word are higher than pray-reading it.

The more we sing and psalm the Word of God, the more we shall be delivered from the influence of religion, the influence which causes us to come to the meetings in a formal way. Let us build up the habit of singing the Word day by day. Then our meetings will not be formal. Instead of any kind of performance, the meetings will be filled with an exhibition of our daily life. What we exhibit in the church meetings will be the way we live day by day. In particular, we shall sing in the meetings because we sing the Word daily.

Concerning the singing of the Word of God, my main burden is not that the meetings will be enriched; it is that we shall be saturated with the living Word. We shall participate in the bountiful supply of the Spirit and enjoy the riches of Christ by receiving the Word of God.

In the past I lost many opportunities to be saturated with the Word because I did not know to sing the Word. I spent a great deal of time reading and studying the Bible, filling several Bibles with notes, but I did not realize I could sing or psalm the Word. It is one thing to read Ephesians 2 and another thing to pray-read it. But once again I wish to emphasize that singing the Word is even better than pray-reading. Many of today's Christians

exercise only their mind to read and study the Word. They do not sing the Word at all, and some actually oppose the practice of pray-reading. I am confident that the more we sing and psalm the Word, the more we shall be washed by and saturated with the element of Christ.

RECEIVING THE WORD TO LIVE CHRIST

Concerning those things necessary for life, what is important is not understanding, but receiving. We may not understand very much about the water we drink and especially about the food we eat, but we need to drink and eat nevertheless. By eating and drinking we receive what is necessary to maintain life. In like manner, we need to receive the Word into us by eating it. Yes, we can eat the Word by reading it in a proper way. Furthermore, from experience we know that we can take the Word as food by pray-reading it. But now we must go on to see that there is no better way to receive the Word into our being than by singing the Word. The more we sing and psalm the Word of God, the more it will sink into the depths of our being and saturate us. If we take even a little time to sing the Word, we shall sense that we are inwardly filled and saturated with it. Then spontaneously we shall live Christ.

When the element of Christ has been infused into us by our singing and psalming the Word, we live Christ spontaneously and automatically. Sometimes we may read the Word without having any element of Christ infused into our being. But when we sing and psalm the Word, we are saturated with the divine element contained in the Word and conveyed to us through the Word. The more we sing and psalm the Word, the more we give opportunity to the Word to dwell in us, sink into us, and permeate us with the divine element. Then we shall be constituted of the element of Christ. Automatically we shall become what we eat and live out what we have absorbed. This is the way to live Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

MAKING HIS HOME IN US BY HIS WORD INHABITING US

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:8, 16-17a, 19b; 6:17b-18a; Col. 3:16; Phil. 2:16a; John 14:23; 15:4, 7

The verses printed above may be compared to the pieces of a puzzle. When we put the pieces together, we see a complete picture.

In Ephesians 3:8 Paul speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The unsearchable riches of Christ are the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9). How all-inclusive and extensive these riches must be! The very fullness of the Godhead has become the unsearchable riches of Christ.

As we consider Ephesians 3:8 and 16-17a, we see that for Christ to make His home in our heart means that His unsearchable riches must possess our entire being. They must fill our heart, including the mind, emotion, will, and conscience. No doubt, if our heart has been occupied and possessed by Christ, we shall also be one with Him in spirit. Then our whole inner being will be possessed by Christ and be one with Him.

The word about the fullness of God being the riches of Christ and the riches of Christ possessing our inner being may be little more than a doctrine to us. We must go on to ask how in a practical way the riches of Christ can fill us. The fullness of the Godhead and the unsearchable riches of Christ are realized by the Spirit and in the Spirit. Furthermore, the Spirit is embodied in the Word. On the one hand, in Ephesians 3:8 and 17 Paul speaks of the riches of Christ and of Christ making His home in our heart; on the other hand, in Colossians 3:16 he charges us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. The word richly

corresponds to riches, and the word dwell corresponds to "make His home." The Christ with the unsearchable riches desires to make His home in our heart. Colossians 3:16 refers both to these riches and to the matter of the word of Christ inhabiting us, indwelling us.

Moreover, according to Ephesians 3:19, if Christ makes His home in our heart, we shall be filled unto all the fullness of God. We began with the fullness of the Godhead, and now we return to this fullness. The fullness of God, which is from eternity, has become the unsearchable riches of Christ. Now this Christ with His unsearchable riches is making His home in our hearts so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of the Godhead. Therefore, here we have a full circle beginning with the fullness of the Godhead and also coming back to this fullness. We praise the Lord that through the Spirit and the Word we may experience the unsearchable riches of Christ and be filled unto all the fullness of God!

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Concerning the Spirit, there are two extremes, one found among fundamentalists and the other among Pentecostalists. Because they are afraid of the experience of the Spirit, certain fundamental Christians care primarily for Bible doctrine. But to have only the doctrine of the Bible without the Spirit is to have a lifeless body. The Spirit is embodied in the Word. Hence, the Word may be called the body of the Spirit. To separate the Spirit from the Word is to have a lifeless body. The Spirit is the life content of the Bible. Apart from the Spirit, the Bible is dead letters. Nevertheless, fundamental Christians are often afraid to hear about the experience of Christ, the Spirit, and the inner life. They represent one extreme.

The Pentecostalists represent another extreme. They may neglect the Word and emphasize the Spirit in an abnormal, unbalanced way.

God's economy avoids both extremes. In the economy of God, the Spirit is the ultimate and consummate reaching of

the Triune God to man. As we have seen, when the Spirit comes to us, the Triune God comes. Along with the Spirit, God gives us the Word. On the one hand, we have the Spirit as the ultimate and consummate reaching of the Triune God; on the other hand, we have the Word as the embodiment of the Spirit. We should never divorce the Word from the Spirit. Just as our life and our physical body are one entity, one complete living organism, so the Spirit and the Word are one. As human beings, we must have both a visible and tangible body and also an invisible and intangible life. In like manner, as believers, we need both the Word and the Spirit. Furthermore, just as it is the invisible life within our body which makes our body vigorous and active, it is the Spirit who causes the Word to be living.

The Triune God as the all-inclusive Spirit is with us. There is no need to fast and pray in order to receive the Spirit. We can receive this Spirit simply by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. From our experience we know that whenever we call, "O Lord Jesus," we receive the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Then the Spirit turns us to the Word. Many of us can testify that when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus with faith and love, we receive the Spirit. Automatically, we are drawn to the Bible. This indicates that the Spirit and the Word are one. God's economy depends on both the Word and the Spirit. We must have both and never separate them. We need the Word as the body and the Spirit as the life.

If we would allow Christ to occupy us and make His home in us, we must be filled with the word of Christ. In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus says, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." Here we see the connection between the Lord's word and the Father and the Son coming to us and making an abode with us. It is difficult to say whether this abode is for the Father and the Son or for us. Actually, it is a mutual abode. On the one hand, the Lord makes us His abode; on the other hand, He

is an abode to us. This is proved by the Lord's word in John 15:4 concerning abiding: "Abide in Me and I in you." This refers to the mutual abiding and to the mutual abode. No doubt, John 15 is the continuation of chapter fourteen. In chapter fourteen we have the mutual abode and in chapter fifteen, the mutual abiding. Because there is an abode both for the Lord and for us, we now can abide in Him and He can abide in us.

According to John 15:4 and 7, for the Lord's word to abide in us means that the Lord Himself abides in us. Verse 4 says, "Abide in Me and I in you." In verse 7 the Lord goes on to say, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you...." These verses indicate that the Lord's words are equal to the Lord Himself. If Christ is to abide in us in a practical way, His words must abide in us. We cannot have Christ in us experientially unless we have His words in us also.

We praise the Lord that we have Christ, the Spirit, and the Word! Because Christ is God, He is real; because He is the Spirit, He is living; and because He is the Word, He is very practical. None of us can deny that, as those who believe in Christ, we have the Spirit and the Word. How wonderful that the Spirit and the Word are one!

RECEIVING THE WORD TO LIVE CHRIST

Now we come to a very crucial matter: the need to receive the Word day by day. We should not have the attitude that because we have acquired a certain amount of knowledge during our years as Christians, there is no need for us to come to the Word daily. Even though we have been eating for years, we continue to eat day by day in order to stay alive. It would be foolish to say that because we have eaten so often in the past, we no longer need to eat. In like manner, we must come to the Word every day, even several times during the day. We should begin each day with a good breakfast both physically and spiritually. Every day we need to take the living Word into us and be filled.

After hearing the messages on living Christ, we may have the genuine desire to live Him. However, if we do not feed on the Word daily, it will not be possible for us to live Christ. I am healthy spiritually because daily I eat, digest, and assimilate the Word and am nourished by it.

God has made Christ to be our life and our everything, and He has destined us to live Christ. If we live Christ, we shall be the most blessed people on earth. We shall have joy, satisfaction, and every blessing. As we have pointed out, the way to live Christ is to receive His word into us and be filled with it.

In order to receive the Word into our being, we should not merely read the Word, but should mingle our reading with prayer, singing, psalming, and calling on the name of the Lord. Whenever I open the Word of God, either for the work or for my own nourishment, I am immersed in the atmosphere and aspiration of prayer. Often I converse with the Lord by means of the verse I am reading. In this way I am infused and nourished, filled in my spirit with the living Word, which is actually Christ Himself as the Spirit.

Do not think that you will be able to live Christ simply by making up your mind to do so. Someone may hear a message on living Christ and then pray, "Lord, I want to live You. I make up my mind to live Christ from now on. Please help me do this." This kind of prayer, however, is not effective. It can be compared to asking the Lord to make you healthy when you do not eat properly. It is useless to make up your mind to be healthy if you do not eat nourishing food. Likewise, if we are not nourished by the Word, it will be to no avail to make up our minds to live Christ. Only by eating the Word can we live Christ.

When we are filled with the word of Christ, we are automatically filled with the riches of Christ and the fullness of the Godhead. Every day we need to take the living Word into us as food. When we come to the Word, we should open our entire being and exercise our spirit. First we should pray and then pray-read, sing-read, and psalm-read. In singing and psalming the Word, we may use any

kind of melody, even a spontaneous one of our own composition.

SINGING THE WORD OF CHRIST

Certain Christians, especially those in Pentecostalism, sing verses from the Bible. However, for the most part, they sing portions from the Old Testament. This is good, but it is not nearly as rich as singing from the New Testament. In particular, we should sing the four books which make up the heart of the divine revelation--Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians--to enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In the meetings of the church we sometimes sing, "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion" (Isa. 51:11). Singing this verse can be inspiring and releasing. But it cannot compare in richness with singing verses from the book of Ephesians. We especially need to sing those verses which convey to us the riches of Christ. Again, I would encourage you to sing-read Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, four books filled with the divine riches. What riches are to be found in verses like Colossians 2:9 and Ephesians 3:17--all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ, and Christ making His home in our hearts!

We should not think that Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are merely words written by Paul and are not the word of Christ. When Paul wrote these Epistles, Christ was in him as the Spirit. Thus, Christ could write in Paul's writing. This means that Paul's words are the word of Christ.

According to Hebrews 1, God today speaks through His Son. As believers, the apostles have the Son of God, Christ, living in them. Thus, whatever the apostles speak with Christ is the word of Christ. For this reason, we should regard all the words written by Paul, in fact the whole New Testament, as the word of Christ. I hope that one day we shall be able to set the entire New Testament to music as a help in singing the word of Christ. Then we shall have a tune for every verse in the New Testament.

My concern is not with formal singing; it is with the spontaneous singing of the Word, a singing which causes our whole being to be exercised. As we sing the Word, we need to exercise our eyes to read, our mind to understand, our emotion to love the Word, our will to receive the Word, and also our spirit to pray, sing, praise, psalm, thank the Lord for His Word.

SATURATED WITH THE WORD THROUGH THE SPIRIT

In the past, many of us did not exercise our whole being when we came to the Word. Often we used only our mind to study the Bible. We did not even exercise our emotion adequately to love the Word, or exercise our will strongly to receive the Word. But if we exercise our whole being to take in the Word, eventually we shall be filled, occupied, and saturated with the living Word. Because the Word is the embodiment of the Spirit and because the Spirit is the reality of Christ, we shall automatically be filled with Christ. Then whatever we do or say will be in the name of Christ. This is to live Christ. We live Christ automatically when we are saturated with the word of Christ through the Spirit.

The more we eat the living Word, the more we shall be constituted of the Word. We shall be saturated and fully constituted of Christ. Then our thinking will be Christ's thinking, our speaking will be Christ's speaking, and our actions will be Christ's actions. This is the way to live Christ.

Living Christ by being saturated with the Word is very different from making up our minds to live Christ and then asking the Lord to help us in this matter. I know from experience that this kind of determining does not work. In the past I often said, "Lord, I ask You to help me to live You from now on." I would be successful for a short period of time, only to fail the Lord again later in the day. Then I would confess my failure and ask the Lord to have mercy on me and help me to live Him. Eventually, I learned that

the way to live Christ is not to ask Him for help; it is to be daily nourished with the living Word. For example, instead of praying to be healthy physically, we should learn to eat nourishing meals day by day. Likewise, if we want to be spiritually healthy and live Christ, we need to take the Word of God into us again and again. Simply praying for the Lord's help does not work. But what does work is coming to the living Word of God every day and being infused with the riches of Christ. We all need to open from the depths of our being and exercise our spirit to receive the Word of God into us not merely by reading, but also by praying, singing, psalming, thanking, and calling on the Lord. Then the riches of the Word will saturate our being.

In His recovery the Lord is not seeking to recover any formalities or practices. The Lord's goal is to recover Himself as our experience and to recover the proper church life which comes from experiencing Him in a practical way. Today the Lord is the Spirit and also the Word. We have the Word to muse upon and through which to converse with the Lord. We can also pray, sing, and psalm the Word, and we can thank God the Father through the Word. The goal of such an exercise is not merely to gain knowledge of the Bible; it is mainly to receive the element, the substance, the essence, of the divine Person, Christ Himself, embodied in the Word and conveyed through the Word. Let us pray the Word and sing the Word to receive the riches of the Word through the Spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

DOING EVERYTHING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD BY BEING SATURATED WITH HIS RICHES

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:16--4:2; Eph. 5:18-25; 6:17-18a; Phil. 4:13

In Colossians 3:17 Paul charges us to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. In Philippians 4:13 he testifies, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me." It is somewhat easy to understand what it means to be able to do all things in the Lord who empowers us, but it is quite difficult to understand what it means to do all things in the name of the Lord. The name, of course, denotes a person. When we call someone by name, that person responds. Hence, a name denotes a person. Apart from the person, the name is empty and meaningless. Because the name denotes a person, to do things in the name of the Lord must mean to do things in His person.

PRAYING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

At the end of their prayers many Christians add the words "In the name of Jesus, amen." They use the Lord's name as a seal, stamp, or signature to endorse their prayers. According to the Bible, however, this is not the meaning of praying in the Lord's name. In John 15:16 the Lord Jesus says, "Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you." Here the Lord speaks of asking the Father in the Lord's name. John 14:13 and 14 say, "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." If we ask something of the Father

in the name of the Son, it may be possible for our petition to use the Son's name as a signature of endorsement. But we certainly cannot use the Lord's name in this way when we are asking something of Him directly. According to the basic truth revealed in John 14 and 15, to be in the Lord's name means to be one with the Lord, to live by the Lord, and to let the Lord live in us. The Lord came in the name of the Father and did things in the Father's name (John 5:43; 10:25). This means that He was one with the Father (John 10:30) and lived by the Father (John 6:57), and the Father worked in Him (John 14:10). In the Gospels, the Lord as the expression of the Father did things in the Father's name. In the Acts, the disciples as the expression of the Lord did even greater things (John 14:12) in His name. Therefore, to be in the Lord's name means to be one with Him in actuality.

In John 5:43 the Lord Jesus says, "I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me." For the Lord Jesus to come in the name of the Father did not mean that He used the Father's name as a stamp. The fact that the Lord came in the name of the Father means that He came with the Father and in the Father. When He came, the Father came also. Furthermore, according to John 10:25, the Lord Jesus said, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works which I do in the name of My Father, these testify concerning Me." For the Lord to do works in the name of the Father is to be one with the Father and to do things in the person of the Father. For this reason, the Lord Jesus could say, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). In John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said that the living Father sent Him and that He lived because of the Father. The thought here is that the Lord Jesus was one with the Father and therefore was in the person of the Father and in the Father's name. All these verses indicate that, according to biblical usage, to be in a person's name means to be one with that person. Thus, the name is not merely a signature, stamp, or seal used as an endorsement to conclude a prayer.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST SUBJECTIVELY

Many Christians do not realize that as believers we should experience Christ subjectively. The Bible reveals that God's desire and intention is to work Christ into us. What could be more subjective than having Christ wrought into our very being? Paul refers to this when he speaks of Christ making His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). As the extensive, all-inclusive One, the One anointed by God, Christ wants not only to dwell in us, but also to make His home in us. This certainly is a subjective matter. The root of the Greek word rendered "make home" in Ephesians 3:17 is the same as that for house. It is not adequate merely to speak of Christ dwelling in us, for this does not convey the full meaning of the Greek word. We must say that Christ wants to house Himself, make His home, in us. The experience of Christ housing Himself in us is indeed very subjective. However, for the most part, this experience is neglected by Christians today.

The teachings among Christians mainly stress that Christ is our Redeemer and Savior, that as God Christ should be the object of our worship, and that Christians should improve their behavior. We fully believe that Christ is our Redeemer and Savior, that He is God, and that we should worship Him. However, according to the Bible, the point about Christians improving their behavior is questionable. What is meant by good behavior? We do not agree with good behavior that is merely the product of a person's self-effort. But we definitely agree that we need good behavior which is the product of the Christian life transformed with Christ. When the Bible speaks of good behavior, it does not refer to the good behavior of the natural life. On the contrary, it denotes the proper living, or behavior, of a transformed life. The important matter here is that many Christians have missed the mark, the focal point, of God's economy. They do not see from the Word of God that the Triune God desires to come into us to be our life, our life supply, and everything to us, even our person, that we may be one with Him.

I wish to emphasize once again that to be in the name of the Lord is not merely to use His name as a stamp or signature at the end of a prayer. It means to be in the person of the Lord Jesus. When Christ the Son came in the name of the Father, He did not use the Father's name as a signature or stamp. Instead, He came in the person of the Father. We should not think that when the Lord Jesus came, only the Son came and not the Father also. No, when the Son came, the Father came in Him and with Him. John 14:23 proves this: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." On the one hand, here the Lord speaks of the Father loving us; on the other hand, He speaks of the Father and the Son coming to us and making an abode with us. According to this verse, if we love the Son, the Father will love us. Then the Father and the Son will make an abode with us. This indicates that when the Son comes to us, the Father comes also. However, this does not mean that the Father comes alongside the Son. The Father comes in the Son, in the way of coinherence, of mutual indwelling. John 14:11 speaks of the Son being in the Father and the Father being in the Son. The little word "in" is very important, for it points to the matter of coinherence. The Lord came in the Father and with the Father in Him. This is what it means to say that the Son came in the name of the Father.

Our thinking needs to be renewed with respect to the meaning of praying in the Lord's name and of doing things in His name. No longer should we consider the expression, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," as a stamp of endorsement. It is vital for us to see that to be in the name of the Lord Jesus means that we are one with Him, that we are in Him and He in us. As the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son in the way of coinherence, we also must be one with the Lord in this way. We and the Lord Jesus should coinhere; that is, we need to be in Him and have Him in us. Then truly we shall be in the Lord's name.

SATURATED WITH THE WORD

In Colossians 3:17 Paul says, "And in everything, whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus is related to letting the word of Christ saturate us and permeate us. We are filled, saturated, and permeated with the Word by praying, singing, and psalming the Word and giving thanks to God the Father for the Word. In this way we stir up our whole being, our mind, will, emotion, and spirit.

However, instead of being stirred up by the Word, many Christians are halfhearted in relation to the Word; their contact with the Word is extremely cool. We should not read the Bible in this way. On the contrary, we need to let the word of Christ inhabit us by singing, praying, psalming, and thanking. The more we exercise in this way, the more our inner being will be stirred up, and the more the word of Christ will not only saturate us, but become mingled with us. In this way our entire inner being will be saturated with the word of Christ.

The word of Christ is actually the embodiment of Christ. Thus, when the Word as the embodiment of Christ is mingled with our inner being, inwardly we are one with Christ. It is at such a time that we can spontaneously do things in the name of the Lord. Because the Lord has saturated us, permeated us, and mingled Himself with us, making us one with Him, we can do all things in His name. To do things in the Lord's name means to do things in Him.

Colossians 3:17 corresponds to Philippians 4:13, where Paul tells us that he can do all things in the One who empowers him. If the words "in Him" are not to be simply terminology but a practicality and a reality to us, we need to let the word of Christ saturate our whole being. When the word of Christ enters into us and stirs us inwardly, we are truly one with Christ. We are in Him actually and experientially. Then just as we live by the food we have

eaten, digested, and assimilated, we shall do all things in the name of the One with whom we have been permeated, saturated, and mingled and with whom we are one in a practical way.

ONE WITH THE LORD

In Colossians 3:18--4:1 Paul gives a charge to wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters. The wives are to be subject to their husbands, the husbands are to love their wives, the children are to obey their parents, the fathers are not to provoke their children, the slaves are to obey their masters, and the masters are to grant their slaves that which is just and equal. But how is a wife to submit to her husband, or a husband to love his wife? The only way to submit or to love is to be in the name of the Lord, to be one with the Lord.

Notice that 3:18--4:1 is the direct continuation of Paul's word in verses 16 and 17. This means that if we are not in the name of the Lord Jesus, one with Him by having the word of Christ dwell in us richly, we cannot submit or love. The fulfillment of all the charges given by Paul in this portion of Colossians comes out of being "in the name of the Lord Jesus." If a sister is mingled with the Lord and one with Him, she will spontaneously submit to her husband. Likewise, if a husband is mingled with the Lord, he will automatically love his wife. In like manner, a child will honor his parents, a father will refrain from provoking his children, a slave will obey his master, and a master will give to his slave what is just and equal. This means that a wife must submit to her husband in the name of the Lord, and a husband must love his wife also in the name of the Lord. Furthermore, children should obey their parents, parents should care for their children, servants should obey their masters, and masters should be fair to their slaves--all in the name of the Lord.

In 4:2 Paul goes on to say, "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." Having become one with the Lord by singing, psalming, praying, and thanking, we

need to preserve this oneness by persevering in prayer. By prayer we preserve the oneness, the mingling with the Lord. To persevere in prayer is to pray continually, unceasingly. This is necessary if we are to live Christ.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul tells us to be filled in our spirit. With what should our spirit be filled? We need to be filled in spirit with the rich word of Christ. When we let the word of Christ inhabit us richly, this word will saturate us and produce an inner filling. We shall be filled with the riches of Christ contained in the Word, filled even unto all the fullness of God. When a brother is filled in this way, God will love his wife through him. Likewise, when children are filled like this, their honoring of their parents will be with the fullness of God.

Most Christians today are taught to live according to ethics. They neglect the Triune God dispensing Himself into the believers and mingling Himself with them that they may live Him. Some even go so far as to oppose this revelation. They accuse us of lowering God, of uplifting man, and of teaching pantheism and evolution into God. What blindness and ignorance! The Bible teaches that God was incarnated. He even stooped so low as to be born in a manger. Eventually, after Christ was crucified on the cross, He was buried in a tomb and even descended into Hades in order to prepare the way to enter into us. It is not we who have uplifted man; it is Christ who has uplifted us. According to the New Testament, when He ascended, we ascended also. Otherwise, how could we be seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6)?

It is indeed sad that so many divine truths are neglected by Christians today. But in His mercy the Lord has shown these things to us. We have seen from the Bible that the Triune God wants to come into us, mingle Himself with us, and uplift us to the heavens that we may live with Him and be one with Him. If this is our experience, then everything we do will be in the name of the Lord Jesus.

What a blessing it is to see this marvelous truth! It will take eternity to make known how much we have been blessed by the Lord in seeing this. Oh, what a blessing that we can do all things in the name of the Triune God! If a sister submits to her husband in the name of the Triune God, her submission will be wonderful, divine, altogether different from submission that is according to the ethics of Confucius. Her submission will not be by the natural human life, but by the divine life which has been wrought into her.

It is a wonderful fact that as believers we possess the divine nature. Second Peter 1:4 says that we are partakers of the divine nature. The way to enlarge the sphere of the divine nature within us is to take the word of Christ not only by reading, but also by praying, singing, psalming, and thanking. If the word of Christ is to dwell in us richly, we need to open our entire being and exercise our spirit. Then the Word will enter into us, stir us up, and become mingled with us, causing us to be one with the Lord in an actual and practical way. As a result, we shall do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus. Spontaneously we shall live Christ. We shall be one with Christ in deeds and words.

Therefore, to do all things in the Lord's name is to do all things in oneness with the Lord by reading, praying, singing, and psalming the Word, exercising our spirit to be mingled with the Word and thereby to become one with Christ experientially. Then we shall live Christ, doing all things in His name. This is the normal Christian living.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

CHRIST, SALVATION, GOD, AND THE WORD OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-16

In 2:5-16 we have Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life. These are the four basic elements of the structure of these verses. In verse 5 Paul presents Christ as our pattern: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then Paul goes on to describe this Christ, saying that He was obedient unto death. In verse 12 Paul speaks of working out our own salvation, and in verse 13 he goes on to say that God is operating in us. Therefore, we have Christ as the pattern of our salvation and we must work out our own salvation according to God's operation in us. The issue of God's operation within us is that we hold forth the word of life (v. 16). Hence, the four basic elements in 2:5-16 are Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life. In this message we shall consider how these four elements are related to one another.

CHRIST AS THE PATTERN

Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. If we would experience Christ and live Him, we must know Him as our pattern. In 2:5-11 Paul presents Christ as our pattern. We need to be deeply impressed with this pattern and even have it infused into us.

Christ is wonderful; He truly is all-inclusive. From the book of Colossians we have seen that Christ is both all-inclusive and universally extensive. This all-inclusive Christ is nothing less than God. But even though He is equal with God, He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men" (v. 7). He did not

regard His equality with God as a thing to grasp. Rather, He laid aside this equality and emptied Himself. This does not mean, however, that Christ was no longer God. It simply means that He put aside His outward expression of God. Although He subsisted in the form of God, He took on the form of a slave and became in the likeness of men and in the fashion of a man. As a result, He had the appearance of a man instead of the expression of God. On the one hand, having the form of God, Christ emptied Himself. On the other hand, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross. As the Savior, Christ has both divinity and humanity. He both emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Thus, according to verses 6 through 8, we may speak of the self-emptying and self-humbling Christ.

Philippians 2:9 says, "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." This verse indicates that God came in to exalt Christ. For Christ to be exalted means not only that He was uplifted to the third heaven from the lower parts of the earth; it also means that in a glorious way He was brought back with His human nature to the form of God. Before His incarnation, Christ did not have the human nature. But through incarnation He took on humanity. Then He brought this human nature to the cross, shedding His blood for our redemption. After His resurrection, He was uplifted to the heavens and with His human nature was brought back to the form of God in glory. Now He is our pattern. The pattern of the Christian life is the God-man Savior who emptied Himself and humbled Himself and who was exalted and glorified by God.

REPRINTING THE PATTERN

The very pattern revealed in 2:5-11 must now become our salvation. This is indicated by the words "so then" at the beginning of verse 12. After giving us a clear view of Christ as our wonderful pattern, Paul says, "So then, my

beloved...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

As our pattern, Christ is both inclusive and exclusive. The pattern is exclusive because it excludes everything worldly, fleshly, or sinful. There is no way for negative things to have any part in Him or access to Him. But, on the positive side, He is all-inclusive, for He is the God-man Savior who emptied and humbled Himself and who has been exalted and glorified by God. With such a pattern available to us, we now must work out our own salvation.

To work out our salvation is to work out this pattern and to become in our experience a reprint of the pattern. Christ as the pattern can be compared to a page of type used in printing a book, and our subjective experience of the pattern becoming our salvation can be compared to the printing of the pages of a book. In making a book, each page of type is reprinted again and again until there are many copies. In our experience, the God-man Savior should be reprinted and become our subjective salvation. The very salvation we are to work out is Christ as our pattern.

SALVATION FROM MURMURINGS AND REASONINGS

The salvation in 2:12 is not salvation from the condemnation of God or from hell. Rather, salvation here refers to the salvation we experience day by day. In particular, it is salvation from murmurings and reasonings. In verse 14 Paul says, "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." We need an instant salvation to deliver us from our murmurings and reasonings.

We have pointed out that the sisters have a particular problem with murmurings, and the brothers, with reasonings. Usually the wives are given to murmuring, and the husbands, to reasoning. Because we all are troubled by murmurings or reasonings, we need the kind of salvation that can rescue us, not only from God's condemnation and from the lake of fire, but also from our murmurings and

reasonings. This means that we need a subjective, moment-by-moment salvation.

We have seen that, as our pattern, Christ emptied Himself and humbled Himself and also was exalted and glorified by God. Sisters, do you think that while you are murmuring, God will come in to exalt you? Brothers, do you believe that while you are reasoning, God will come in to glorify you? Surely God will not exalt us or glorify us when we are murmuring or reasoning. Oh, we need salvation from murmurings and reasonings!

Both murmurings and reasonings are signs of rebellion and disobedience. In verse 12 Paul says that the Philippians "have always obeyed." We also need to obey--to obey Christ as our pattern. As the One who became our pattern, the Lord Jesus did not murmur or reason. Instead, He emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Now we must obey this pattern, realizing that Christ does not murmur or reason, but empties Himself and humbles Himself. When the brothers are tempted to reason, they need to remember the pattern of the self-emptying and self-humbling Christ. The brothers should then obey this pattern without reasoning. This obedience is the working out of our salvation. Whenever we obey Christ as our pattern, we automatically work out our salvation from our murmurings and reasonings.

Christians often ask others if they have been saved. When I was asked this question as a young man, I answered strongly that I had been saved. But if I were asked this question today, I would reply, "What do you mean by 'saved'? If you mean saved from God's judgment and from the lake of fire, I most assuredly have been saved. However, if you mean saved from reasonings, I would have to admit that I have been saved in part, but not yet in full."

Years ago, I used to wonder why Paul included verse 14 in this chapter. It seemed to me that what Paul had written was so high that there was no need for this verse. After saying that Christ was exalted and given a name above every name, that every tongue would confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord, and that we must work out our own salvation according to God's operating within us, Paul suddenly tells us to do all things without murmurings and reasonings. It seemed to me that murmurings and reasonings were too insignificant to be mentioned here. However, after more experience I learned that we definitely need to be saved in a practical way from reasonings and murmurings.

In the church life and in our married life there is a lot of murmuring and reasoning. The sisters may behave properly, but within they may murmur against the brothers. What sister can say that she has never murmured about anything in the church life? If the sisters do not complain outwardly, they certainly murmur inwardly. When the brothers hear of the sisters' murmuring, they may react by reasoning. Because we have murmurings and reasonings, we need the practical salvation revealed in Philippians 2. The salvation here is not the salvation we have received once for all. On the contrary, it is the salvation which we need to work out in order to be rescued daily from our weaknesses. We have pointed out that this salvation is Christ as our pattern. Hence, the pattern and the salvation are one. The pattern is the salvation, and the salvation is the pattern worked out in us.

GOD OPERATING IN US

Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God Who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." The little word "for" at the beginning of verse 13 connects it to verse 12. This indicates that we can work out our own salvation because God is operating in us. Salvation is the pattern, and God is the One who is operating, working this pattern into us. Therefore, we may say that salvation is God Himself operating in us. Salvation, the pattern, and God are not three separate things; they are one. The pattern is the salvation, and the salvation is God. Here we have one thing in three aspects. The pattern is Christ, the God-man who emptied and humbled Himself

and who has been exalted and glorified by God. This Christ, however, is the very God Himself to be the daily salvation for us to work out. Furthermore, this salvation is actually the God who is operating in us.

The matter of God operating in us to be our salvation should not be merely a doctrine, but should be something we experience in a practical way day by day. Often when a sister is complaining or murmuring, she may sense that something within is constraining her and urging her to stop. This inner sense comes from God operating in her. If, by God's mercy, she obeys this inner sense, she will experience salvation and be filled with joy.

We may say that, outwardly, objectively, Christ is the pattern. But when the pattern works within us, it becomes the operating God. Not only did Christ die on the cross as our Savior, but now He lives within us as the operating God. Christ as a man was not able to live in us. However, as God it is possible for Him to dwell in us. Thus, Christ is both the pattern objectively and the operating God subjectively. Once again we see that the pattern, Christ, and God are one.

In 2:13 Paul clearly says that God is operating in us. But elsewhere he usually speaks either of Christ or of the Spirit being in us. For years I did not understand why in 2:13 Paul spoke of God and not of the Spirit. Now I realize that Paul did this deliberately in order to show us that the Christ who is the pattern for our salvation is the very God operating in us. If we consider the context of this verse, we shall see that Christ as the pattern is also the operating God. Objectively, He is the pattern. Subjectively, when He comes into us and operates within us, He is the operating God. On the cross, He was Christ. But within us, He is the operating God. On the cross He, as Christ, established a pattern for us. But within us He, as God, is the operating One to work out this pattern. Therefore, the pattern is the salvation, and the salvation is the operating God.

We may experience the operating God daily as our practical salvation. Whenever we cooperate with God

operating in us, we enjoy salvation. God's operation becomes our salvation. Furthermore, this salvation is the reprint, the reproduction, of the pattern. When the pattern is reprinted in us, it becomes our salvation. The reprinting of the pattern is accomplished by God operating in us.

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

Verse 16 opens with the words, "Holding forth the word of life." When God operates in us, we spontaneously hold forth the word of life. In fact, the word of life is actually the God who operates in us. God works in us by His word. He operates in us by being the word of life. We have spoken repeatedly of the operating God. Now we must see that God is embodied in the word of life. This means that the word of life is the embodiment of the operating God.

We need to put this understanding into practice by coming daily to the word of life, the Bible. Whenever we come to the Word, we should also come to God. This, however, is not to regard the Bible as God Himself. But we should not separate God from His Word, for God is embodied in the Word. Because God is mysterious, it is difficult for anyone to apprehend Him. How we thank Him that He has embodied Himself in the Word, the Bible! The Word is the condensation of the invisible and mysterious God. Many of us can testify from our experience that whenever we come to the Bible and open ourselves, we touch God, and God works within us. Whenever we touch the word of life, we experience God operating in us, moving in us, to produce a reprint of the pattern. This is our practical salvation.

Now we can see that Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life are one. Furthermore, to experience Christ, salvation, God, and the word of life in the way we have described is to live Christ.

SALVATION THROUGH THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

Paul speaks of salvation both in 1:19 and in 2:12. In 1:19 Paul could say that his circumstances would turn out

to him for salvation. This indicates that even in his imprisonment Paul enjoyed God's salvation. The salvation in 2:12 is the practical salvation which rescues us daily from murmurings and reasonings. However, salvation in both 1:19 and 2:12 is the same in principle. In both cases salvation is a practical, daily, moment-by-moment salvation.

According to 1:19, Paul enjoyed salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Apparently, we do not find this bountiful supply in chapter two. Instead, we have the word of life. However, the bountiful supply of the Spirit and the word of life actually are one. Paul enjoyed daily salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and we may enjoy daily salvation by the word of life. Moreover, Paul says that to enjoy salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit is to magnify Christ and to live Christ. In the same principle, when we enjoy salvation daily through God operating in the word of life, we also live Christ. Thus, to enjoy God's salvation in a practical way is to live Christ, that is, to hold forth the word of life. In order to live Christ, we must first take Christ as the living pattern. Then we need to obey the operating God within us and receive His word of life. Then spontaneously we shall live Christ.

Salvation, Christ, God, and the word of life are four-in-one. Eventually, in our experience, the pattern is the word of life. The word of life works out the pattern by the operating God to apply salvation to our daily life. In this way we enjoy Christ and live Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

THE WORD OF GOD BEING THE EMBODIMENT OF THE LIVING GOD

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:13, 16a; John 1:1-2, 14; 6:63; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:15; Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20

The Bible reveals God's doings, His deeds and activities. First, according to His plan, He created the universe and all things in it. God's deeds also include incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, descending as the Spirit, and, in the future, Christ's second coming, the kingdom, and the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. God is by no means inactive. On the contrary, He has accomplished a great many things. If it were not for God's activity in creation, the universe would not have come into existence. The universe came out of God's activity.

Incarnation is an even more impressive matter than creation. Through incarnation God became a man. As a man, Christ accomplished the work of redemption, dying on the cross for our sins. In His resurrection He brought His humanity into God. How marvelous!

THE GOD-CHILD AND THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Christians often say that the Son of God was incarnated. This, of course, is true. However, John 1:14 does not say that the Son of God became flesh; it says, "The Word became flesh." John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This Word, according to verse 14, became flesh. This indicates that God Himself became a man. First, the Word became a man. Then in resurrection Christ, the last Adam

in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit. In John 1:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:45 we have two important uses of the word became: the Word became flesh, and the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. First, Christ became a man in order to accomplish redemption. For this, He died on the cross and was buried. Then in resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit. Our God today is the life-giving Spirit.

God has passed through a marvelous process. He became a man by being born of a virgin in a manger. For this reason, Isaiah 9:6 declares that unto us a child is born and that this child is called the mighty God. That child born of a virgin was the mighty God. This means that the mighty God actually became a child. Do you realize that one day our God became a child? The unique God, the only God in the universe, became a child! We may even speak of this child as the God-child. Of course, this term is not found in the Bible. However, the fact of God becoming a child is clearly revealed in Scripture. To speak of the God-child is not heresy; it is a divine fact. We are considering two crucial times the word "became" is used. The first is that the Word became flesh, God became a child born in a manger.

As we have indicated, the second crucial time the word "became" is used is in 1 Corinthians 15:45, where we are told that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. Who was this last Adam? No doubt the last Adam was the man Christ Jesus, God incarnate. Through resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit.

As Christians we all must recognize that the Word, which was God, became flesh. The very God actually became a child. We also must recognize that Christ, after His crucifixion and in resurrection, became a life-giving Spirit. Some Christians, however, oppose this teaching and say that it is heretical. They ask how Christ, the second of the Trinity, could be the Spirit, who is the third of the Trinity. But according to 1 Corinthians 15:45, Christ as the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. Is not the life-giving Spirit here the Holy Spirit? To deny this is to hold the

heretical view that there are two life-giving Spirits.

THE PROCESSED GOD

We must turn away from traditional theology and come back to the pure Word of God. According to the Bible, the Triune God has been processed to become the life-giving Spirit. Based upon the revelation in the Word, we may say that today our God is the processed God. He is no longer unprocessed, or "raw." To say that God has been processed means that He became a child born of a virgin and that, as a man, He was crucified, buried, visited Hades, and entered into resurrection. This certainly was a process. Therefore, we may speak of our God as the processed God.

From the time of His birth through His resurrection, Christ was being processed. The entire span of His human life, from incarnation through resurrection, was a period of process. Now, having entered into the state of resurrection, He has become the life-giving Spirit.

Because Christ is the life-giving Spirit, it is easy for us to breathe Him in. According to Romans 10, God is not far from us. On the contrary, He is very near, even in our mouth. All we need to do is breathe Him into us. This surely is good news, glad tidings.

The gospel is that the unique God, the Creator, one day became a man and passed through a process in order to become the life-giving Spirit for us to breathe in. The letter kills, but this Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).

Our God has done everything necessary to become the life-giving Spirit. Now we not only have God and the Savior--we also have the life-giving Spirit. The Jews do not know that God has become a man named Jesus Christ. Instead, they know God as the Creator and fail to recognize Him as the One who has been incarnated to be the Savior. Even many Christians today only know God and Christ in an objective way. They do not realize that, as the very God Himself, Christ today is the life-giving Spirit. We cannot separate God, Christ, and the Spirit. These three are one. We may enjoy the three-one God as the Spirit because He

has come into our spirit and has made us one spirit with Him. First Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." How wonderful!

The consummation of God's deeds, of all He has done, is the life-giving Spirit. First, God created all things. Second, through incarnation He became a man. Third, through death and resurrection He was processed to become the life-giving Spirit. Now God is not only the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Savior. Ultimately and consummately, He is the life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is an all-inclusive drink for us to enjoy. Praise the Lord for the revelation in the Word that the very One who is our God, Creator, Savior, Redeemer, Lord, and Master is also the life-giving Spirit dwelling in our spirit!

GOD'S SPEAKING

In addition to the doings of God, the Bible reveals God's speaking. God is a speaking God. Hebrews 1:1 and 2 say, "In many portions and in many ways, God, having spoken of old to the fathers in the prophets, has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son." As a result of God's doings, we have the life-giving Spirit, and as a result of God's speaking, we have the Word. Furthermore, the Word is the word of life.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

We may use electricity as an illustration of the Spirit and the Word. With the application of electricity, there is often the need for an antenna and a ground wire. By means of an antenna and a ground wire electricity may be applied in different ways and the electricity will flow. The Spirit may be compared to the antenna, and the Word, to the ground wire. Many Christians today concentrate on the Word as the ground wire, but they neglect the Spirit as the antenna. Many, especially those in the seminaries and Bible colleges, study the Bible, but neglect the Spirit, the antenna. At the other extreme are the Pentecostalists who

emphasize the Spirit, the antenna, but do not adequately care for the Bible, the ground wire. We in the Lord's recovery should be balanced and have both the antenna and the ground wire, both the Spirit and the Word. If we are balanced concerning the Spirit and the Word, we shall experience the transmission, the flowing, of the divine electricity.

As the heavenly electricity, God has been installed in us for our enjoyment. However, in order to enjoy Him, we need the Spirit and the Word. Praise Him that in our hands we have the Word and that in our spirit we have the life-giving Spirit! The Spirit and the Word are two great gifts.

It is important for us to realize that the Word is the embodiment of the living God. Furthermore, the Word is spirit and life. The Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). We should never separate God, the Spirit, and the Word. These three are one. God is the Word, and the Word is the Spirit.

If God were not the Word, He would remain a great mystery as far as we are concerned. For example, if a person does not speak out what is in him, he will be mysterious. But if he speaks, he will make himself known, and what is in him will be revealed. By His speaking, God has revealed Himself. Because God is a speaking God, He is transparent. The more a person speaks, the more transparent he becomes.

We praise the Lord that through His doings He has become the Spirit and that through His speaking He has become the Word. Day by day we need to come to the Word with an open, exercised spirit. Then we shall not only receive light from the Word; we shall enter into a realm, a sphere, of light. Whenever we come to the Bible with a pure heart and a right spirit, we enter into a sphere of light. Then instead of simply receiving enlightenment, we shall be in a realm of light. Simply to see light from the Word is not adequate. We need to be in the sphere of light.

GOD OPERATING IN US

When we contact the Word in a proper way by reading and praying, we experience the current of the divine electricity. This is God operating in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). If we do not experience God operating in us when we spend time in the Word, we must be wrong in some way. Probably something is defective in our experience of the antenna, the Spirit, leaving us with only the Word as the ground wire. But if we have both the Spirit and the Word, we shall experience an inward divine activity. Something in us will move, and we shall be strengthened, comforted, nourished, supplied, and refreshed. This is God operating in us.

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

As a result of God's operating in us, we spontaneously have a life in which the word of life is held forth to others. To hold forth the word of life is to present it to others, to offer it to them, to apply it to them. If God operates in us and we are filled with the Word, then wherever we are and whatever we say or do, we shall be an expression of the living God. This is to hold forth the word of life. This is also to live Christ.

I believe that most of us have experienced that when we are right in our spirit and pure in our heart, and then come to the Word with our whole being open to the Lord, we have the sense that we enter into a sphere of light. Then as we pray-read a portion of the Word, we sense that something inwardly is moving, operating in us to comfort, strengthen, satisfy, and refresh us. Sometimes we may want to shout for joy. At other times we may sing and praise the Lord. Those around us may be surprised at the change which takes place in us as a result of contacting the Word in this way.

We need to have this kind of contact with the Lord day after day, hour after hour, and even moment by moment. For this reason, it is helpful to carry a pocket version of the New Testament in order to take advantage of opportunities

to pray-read the Word during the day. The more we pray-read with a right spirit and a pure heart, the more we shall enjoy the heavenly electricity and experience the living God operating in us. Then if we are sorrowful, He will comfort us; if we are dry, He will water us; if we are hungry, He will satisfy us; and if we are disappointed, He will encourage us. Spontaneously, what we say and do will be a holding forth, a presenting, of the word of life. This means that in our daily living there will be a divine expression. This is to live Christ that He might be magnified in us. Truly this is the proper Christian life.

The Christian life is intimately related to the life-giving Spirit and the word of life. As the consummation of His process, God is now the life-giving Spirit. Furthermore, in His speaking He is the Word. He has given us the Spirit and the Word as two wonderful gifts. Now we have both the antenna and the ground wire, both the Spirit and the Word, for us to contact and enjoy the heavenly electricity. The enjoyment of the divine electricity is very different from traditional Christianity and theology. It is to contact God subjectively as the One who dwells in us as the life-giving Spirit through the Word. The more we experience the word of life as the embodiment of the living God, the more God will become our enjoyment. Then we shall hold forth the word of life. This is to live Christ that He may be magnified in us.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

THE WORD OF LIFE IDENTICAL TO THE LIVING CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:1-2; John 15:5, 7-8; Col. 3:16; 1 John 2:14b; Rev. 1:2-9; 19:13

In the foregoing message we pointed out that the word of life is the embodiment of the living God. Now we shall go on to see that the word of life is identical to the living Christ. The Word is both the embodiment of the living God and identical to the living Christ. First John 1:1 and 2 say, "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, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)." These verses indicate that the word of life is the Son of God, Christ. Therefore, the word of life is identical to the living Christ.

THE THREE-ONE GOD

The Triune God is mysterious, far beyond our comprehension. To say that God is triune means that He is three-one. The English word triune is derived from the Latin tri-, meaning three, and -une, meaning one. Hence, the word triune does not actually mean three-in-one; it means three-one.

A Heavenly Language

Language is intimately related to culture and expresses various aspects of culture. However, in man's culture there

is nothing which is three-one. But God, the mysterious, invisible One, is triune; He is three-one. The expression three-one is not that of an earthly language, but of a divine, heavenly language.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In this verse one clause says that the Word was with God, whereas another clause declares that the Word was God. To say that the Word was with God would seem to indicate that the Word and God are two. But to go on to say that the Word was God indicates that the Word and God are one. Are the Word and God one or two? We may say that they are two-one, even though there is not such an expression in our language because there is not such a fact in our culture. However, we need a divine language to express the divine reality.

Distinct but Not Separate

Today many fundamental Christians claim that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three separate Persons. However, according to the Bible, we may say that the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct, but They definitely are not separate. The Lord Jesus said, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (John 14:10). How, then, can the Father and the Son be separate? He also said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). How, then, can the Son be a separate Person from the Father? Furthermore, the use of the Greek preposition which means "from with" in the Gospel of John (para) is very significant. The Lord Jesus, the Son, is not only from God, but also with God. While He is from God, He is still with Him (John 6:46; 8:16, 29; 16:32). Likewise, the Spirit was sent not only from the Father but from with the Father (John 15:26). This indicates that when the Spirit comes from the Father, He comes with the Father. Therefore, although the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct, They cannot be separate. The Three of the Godhead are inseparable. Although They are three, They are truly one. In fact. They are three-one.

A Three-one Name

According to the Bible we have the unique God, who is called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 indicates that the Three of the Godhead have just one name. This verse speaks of baptizing believers into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Here we have a three-one name. This is a divine fact, although our language is not adequate to express it.

Many Christians today, perhaps unconsciously, hold to tritheism, the belief in three Gods. The traditional teaching of the Trinity has a tendency toward tritheism. But we do not believe in tritheism; we believe in the revelation of the Triune God according to the Bible.

Concerning the Godhead, many portions of the Word are rather puzzling. For example, Hebrews 1:2 says that God has spoken to us in the Son. But according to verse 8, the Son is addressed as God. Furthermore, speaking of God, verse 9 then uses the expression "Your God." According to grammar, this must mean the God of God. How are we to understand this? It certainly is mysterious. Verses such as these indicate that we need to be delivered from the natural, traditional, and religious way of understanding the Bible.

THE SPIRIT

It is crucial for us to realize that, having passed through the various steps of a process, the Triune God today has become the Spirit. John 7:39 says, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Although the Spirit of God has always been in existence, this verse nevertheless says that the Spirit was not yet. The expression "the Spirit" here denotes the Triune God--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit--processed to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is all-inclusive because it includes not only divinity, but also humanity, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. It includes all the three-one God is, has, and has accomplished and attained. Therefore, the Spirit is the

totality of all the three-one God is, has, and has accomplished and attained.

THE SPIRIT EMBODIED IN THE WORD

It is even more difficult to define the Word than it is to define the Spirit. In the New Testament, the Son of God is called the Word. Revelation 19:13 says of Him, "His name is called The Word of God." In the past we have pointed out that for Christ to be the Word of God means that He is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. However, this understanding is not adequate. We must go on to see that the New Testament indicates that the Word is the Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). Furthermore, Ephesians 6:17 even identifies the Word as the Spirit. Hence, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, and the Word are one in a very mysterious way.

In the previous message we pointed out that the Spirit is the consummation of the process through which the Triune God has passed. We also indicated that the Word is the consummation of God's speaking. But why is the Word the Spirit and the Spirit, the Word? I admit that this matter is very difficult to understand and explain.

As a help to our understanding, we may use the striking of matches as an illustration. Matches are made of phosphorus. Hence, a match is the embodiment of phosphorus. As such, in a very practical way it is identical to phosphorus. This means that the match is phosphorus and phosphorus is the match. Applying this illustration to the Bible and the Spirit, we may compare the Bible to the match and the Spirit to phosphorus. Furthermore, because a match is made of phosphorus and is the embodiment of phosphorus, it makes phosphorus available to us. The Triune God today is the Spirit, and the Spirit is embodied in the Word. Although it is rather difficult for us to handle the Spirit, we can easily carry a Bible. Just as we have phosphorus by having a match, so we have the Spirit by having the Bible.

EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT TO "STRIKE" THE WORD

However, even though the Word is the embodiment of the Spirit, many Christians do not contact the Word through the Spirit. To use the illustration of the match, when these believers strike the Word, the "match" does not light, even though they may love the Bible very much. If we want to light a match, it is not adequate merely to love the match. We need to strike the match in a proper way. In the same principle, if we would contact the Spirit embodied in the Word, we need to "strike" the "match" of the Word by exercising our spirit.

Suppose someone tried to light a match by analyzing it or by exercising his emotion to express his love for it. This indeed would be useless, even foolish. To light a match does not require that we analyze it or love it. We simply need to strike it in a proper way, and it will suddenly burst into flame. In like manner, if we want to contact the Spirit through the Word, we should not merely analyze the "match" of the Word or express our affection for it. Once again I say we need to "strike" the Word in the proper place, and that place is our spirit. Seminaries and Bible schools, however, instruct believers to analyze the "match" or to love it. They do not emphasize the way to "strike" it.

If we would "strike" the "match" of the Word, we must learn to exercise our spirit. Do not use your mind or emotion to strike the Word. The Word will only light up in our experience if we strike it in our spirit. This is the reason we need to exercise our spirit to pray when we come to the Word of God. This is to pray-read the Word.

TESTIMONIES OF PRAY-READING THE WORD

Many believers throughout the centuries had the practice of praying with the Word of God. Although they did not use the term pray-reading, they nonetheless had the fact in their experience. One of those who practiced praying the words of the Bible was George Whitefield, a contemporary of John Wesley. George Whitefield's practice

was to pray the New Testament in Greek while on his knees. This was the secret of his power and spirituality. George Whitefield pray-read the word of life. To pray the Word is to use our spirit to "strike" the Word.

I have been reading and studying the Bible for more than fifty years. When I was a young man, I loved the Word of God and was ambitious to know it thoroughly. However, I only knew to read the Bible with my eyes and my mind. Then someone encouraged me not only to read the Word, but also to meditate on it. I began to spend time to ponder the Word, to consider it, to dwell on it. This was somewhat helpful. I was also helped by reading George Mueller's autobiography. According to Mueller, we should not only read the Bible and meditate on it, but also pray over it. In his autobiography Mueller does not say that we should pray the Word; however, he does say that after reading a certain portion we should pray. For example, if we read a verse concerning love, we should then pray regarding love. Likewise, we should pray concerning repentance when reading about repentance in the Word. This practice of praying immediately after reading a verse is similar to pray-reading. George Mueller's autobiography was very helpful, and I began to read the Bible and pray according to his practice. Often I actually prayed with the pure word of the Bible, making a certain verse my prayer to the Lord. In effect, I was pray-reading.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SPIRIT

Although I had adopted the practice of praying while reading the Word, I did not yet know how to exercise the spirit. From brother Watchman Nee I received help in this matter. Brother Nee emphasized the necessity of exercising the spirit. He said that when we speak to others, especially in giving a message, we need to send forth our spirit by exercising it. He pointed out that if we use a certain part of our being while speaking to others, we shall touch the same part in them. For example, if we use our mind, we shall touch the mind of others. If we speak from

our emotion, we shall touch others in their emotion. If we would touch others' spirit, Brother Nee told us, we must use our spirit.

The Spirit Being Dormant

Because man is fallen, his spirit is dormant, whereas the mind and the emotion of the soul are extremely active. With men the mind is active; with women, it is the emotion which is active. The most idle and dormant part of the being of fallen man is the spirit. Even after we have been saved and regenerated, our spirit may remain idle and dormant. When certain sisters pray, they may pray by the emotion instead of by the spirit. As they pray to the Lord about their problems, they may weep. If they exercise their spirit instead of the emotion, they will pray in a very different manner about their problems. Instead of crying, they may say, "Lord, I thank You and praise You for all my troubles. I thank You, Lord, for my circumstances."

Although we may be very strong in our mind, emotion, or will, our spirit may be weak, idle, and dormant. Our mind, emotion, or will may react immediately to things. Our spirit, however, may be very slow to respond. Our spirit may even be dormant when we come to the Bible, whereas other parts of our being, especially the mind, may be extremely active. In reading the Bible, we may have very little exercise of the spirit.

Experiencing the Fire in the Word

If we fail to exercise our spirit in reading the Word, we fail to "strike" the "match" in our spirit. As a result, the "phosphorus," the Spirit embodied in the Word, does not ignite. If we want to experience the phosphorus embodied in the match, the Spirit embodied in the Word, we need to exercise our spirit to pray-read the Word. Then we shall strike the match in the right place and experience the fire in the Word. We can testify that by taking the Word in the proper way, exercising our spirit, we experience the burning in our spirit.

EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

In the Bible light is one with life, life is one with love, love is related to holiness, and holiness, to righteousness. When all these are put together, we have power. These divine attributes--light, life, love, holiness, righteousness, and power--are actually the Triune God Himself coming to us as the Spirit through the Word. When we contact the Triune God as the Spirit through the Word, we experience Him as our light, life, love, holiness, righteousness, and power. This is Christ in our experience. Experiencing Christ in such a subjective way, we spontaneously live Him.

The word of life is not only identical to Christ; it is identical also to these divine attributes. From experience we can testify that whenever we strike the Word with our spirit, we have light. The word of life becomes light to us in our experience. Furthermore, the Word becomes life, including love, holiness, righteousness, power, strength, and might. This is the word of life being identical to the living Christ and also to the various attributes of the Triune God.

TAKING THE WORD AS THE TREE OF LIFE

We should not regard the Bible simply as a book of theology revealing who God is, what God is, and what God wants us to do in order to contact Him. The Bible is not just an objective revelation of God and His requirements. The Bible should also be the tree of life for us to eat. To us the Bible may be either a book of knowledge or a book of life, either the tree of knowledge or the tree of life. The tree of knowledge brings death, but the tree of life brings the divine life supply. I can testify that in the past I acquired a great deal of knowledge by approaching the Bible as the tree of knowledge. The result was that I was deadened, even killed, by the Bible in black and white letters. This is according to Paul's word, "The letter kills" (2 Cor. 3:6). The Scripture in letters can kill. This comes from taking the Bible as the tree of knowledge. But if we exercise our spirit to feed on the Word, the Bible will become in our

experience a book of life, even the tree of life. We shall then be supplied with life through every verse. Many Christians have been killed by the Bible in dead letters. What they need is not more doctrine, but the life of the Spirit. They need to come to the Bible as the tree of life.

THE LORD AND HIS WORDS ABIDING IN US

I can testify that I am living and energized because I receive the life supply from the Word as the tree of life. The Word is the embodiment of the very Lord whom I love. Because I love Him, I contact Him through the Word, which is identical to the Lord Himself. Two verses in John 15 indicate this. In verse 4 the Lord Jesus says, "Abide in Me and I in you." But in verse 7 He says, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall come to pass to you." Notice that in verse 4 it is the Lord who abides in us, whereas in verse 7 His words abide in us. This indicates that the Lord's words abiding in us are equal to the Lord Himself abiding in us. If we do not have His words abiding in us, it will be difficult for us to experience Him abiding in us. The Lord is abstract, but His word is concrete.

We need to contact the Word not only with our mind, but also with our regenerated spirit. When we exercise our spirit to contact the Word, the Word becomes identical to the Lord Himself in our experience. Then the Word is living, energizing, and filled with the divine attributes of light, life, love, holiness, righteousness, and power. By taking the Word in this way, we live Christ.

THE PROPER CHRISTIAN LIFE

I have no doubt that Paul's life was a life of living Christ. He could say, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). He also charged us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). As we have pointed out, the word dwell in Colossians 3:16 means to inhabit, to house itself, in us. To let the word of Christ house itself in us is to let the Word

saturate our whole being. Eventually, when in our experience the Word, Christ, and the Triune God are mingled together as one, we live Christ. We have a life full of the divine virtues of light, life, love, holiness, righteousness, and power. This is the proper Christian life.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-SIX

CHILDREN OF GOD SHINING AS LUMINARIES BY HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:14-16

PRAY-READING THE WORD

In 2:14 through 16 there are many important words and phrases: murmurings, reasonings, blameless and guileless, children of God, without blemish, crooked and perverted generation, shine as lights, holding forth the word of life. We need to pray-read these words again and again. For example, if we pray with the words murmurings and reasonings in 2:14, we shall breathe in the breath of God. Furthermore, we shall come to hate our murmurings and reasonings and aspire to be saved from them. By pray-reading the Word, we respond to it. Then in our experience the Word is not a book in dead letters; instead, it is God's breath, even His breathing.

Sometimes when we pray-read the Word, we may pray a whole verse at one time. However, often it is better to pray-read word by word or phrase by phrase. No one can eat a whole chicken at once. Instead, we eat a little at a time. In the same principle, we should pray-read the Word a little at a time, perhaps even word by word. If we pray with the words murmurings and reasonings in 2:14, we shall receive a divine injection, a heavenly inoculation, which will save us from our murmurings and our reasonings.

In our physical body, we sometimes develop a problem with our skin, perhaps an infection or a fungus. In some cases, neither cleansing nor application of medications to

the skin will bring about healing. However, a physician may prescribe medication to be taken internally which will clear up the whole problem. The Bible is a divine medication, the most effective antidote to all negative things. The way to apply the Word as an antidote is not merely to think about it, consider it, or analyze it. We receive the antidote of the Word by exercising our spirit to pray-read it.

Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." Like the prophet Jeremiah, we also would eat the Word of God. Some Christians, however, oppose this concept, claiming that the Bible is good only for reading and studying. But the Bible is not only for reading and studying, but also for eating. The Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). This indicates that every word of the Bible, even words such as murmurings and reasonings, can supply us with life. Hence, we may pray-read a verse like 2:14 word by word. In this way, we shall live by every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.

SINGING THE WORD

We may not realize how much we are influenced by traditional Christianity even in the way we read the Bible. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." Here Paul does not speak of reading, analyzing, or meditating on the Word. Instead, he encourages us to sing the Word. We should receive the word of Christ not only by reading, but also by singing, psalming, and praising. Whether or not we sing well, the Lord is pleased to hear US singing the Word. He is happy when we sing from our spirit and from our heart. If we do not know a melody to use in singing a particular

verse, we may make up one of our own. The important thing is that we learn to sing the Word of God. I believe that one day in a meeting we may spend most of the time singing a book like Ephesians.

We have pointed out that the Lord Jesus said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. The Word, however, is not only food to us and our life supply; it is also a spiritual antibiotic. We should not only be fed by the Word, but should also be inoculated with it against many different kinds of troubles, problems, weaknesses, and "diseases." Murmurings and reasonings are spiritual diseases against which we need to be inoculated by the Word. Day by day we need to pray-read the Word and sing the Word in order to receive further inoculations. If we pray-read 2:14, we shall be inoculated against murmurings and reasonings.

We need to take the Bible as a book of life. The whole Bible is the word of life. As the word of life, the Bible is food to us. Would it not be foolish only to study food and not eat it? If we would study our food and refuse to eat it, we would eventually die. Likewise, if we do not eat the Word, we shall die spiritually. It is crucial that we eat the Word by pray-reading it and by singing it.

In pray-reading 2:14 through 16, we should not simply pray-read these verses as a whole, but should concentrate on the important words and phrases. We need to pray-read the words murmurings, reasonings, blameless, guileless, without blemish, children of God, crooked, perverted, generation, shine, lights, world, holding forth, word, and life. We may strongly dislike murmurings, reasonings, and the crooked and perverted generation. Nevertheless, the words "murmurings," "reasonings," and "crooked and perverted generation" in these verses can supply us with life if we pray-read and sing them. We should hate murmurings, but we should appreciate pray-reading the word "murmurings." Furthermore, we should not only eat these words, but also digest them and assimilate them so that they may become part of our constitution.

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES IN THE WORD

Those who have been listening to my messages for many years sometimes wonder why I always have something new and fresh to minister to the saints. The more I pray-read 2:14-16, the more I realize that we can give message after message on these verses. We may give one message on murmurings, and another on reasonings. Then we need messages on being blameless and guileless. To be blameless is to be without defect in our outward behavior, and to be guileless is to be pure in our inward character. Outwardly, in our behavior, we need to be without defect; inwardly, in our character, we need to be pure. Surely such matters can be the subject of entire messages. However, Christians may read these verses and take them for granted. They may not inquire what Paul means here by blameless and guileless.

Imagine how many messages we need on the expression "children of God"! As children of God, we have the divine life and nature. These matters are profound and require many messages to cover them adequately.

We also could give messages on being without blemish, and on the crooked and perverted generation. What is the difference between crooked and perverted? What is the generation in verse 15, and what does Paul mean by the world? If we ask questions such as these and if we pray-read these verses, we shall be impressed with the fact that the riches in the Word are inexhaustible. Day by day we need to receive these riches by pray-reading the Word and by singing it.

FILLED WITH THE WORD TO MANIFEST CHRIST

If we are filled with the riches of the living Word day by day, spontaneously we shall hold forth the word of life. We shall present the word of life to others and offer it to them. This is to magnify Christ and to live Christ. Christ Himself is the living Word, the word of life. For this reason, when we are filled with the word of life, we manifest Christ and magnify Him. This is the way to live Christ.

CHILDREN OF GOD

What I have said so far is an introductory word to this message, which is entitled "Children of God Shining as Luminaries by Holding Forth the Word of Life." The expression "children of God" implies the life and nature of God. As God's children, we have His life and nature. Just as a child has the life and nature of his father because he was born of him, not adopted by him, so we have the life and nature of God the Father because we were born of Him and not merely adopted by Him. Praise the Lord that we are sons of the Triune God with the divine life and nature!

Would you not have a special feeling of pride if you were the son of the President of the United States? Would you not feel honored and want to boast of this fact? We, however, have a much higher kind of sonship. We are sons of God possessing the divine life and nature! Once we were sinners, but now we are sons of God. How glorious that we are God's divine sons!

Because we have the divine life and the divine nature, we can truly say that we are divine. However, this certainly does not mean that we are evolving into the Godhead or that we shall ever become God as an object of worship. Furthermore, this is not to teach pantheism or the deification of man. Nevertheless, we may be bold to declare that as sons of God with the divine life and nature we are divine. Hallelujah, we are children of God with the divine life and divine nature!

We should not only pray-read the words "children of God"; we should also sing them, either using a familiar tune or making up our own melody. If we sing the Word in this way, we shall be infused, inspired, and inwardly strengthened. We shall also receive a divine inoculation.

THE FUNCTION OF SHINING

In 2:15 Paul goes on to say that as children of God we "shine as lights in the world." The Greek word rendered lights means luminaries which reflect the light of the sun.

The matter of shining as luminaries indicates our ability to function. Praise the Lord that we are able to shine! We are not only children of God, but are also luminaries with the heavenly function of reflecting Christ as the real sun.

Every kind of life has its particular function. The function of an apple tree is to bear apples, and our function as luminaries possessing the divine life and nature is to shine. As sons of God with the divine life, we have the function of shining. In our daily living we should not merely behave ourselves according to a certain standard--we should shine.

As luminaries, we in ourselves do not possess any light. Our shining is simply the reflection of light which we receive from another source. Christ is the light, the real sun, and we reflect Him by holding forth the word of life. Thus, our shining is actually our reflection of Christ as the source of our light.

We shine by holding forth the word of life. According to Colossians 3:16, we should allow the word of Christ to dwell in us, to inhabit us, richly. Then we shall have the word of life with which to shine. In order to hold forth the word of life, we must first have the divine life within us. Because we are supplied with this life and energized by it, we can shine as luminaries by holding forth the word of life. The more we are nourished by feeding on the word of life, digesting and assimilating this word, the greater will be the accumulation of the word within us. Then spontaneously we shall shine with the very word of life we have taken into us. This shining will then be our holding forth, our presenting, the wonderful word of life to others. Those who have contact with us over a period of time will thus receive help from us. If we daily digest Christ as the word of life, accumulating the riches of the Word in a subjective, organic way, we shall have something living and organic to share with others. This is the proper gospel preaching and proclamation of the truth. As we have pointed out, this is the way to magnify Christ and live Him.

May we all pray-read the Word and sing the Word by

exercising our spirit. May we be liberated from every kind of bondage in our dealing with the Word and the Spirit. If we exercise our spirit to pray-read, sing, and psalm 2:14-16, we shall praise the Lord that we are children of God and luminaries shining by holding forth the word of life. If we practice pray-reading these verses word by word and also exercise to sing the Word of God, we shall be permeated and saturated with the rich supply from the living Word. Then our inner being will be filled with the riches of Christ. Spontaneously, unconsciously, and even unintentionally, we shall live a life that expresses Christ and holds forth the word of life. What the Lord needs in His recovery today is not a group of people who are religious, but a group of people who live Christ and who shine as luminaries by holding forth the word of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-SEVEN

THE CONSTANT SALVATION IN OUR PRACTICAL LIFE

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21; 2:12-16

According to the book of Philippians, there is a salvation which is constant in our practical life. To say that this salvation is constant means that it is a salvation we may experience every day, every hour, and every moment.

A SUBJECTIVE SALVATION FOR MAGNIFYING CHRIST

In Philippians 1 and 2 Paul uses the word salvation twice. In 1:19 he says, "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation." In 2:12 he says to the saints in Philippi, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The salvation in 1:19 denotes the salvation Paul experienced during his imprisonment in Rome. A typical Jew, he was held a prisoner in Rome, far from his native land. Using today's terms, Paul was held captive by the Roman imperialists. It certainly was a shameful, dishonorable thing for a Jew to be held in a Roman prison. Most of the time, Paul was probably chained to a guard. It certainly must have been an insult for an educated upperclass Jew to be chained to a guard in a Roman prison. It was also dishonorable for such an apostle of the Lord Jesus to be imprisoned in such a way. Nevertheless, Paul testified that his situation would turn out to him for salvation.

In 1:19 Paul is not referring to eternal salvation, the salvation from hell and the judgment of God. That salvation is objective. What Paul has in mind here is a very subjective, experiential salvation, a salvation experienced not once for all, but moment by moment.

When Paul said that he expected his situation to turn out for his salvation, he did not have in mind release from prison. Some readers of the book of Philippians may think that Paul's expectation was that, through the prayers of the saints, especially those in Philippi, he would be released from prison. However, according to the grammatical construction of 1:19-21, this cannot be the meaning of salvation here. The salvation in verse 19 is related to Paul's word in verse 20 about not being put to shame in anything and about Christ being magnified in his body, whether through life or through death. Hence, in verse 20 we have the definition of the salvation mentioned in verse 19. Therefore, salvation here consists of not being put to shame in anything, but of magnifying Christ in everything.

Salvation here certainly does not mean release from prison. Instead, it means that, no matter how difficult Paul's situation was and no matter how insulting, he would not be put to shame in anything. Rather, Christ would be magnified in his body. Not even being chained to a guard would hinder Paul from magnifying Christ. This is what we mean by constant salvation.

Actually, the word constant is not adequate to describe the salvation in 1:19. All our words are related to our culture. If a certain matter does not exist in our culture, we shall not have a word for it. The salvation here is altogether wonderful and marvelous, and no word is sufficient to describe it fully. Not even in prison would Paul be put to shame. Instead of being put to shame, he knew that he would magnify Christ. This was Paul's salvation.

Suppose instead of rejoicing in the Lord, Paul wept about his situation and complained, saying, "I'm an educated Jew and also an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, called, commissioned, and sent by Him. Now I'm in prison chained to a guard. How terrible!" If Paul had wept and complained, he would have been put to shame. However, Paul did not weep or complain. On the contrary, he rejoiced in the Lord. Anyone who visited him in prison may have

been astonished and amazed. Perhaps Paul even testified to the jailer that he was happy in the Lord and rejoiced in Him. Possibly Paul's enjoyment of Christ in prison may have been a factor in bringing Onesimus, a runaway slave, to salvation. Anyone who observed Paul in prison would have seen a man praising the Lord and rejoicing.

When Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, he and Silas sang praises to the Lord (Acts 16:23-26). To be sure, the Philippian believers knew of Paul's experience there in prison. They knew that the praises of Paul and Silas brought in a great earthquake. No doubt, while in prison in Rome, Paul also exercised himself to sing praises to the Lord. Far from being found complaining or weeping, he could be found rejoicing in the Lord, singing praises to Him, and testifying concerning Him. This is constant salvation.

ENJOYING A CONSTANT SALVATION TO LIVE CHRIST

Many of us have been Christians for years, but we have never heard anything about this constant salvation. We knew, of course, about eternal salvation. That kind of salvation is objective. I wish to make it very clear that I certainly do not belittle eternal salvation in any way. I treasure it and deeply appreciate it. In His eternal salvation God has rescued us from hell and from His righteous judgment. But day by day we need to go on to experience a constant salvation in our practical life. When Paul was in prison, what he enjoyed was not simply God's eternal salvation with the hope it afforded him; he also enjoyed a constant salvation hour by hour. To enjoy this salvation is to live Christ. Actually to live Christ is to enjoy constant salvation in our daily life.

Every aspect of God's salvation brings us out of something on the negative side and ushers us into something on the positive side. Negatively, Paul was saved from being put to shame; positively, Christ was magnified in him. What a wonderful salvation!

SAVED FROM ORDINARY THINGS

In 2:12 Paul tells the saints in Philippi, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The constant

salvation in 1:19 is for a particular person in a particular situation, whereas the constant salvation in 2:12 is for all believers in common situations. We have seen that the salvation in 1:19 saved Paul in the particular situation of his imprisonment in such a way that he would not be put to shame, but instead would magnify Christ. Now we need to see that, according to the context of 2:12, constant salvation is also for the believers to be saved from ordinary things in their daily living.

From verses 14 and 15 we see that these things include murmurings, reasonings, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, perverseness, and darkness. These are general characteristics of the condition of fallen man everywhere. No matter where we may be, there will be murmuring, reasoning, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, perverseness, and darkness. These may be found not only in society generally, but even in the family life of believers. It is common for wives to murmur, and for husbands to reason. A wife may complain about something, and her husband may vindicate himself. Then neither the wife nor the husband is blameless, and both may also have guile and blemishes. At times, a husband and wife are also crooked and perverted in their dealings with each other. Who can say that he has never been crooked in his relationships with others? Children may even be crooked in relation to their own parents. Although we have received God's eternal salvation, to a certain extent we may still be crooked, not altogether honest and straightforward in certain matters. Thus, we need a constant salvation with respect to all the negative things in verses 14 and 15.

Paul tells us that we need to work out our own salvation. By working out this salvation we shall be saved from murmurings, reasonings, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, perverseness, and darkness. To be sure, it is not easy to be saved from such things. Paul deliberately used these words to indicate the fallen condition common to all.

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

However, just as the salvation in 1:19 has both a negative side and a positive side, the salvation in 2:12 has two sides. The negative side is in verses 14 and 15; the positive side is in verse 16, where Paul speaks of "holding forth the word of life." The Greek word rendered holding forth means to apply, present, offer. To hold forth the word of life is to present it to others and offer it to them, applying it to them in their situation. Wherever we may be, we need to hold forth the word of life; we need to present the word of life to others. What we offer to those around us should not be words of murmuring or reasoning, nor anything related to crookedness or perverseness. We should offer nothing other than the word of life.

To hold forth the word of life is identical to living Christ. Whenever we live Christ, we hold forth the word of life. Once again we see that the book of Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ and a book also on living Christ. What Paul wrote in this Epistle is related to the experience of Christ and to living Christ.

I hope that we all shall be deeply impressed with the need to enjoy constant salvation in our practical life day by day. We need a salvation which we can term our own salvation. This salvation saves us not from hell, nor even merely from sin, but from murmurings, reasonings, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, perverseness, and darkness. When we experience this salvation, we spontaneously hold forth, present, apply, the word of life to those around us. This is to live Christ.

PARTICULAR SITUATIONS AND COMMON SITUATIONS

In Philippians 1 and 2 we see a constant salvation that is, on the one hand, for a particular person in a particular situation and, on the other hand, for all believers in the common situations of daily life. Under God's sovereignty, we may become a person in a particular situation. Paul

became such a person when he was imprisoned in Rome. Imprisonment caused him to be a person in a particularly difficult situation. But being a person in that kind of situation afforded him an excellent opportunity to experience and enjoy constant salvation. We may also find ourselves in particular situations. For example, a brother may suddenly find himself without a job. This brother needs the salvation in 1:19.

Most of the time our situation is rather common, ordinary. As we have pointed out, the daily situation of fallen man includes murmurings, reasonings, and many other negative things. In our married life we need a constant salvation in order to be rescued from murmurings and reasonings. We also need a constant salvation in order to be rescued from crookedness and perverseness. For example, a brother may not be honest or straightforward in dealing with his wife. Thus, he needs a present, constant salvation. If he does not experience this salvation, there will be no way for him to hold forth the word of life.

Day by day we need a constant salvation to save us from anything that is not Christ. This salvation brings us into a condition where spontaneously we live Christ. Then in our living we shall present the word of life to others. This word of life held forth by us also is Christ. For this reason, to hold forth the word of life is to live Christ.

How much we need the Lord's constant salvation in our married life! Suppose a brother is working around the house and his wife calls him to dinner. However, because he is occupied with what he is doing, he does not respond. After calling him again and again, the wife may begin to murmur, to complain. The husband may react by reasoning to vindicate himself. Then their dealings with each other in this situation become crooked and perverse. Both need a constant salvation.

I thank the Lord that in His recovery He has gained a good number of saints who love Him and seek Him. Although we pursue the Lord, we must admit that, at least to a certain extent, we are still crooked in dealing with

others, especially with those in our household. Parents and children may not he straightforward in their relationship with one another. This exposes our need for a daily salvation to rescue us from our fallen condition.

Paul knew the situation of fallen man. In Philippians 1 he presents his own case as an illustration of God's constant salvation. Then in chapter two he shows that this salvation is for all believers in the common situations of daily life. Although the salvation in 1:19 may not always apply to you specifically in your circumstances, you cannot deny your need for the salvation in 2:12. You may not be a particular person with a particular case, but you certainly are an ordinary person in a common situation. In ordinary daily life we all are bothered by murmurings, reasonings, crookedness, and even perverseness. Thus, we need a constant salvation day by day.

WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE CHRIST

We need this salvation not only to bring us out of negative things, but also to bring us into a glorious condition of presenting the word of life to those around us. The salvation in 1:19 brings us into a state where Christ is magnified in us, and the salvation in 2:12 brings us into a condition where we hold forth the living Christ as the word of life to others. To have this salvation, which we need daily and hourly, is to live Christ in a practical way.

Do you know what it means to live Christ? To live Christ means that no matter what our circumstances may be, Christ is magnified in us and we are not put to shame in anything. Hence, the salvation in 1:19 is equal to living Christ. To enjoy and experience this salvation is to live Christ. Furthermore, to live Christ also means that in our daily life we are saved from murmurings, reasonings, crookedness, and perverseness and that we present our living Lord as the word of life to those whom we meet day by day. What a tremendous salvation! We all need this daily, constant salvation, a salvation which is nothing other than Christ Himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-EIGHT

CONSTANT SALVATION THROUGH THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE INWARD OPERATION OF THE INDWELLING GOD

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21; 2:12-16

Although Philippians is a short book, it is rich and profound. No other book in the New Testament reveals salvation in such a practical and experiential way. We know from the first chapter of Matthew that Christ became a man named Jesus and Emmanuel. Jesus means "Jehovah the Savior," and Emmanuel means "God with us." After I was saved, I treasured these names. However, I did not know their meaning in an experiential way until the Lord brought me into the reality of the book of Philippians. In this book we have the details of God's practical, experiential, subjective, and constant salvation. Philippians presents God's salvation in a way that is more practical and experiential than the way it is presented in Romans. Romans speaks of salvation more in a doctrinal way, but Philippians speaks of it more in an experiential way.

THE NEED FOR CONSTANT SALVATION IN OUR FAMILY LIFE AND CHURCH LIFE

God's salvation in Christ is not only eternal, but also constant and practical. In a sense, eternal salvation is rather remote. We need a salvation that can be applied to our daily situations, especially to our married life and family life. Married life can be compared to a prison. Our spouse is the jailer, and our children are guards. For such a

situation, we need a salvation that is practical, constant, and experiential. The book of Philippians reveals a salvation that we can experience day by day, a salvation that we can enjoy in the "prison" of married life.

We need to experience a present salvation not only in our family life, but also in the church life. In the church there are saints of many different nationalities and with all kinds of dispositions and personalities. In order for us to stay together in the church life, we need a present and practical salvation. This is especially necessary if we are to experience the church not only locally, but also as the new man universally. Hence, we need salvation for our family life, for our local church life, and for our life in the one new man.

Suppose you plan to visit churches in different parts of the world. As you come in contact with saints of different cultures, nationalities, and dispositions, you will realize how much we need to experience God's salvation in the church life. If we are to practice the church life with so many different brothers and sisters meeting together as one, we need the constant salvation revealed in the book of Philippians.

In 1:19 Paul says, "I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation." As a prisoner in Rome, Paul needed a practical salvation. Suppose someone spoke to him about eternal salvation. Paul could have said, "Brother, don't talk about something so remote from my present situation. I am a prisoner in chains. I need a salvation that can be applied to this situation."

SAVED FROM CROOKEDNESS

In 2:12-15 Paul speaks of working out our own salvation in relation to murmurings, reasonings, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, and perverseness. This indicates that we need a salvation from all these negative things. If we are still crooked in some way, then, whether or not we are Christians, we are part of today's crooked generation. To be saved from the crooked generation is to be saved

from crookedness. We all need a salvation for today, the salvation revealed in the book of Philippians.

THE MEANS OF OUR DAILY SALVATION

In this message we shall see that we may have constant, daily salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the inward operation of the indwelling God. Salvation requires power. This means that a certain power is necessary to afford us a constant salvation. God's means for the accomplishment of this salvation are unspeakably great. According to Philippians, the means are two: the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the inward operation of the indwelling God. Daily and even hourly we may be saved by these two means.

Please notice that the means of our daily salvation are not the bountiful supply of the Spirit of *God* and the operation of the *visiting* God. They are the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the inward operation of the indwelling God. The God who saves us is not one who merely visits us; He is the One who indwells us. On the one hand, Paul could say that his circumstances would turn out to him for salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, he charged the saints to work out their own salvation according to the inward operation of God. Thus, the bountiful supply of the Spirit and the inward operation of the indwelling God are the two means whereby we are saved in a practical way day by day.

AN ORGANIC UNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

When we believed in Christ, an organic union took place between us and the Triune God. We have actually been joined to the Triune God, united with Him. By believing in Christ we were born of God, and God was born into us. This divine birth makes the organic union possible. We were born of God when the Triune God as the all-inclusive

Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, came into our spirit. This transaction took place at the time we believed in the Lord Jesus, even though we probably did not realize it and were not conscious of it. Having come into our spirit, the all-inclusive Spirit remains there with His bountiful supply.

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY

Divinity

We need to see what the bountiful supply of the Spirit includes. First, the bountiful supply includes the divine Person with the divine life and nature. Thus, the bountiful supply includes divinity, and divinity includes the divine life, nature, being, and person. In other words, it is God Himself. In the bountiful supply we have God with His life, nature, being, and person.

Humanity

The bountiful supply also includes an uplifted humanity, a humanity with a proper life, living, nature, and person. The Lord Jesus is both God and man. Within Him there are both divinity and humanity. Thus, when He was on earth, He lived as God and also as man. All that the Lord passed through in thirty-three and a half years of life on earth is now in the all-inclusive Spirit. Therefore, divinity and humanity, including the human living of the Lord Jesus, are in the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive Spirit.

Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension

On the cross the Lord Jesus died a wonderful death. The all-inclusive death of Christ dealt with every negative thing in the universe. By His death all sinful things were terminated. This wonderful death is also included in the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Christ's resurrection and ascension are included as well. Now in the bountiful supply of the Spirit we have Christ's divinity, humanity, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

The Divine Attributes and Human Virtues

The bountiful supply of the Spirit also includes the divine attributes and the human virtues. God is love and light, and He is holy and righteous. These are some of His attributes. Furthermore, as a man Christ has all the human virtues. Both the divine attributes and the human virtues are in the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The submission and love we need day by day are also found in the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Although the Bible commands a wife to submit to her husband and a husband to love his wife, actually in ourselves we do not have either genuine submission or love. Instead of submission, we have rebellion. Instead of a proper love, we have an unbalanced, twisted love. True submission and love are in the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

As we enjoy the bountiful supply of the Spirit, we partake of the ingredients of this supply without being aware of it. For example, we may love others without being conscious of the fact that we are loving. In like manner, we may be submissive without realizing that we are submissive. However, if we deliberately try to love or submit, our love or submission will not be genuine. True love and true submission are always spontaneous and not something of which we are conscious. A sister who is genuinely submissive to her husband has no consciousness of being submissive, for her submission comes out of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes sisters submit purposely and intentionally. A sister may think that she must submit to her husband in order to be spiritual. This kind of submission is political. Other sisters may submit for the purpose of setting a good example for their daughters to follow. This submission is also political and even hypocritical. It is a performance rather than something spontaneous. I repeat, real submission is spontaneous; it is the issue of enjoying the bountiful supply of the Spirit.

Whenever we try to behave ourselves apart from enjoying the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

we are political and hypocritical. Actually, every kind of religion teaches people to act in a political way. Under this influence, we may think that for the sake of our husband or wife, for the sake of our children or relatives, and even for the sake of the church, we should behave in a particular way. Such behavior is political, hypocritical.

The source of true virtue is the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When Paul was rejoicing there in prison in Rome, he was not deliberately trying to act joyful. His rejoicing was not the result of his own effort, and it certainly was not a performance. Because Paul loved the Triune God, opened himself to the Triune God, and communicated with the Triune God, the Triune God had a free course to infuse all He is into Paul. As a result, Paul could realize that with this Triune God there is the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Because he experienced this supply, he could rejoice in the Lord even while a prisoner in chains.

The Spirit today is not merely the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, or the Holy Spirit. Having passed through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Spirit is now the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Within Him there is a living supply which includes all kinds of divine, spiritual, heavenly ingredients. Through this bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Paul's circumstances turned out to his salvation. He was saved constantly and instantly through this bountiful supply. Thus, the source of his daily salvation was the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

SAVED FROM MURMURINGS AND REASONINGS

In Philippians 1 Paul was saved from a particular situation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit. In chapter two he goes on to point out how the believers may experience a constant salvation in the ordinary things of daily life. For example, 2:14 says, "Do all things without

murmurings and reasonings." Murmurings and reasonings are things we experience daily. We may not experience hate or anger every day, but we certainly reason and murmur every day. In married life, the wives are especially given to murmuring, and the husbands, to reasoning. In a sense, the natural married life is a life of murmurings and reasonings. If a brother lived alone, without a wife as his companion, he might have little occasion for murmuring and reasoning. Married life, however, affords him ample opportunity for both. Likewise, before a sister is married, she may not murmur over minor frustrations. Now after she is married, she may murmur over the slightest frustration. Her husband may react to her murmuring by reasoning with her, vindicating himself and accusing her. There may be murmurings and reasonings over such things as a bed that is not made, a brush that is out of place, a burned-out light bulb, or a room that is not clean. Should a husband come home from work and find the house not in proper order, he may find it difficult to be silent. Even if he manages to be quiet, he may not be silent joyfully. Our murmurings and reasonings over matters such as these reveal our need for constant salvation. Oh, how we need to be saved daily from murmurings and reasonings!

GOD OPERATING IN US

What can save us from our murmurings and reasonings? In 2:12 and 13 Paul charges us to work out our own salvation, for "it is God Who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." However, the matter of God operating in us may be merely a doctrine. When we face certain situations at home, we may not have the reality of the inward operation of God. Instead, we may be fully in ourselves. Nevertheless, if we are to experience constant salvation, we need to realize that this salvation is God Himself operating within us.

For years I was bothered by the fact that in 2:13 Paul speaks of God and not of Christ or the Spirit. Paul

deliberately speaks of God in this verse in order to indicate that our constant salvation is nothing less than God Himself. However, there is a difference between the God revealed in 2:13 and the God revealed in Genesis 1:1. By the time we come to the book of Philippians, God has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. According to Isaiah 9:6, the child born to us was called the mighty God. The One who was born in a manger in Bethlehem and who lived in a carpenter's home in Nazareth was the mighty God. By this we see that the living God experienced human life. In a man, the mighty God lived among human beings for more than thirty years. Then for the accomplishment of redemption, He was crucified, entered into death, took a tour of Hades, and came forth in resurrection. Furthermore, our God, Jesus Christ, ascended to heaven and was made the Lord of all. Now He has the lordship, the kingship, and the headship. Today our God is not only the Creator, the Redeemer, the Savior, and the Lord. He is the all-inclusive One. The word God in 2:13 points to this wonderful, processed, all-inclusive God. This indwelling God is now operating in us. The indwelling and operating God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, He is our pattern, the word of life, and the all-inclusive Spirit.

This indwelling One is not passive; on the contrary, He is active and energetic, moving, working, and operating in us. The Greek word rendered "operates" in 2:13 means energizes. The English word energize is an anglicized form of this word. The indwelling God energizes us from within to be the source, power, strength, and energy for our constant salvation.

To be saved from murmurings and reasonings is not an insignificant matter. Apart from the indwelling and operating God, we have no way to be saved from these things. We also need to be saved from crookedness and perverseness. In certain ways we all are crooked and perverted. To be perverted is to be warped, twisted. It is not easy to be saved from these things in a practical way.

A CONSTANT SALVATION FROM REFINED SINS

In Philippians 2 Paul refers to murmurings, reasonings, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, perverseness, and darkness. By contrast, in Romans 1 he speaks of gross sins such as idolatry, fornication, and murder. Actually, to be saved from gross sins is relatively easy, but to be saved from murmurings, reasonings, crookedness, and perverseness is very difficult. We may not commit gross sins, but day by day we are still bothered by the negative things listed by Paul in Philippians 2. We need salvation not only from gross sins, but also from sins that may be considered somewhat refined, such as murmuring and reasoning. If we would be blameless and guileless, we also need a constant salvation.

The only one who can possibly save us in this way is the Triune God who has been processed to become the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit. Today our God is such an all-inclusive Spirit. This wonderful God now indwells us and is working, energizing, operating, within us, looking for the opportunity to rescue us day by day.

When I was young, I heard only two aspects of God's salvation. First, I was told that Christ died on the cross to save us. Second, I learned that, as the almighty One, He is in the heavens, able to save us to the uttermost if we trust in Him. For years I did not know specifically how the Lord Jesus saves us in a practical way. Now in the book of Philippians we see that we have a constant salvation both for particular situations and for ordinary daily life. The One who saves us is not merely the almighty One in the heavens; we are saved through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and by the inward operation of the indwelling God.

SAVED THROUGH THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT AND THE PROCESSED GOD

Today our God is subjective. He has become our inward supply to support us in any particular situation with His

riches, all of which are now our portion in the bountiful supply of the Spirit. As we enjoy this bountiful supply, we are spontaneously saved from our particular situations. Furthermore, this Spirit is the God who dwells in us to operate within us to save us from the common situations of daily Life.

During the years I have been in this country, I have continually ministered to the saints the all-inclusive Christ as the life-giving Spirit and the processed God. In Philippians 1 we have the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit, and in Philippians 2 we have the processed God. Today our God is no longer merely the object of our worship. As the processed One, He dwells in us. God is no longer unprocessed, no longer "raw." Having passed through the steps of a process, He now dwells in our spirit for our experience and enjoyment. Hallelujah, we have the processed God as our portion! He is operating in us to save us day by day. Eventually, He Himself becomes our constant salvation.

Actually, the indwelling God who operates in us is the all-inclusive Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Because He is such, we simply cannot systematize Him. This God is Christ and also the Spirit. The source of our constant salvation is the processed God who is the all-inclusive, life-giving, compound Spirit. With this Spirit we have the bountiful supply, and with the processed God we have the inward operation. The supply and the operation are the source of our constant salvation. By means of this wonderful source we are saved from our particular situation and from the common situations of daily life. In this way we can be saved from murmurings, reasonings, crookedness, and perverseness. This is not a theory; it is practical and experiential. When we enjoy this constant salvation, we live Christ. We live Christ by enjoying constant salvation in our daily life.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FORTY-NINE

THE DIVINE AND RICH PROVISION FOR OUR CONSTANT SALVATION

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-16

In 2:5-16 Paul not only speaks of constant salvation and its source, but also shows us the divine and rich provision for this salvation. For the working out of our own salvation we need this provision.

In 2:5-11 we have a record of Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation. However, here nothing is said about Christ's redemption. It seems that in these verses Paul purposely does not refer to the redemption of Christ. His purpose is to present the Lord Jesus and His incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and exaltation in such a way as to give us a pattern for our daily salvation.

Christ alone was qualified to accomplish redemption. We cannot share in this work. It would be blasphemy to say that we participate in the accomplishing of redemption. We enjoy Christ's redemption, but we cannot participate in Christ's work of redemption.

THE PATTERN AND THE STANDARD

Although we cannot share in Christ's redemption, we need to be partners with Him in His human living, especially in His emptying Himself, humbling Himself, and in His not grasping equality with God as a treasure. Although the Lord subsisted in the form of God and was equal to God, He did not consider this equality a treasure to be grasped and retained. He did not insist on holding onto the form of God, but was willing to empty Himself by laying aside the form of God and putting on the form of a

slave. We all should be partners with Christ in this self-emptying. This means that instead of grasping what we have, we should lay these things aside and empty ourselves.

After Christ emptied Himself, becoming in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself to such an extent that He was obedient even unto the death of the cross. Then God raised Him from among the dead and highly exalted Him. Here we have not only a pattern for our constant salvation, but also the standard for this salvation. The pattern includes Christ's experience from incarnation through crucifixion; the standard includes His experience from resurrection to exaltation. Daily we need to enjoy a salvation which has such a pattern and standard.

Suppose the wife of a certain brother gives him a difficult time. The way for him to be saved in this situation is not to insist on his headship or on her subordination. He should not regard himself as a king and her as a subject. Neither should he use Ephesians 5:22 to insist that she submit to him. To do this would be to grasp his headship, his "husbandship." This would not be in keeping with the principle that the Lord did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. Although it is difficult for one who has the headship to lay it aside, this is just what the brother must do in order to experience the Lord's constant salvation. Of course, the brother can be saved by the inward operation of God. However, 2:5-8 comes before God's operation, which is in verse 13. Surely God will operate in the brother to save him. Nevertheless, he must be willing to empty himself and lay aside his headship according to the pattern in 2:5-8. However, in most cases, a married brother grasps his headship and refuses to lay it aside. This may give rise to murmurings, reasonings, and bitter exchange of words. The brother here should contact the Lord Jesus and say, "Lord, You did not grasp equality with God, and I do not grasp my headship. Neither do I insist on my position as a husband. By Your gracious

mercy, I lay aside my headship." Simply by doing this, he experiences the first step of God's constant salvation. Now he must go on to experience the rest by humbling himself, even unto death. Instead of feeling resentment toward his wife for having to lay aside his headship, he should humble himself before her. This is to experience the pattern of constant salvation from incarnation to the death of the cross. If the brother experiences this, God will come in to raise him and exalt him. Then the brother will also experience the standard of God's instant salvation. As a result, his wife may be humbled, troubled by the fact that she has been giving him a difficult time. Instead of reacting to her in a negative way, her husband emptied himself and humbled himself. Now she realizes that in his experience of Christ he is exalted and enthroned. He has experienced constant salvation with its pattern and standard.

In 2:5-16 we see how to work out our own salvation. We also see the source and the power for a constant salvation. As we consider the pattern and the standard found here, we see that we need to be partners with Christ in His pattern and standard. This is the first aspect of the divine and rich provision for our constant salvation.

THE OPERATING GOD

When I was young, I learned that in 2:5-11 there are seven steps in the Lord's humiliation: emptying Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men, humbling Himself, becoming obedient, being obedient unto death, and being obedient unto the death of the cross. I was also taught that, as Christians, we should follow the Lord Jesus in these steps. However, the more I tried to follow Him and imitate Him, the more my fallen nature was exposed. I realized from my experience that the traditional teaching of imitating Christ does not work, for I simply did not have a nature that could follow the Lord in this way. The Lord Jesus was God incarnate, a God-man, a man with the divine element. How could I, a fallen human being, one who lacked even the proper human element and entirely

lacked the divine element, follow this God-man? The Lord Jesus has both the divine element and the proper human element. Although He put aside the form of God, He never laid aside the nature of God. The reality, essence, substance, of the divine nature was still in Him. Thus, He was a man filled with the divine element. He could pass through the seven steps of His humiliation. However, I could not imitate Him.

Gradually I began to understand that to follow the Lord Jesus according to Philippians 2, we need to have God operating within us. In ourselves we are not able to follow the divine pattern or reach God's standard. Praise the Lord that God is working in us! The very God who became incarnate in the Lord Jesus is now in us. This God is the infinite God, the eternal God, the One who created the universe by His word. Through incarnation, this eternal God came to live in the Lord Jesus. He made Jesus a pattern and uplifted Him according to the divine standard. Now this same God is operating in us. When I first realized this, I was overjoyed. Because God is operating in me, I am now a God-man. All genuine believers in Christ need to see that, as Christians, we are God-men. No longer need we live according to our fallen humanity, for God is now operating in us. Hallelujah, because God dwells in us and is operating in us, we are God-men! This inward operation of God is the second aspect of the divine and rich provision for constant salvation.

CHILDREN OF GOD

The third aspect is that we are children of God (2:15). Because we have proclaimed this truth, some have falsely accused us of teaching evolution into God. We certainly do not teach evolution into God. According to the Bible, we testify the fact that, as children of God, we have been born of God. Just as an offspring of a dog has the life and nature of a dog, and a child has the life and nature of his parents, so as children of God we have God's life and nature.

If we were not children of God with the divine life and nature, we could not understand God's operation within us or cooperate with it. Our cooperation with God's operation can be compared to a three-legged race. In such a race, each person has one leg free and the other bound to one of his partner's legs. It is impossible for a human being to run a three-legged race tied to an animal, because an animal does not have the life and nature to cooperate with a human being. Figuratively speaking, because we have the divine life and nature, we are running a three-legged race with God as our partner. Paul says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). After our God came through incarnation, lived on earth to establish a pattern of salvation, was crucified, and was raised and exalted according to the divine standard, He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). As such a Spirit, He has entered into us and now dwells in us as the all-inclusive, processed God. His operation within us is based on the fact that He has regenerated us and deposited into us His divine life with the divine nature. This is the greatest wonder in the universe! After setting up the pattern and establishing the standard, God put His life and nature into us. Now He is motivating, operating, and energizing within by His divine life and nature according to the pattern with the standard. When we call on the Lord or pray to the Father, we experience this inner operation.

We have seen that the first aspect of the divine provision for our constant salvation is the pattern with the standard and that the second aspect is the inward operation of the God who became incarnate, died on the cross, and was resurrected and exalted. This God has come into us to live out this pattern in us. First He regenerated us, imparting His divine life with the divine nature into us to make us God-men, children of God. Now He dwells in us to operate in us continually. Because we have the indwelling God operating in us, Hebrews 8:11 says, "And they shall by no means teach each one his fellow citizen and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all

shall know Me from the little one to the great among them." Because God is operating in us, we know what He wants to do and what we should do. For example, when a brother's wife gives him a difficult time, he does not need a pastor to instruct him. Through the operating God he knows that he should lay aside his headship and, according to the pattern of the Lord Jesus, be willing to serve her as a slave.

SHINING AS LUMINARIES

In verse 15 Paul says that we "shine as lights in the world." The Greek word rendered lights denotes luminaries which reflect the light of the sun. As children of God with the divine life and nature, we have a special function--the function of shining. Because we have the divine life and nature, we have become luminaries reflecting Christ as the real sun. Whenever we cooperate with God's inward operation according to the divine life and nature, we shine with the light of Christ. This is the fourth aspect of the divine and rich provision for constant salvation.

THE WORD OF LIFE

The fifth aspect is found in the phrase "holding forth the word of life" (v. 16). In 1:19 we have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and in 2:16 we have the word of life. Between them we have the pattern of salvation with the standard, the operating God, the divine life with the divine nature, and the function of reflecting the light of Christ. What a tremendous provision! With such a rich provision we can be saved constantly.

We thank the Lord for two great gifts--the Spirit and the Word, the Bible. Every child of God must learn how to get into the Word of God by the divine life and nature. This is to contact the Scripture by exercising our spirit to touch the indwelling God. Such contact, based on the divine life and nature, is very different from reading the Bible merely with the exercise of the mind. Some Christians analyze the Bible purely in a mental way, others emphasize the memorization of Bible verses, and still others, especially

those with seminary training, expound the Word in a doctrinal way. If we approach the Bible only in these ways, we shall not touch the word of life. Instead, to us the Bible will be a book of knowledge, doctrine, teaching, and theology. Because we have been regenerated of the Spirit, we have the divine life, the divine nature, and even the divine Person, God Himself, dwelling in our spirit. Now we need to exercise our spirit whenever we come to the Word. If we do this, every line, phrase, and word of the Bible will become life to us.

Because everything related to God is living, God's words must be living words, words of life. If we come to the Bible with a living spirit, spontaneously we shall enjoy the word of life. Then we shall be supplied, strengthened, quickened, enlightened, refreshed, nourished, and washed.

As we experience the word of life in this way, we should hold forth the word to others, presenting it, offering it, and applying it to them. This is to speak the word of life to those around us. Far from being subdued by opposers, we should in love speak the word of life to them. By speaking the word of life, we present the word of life to others. We should be a speaking people. Whenever we have opportunity, we should speak for the Lord. Preaching is not our profession; it is our living. We need to enter into the word of life in such a living way that we live by this word and speak it. By holding forth the word of life in this way we enjoy constant salvation.

In this message we have covered five aspects of the divine and rich provision for our constant salvation: the pattern with its standard, the inward operation of God, the children of God, the luminaries, and the word of life. If we enjoy all these aspects, we shall experience constant salvation. The One who set up the pattern and who Himself is the pattern now operates in us as the indwelling God. Through regeneration, we have become children of God with the divine life and nature. This makes us luminaries with the function of reflecting Christ. Furthermore, we have the word of life, and we may enter

into this word, enjoy its riches, and declare it to those around us. In this way the negative things are defeated, and we enjoy the victory of constant salvation.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY

THE SACRIFICE OF YOUR FAITH

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:17-18; 1:25; 3:9; Eph. 1:13; 2:8; 3:17; Gal. 2:20; 5:6; Col. 1:3-4; 2:12

In 2:17 Paul says, "But if even I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith, I rejoice and rejoice together with you all." In this verse Paul speaks of "the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith," a phrase which is difficult for students of the Bible to understand. Here two matters are related to the believers' faith: the sacrifice and the priestly service. Paul regards the believers' faith as a sacrifice offered to God. The priestly service refers to the offering of sacrifices by a priest. In this verse Paul seems to be saying, "Philippians, I consider your faith as a sacrifice offered to God, and my offering of this sacrifice to Him is a priestly service." In this message we shall consider the sacrifice of our faith. We shall not cover the matter of priestly service.

In the book of Philippians Paul uses certain extraordinary expressions such as "the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (1:19), "holding forth the word of life" (2:16), and "the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith." If we would know the secret of experiencing Christ as revealed in this book, we need to understand these expressions.

FAITH AS A SACRIFICE OFFERED TO GOD

What is the faith that can constitute a sacrifice offered to God? As believers, we all have some amount of faith. If we did not have faith, we could not be believers in Christ. Although we have faith, the question remains whether or not this faith can be regarded as a sacrifice offered to God

in a joyful way by the apostles. Paul was a New Testament priest. He says in Romans 15:16, "That I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit." As a gospel priest, Paul offered his converts to God as a sacrifice. In Philippians 2:17 it is not the believers themselves which are the sacrifice; it is the faith of the believers which is considered a sacrifice. The thought in 2:17 is deeper than that in Romans 15:16. Do you think of your faith as a sacrifice which such a ministering one can offer to God?

According to verse 17, Paul was willing to be poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and priestly service of the believers' faith. Paul realized that one day he would be martyred. As a martyr, he would be a drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice of their faith. In the Old Testament a drink offering was poured out on one of the basic offerings. Without a basic offering, there could not have been the drink offering. Paul regarded his death as a martyr as a drink offering. The basic offering upon which this drink offering was to be poured was the faith of the believers in Philippi. It is very important for us to understand what kind of faith can become the sacrifice on which the drink offering is poured. Thus, in this message we shall seek to understand the faith to which Paul refers in 2:17.

FAITH, THE WORD, AND THE SPIRIT

The faith in this verse is somewhat different from that mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. Ephesians 1:13 says, "In Whom you also, hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise." As a result of hearing the word of the truth and of believing in Christ, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. In this verse we have the word, faith, and the Spirit. By hearing the word and believing it, we receive the Spirit. The word, faith, and the Spirit are one.

The Word is the expression of God (John 1:1). God is the source of the Word. When we have the Word, we have God, for the Word is God's expression.

According to the Gospel of John, the Word is both God and the Spirit. Furthermore, Christ is also God, the Spirit, and the Word. Christ is the Word, and the Word is God. Thus, there is a marvelous interrelationship between God, Christ, the Spirit, and the Word. The Word is God and also the Spirit. At the same time Christ is both God and the Spirit. On the one hand, Christ is the Word; on the other hand, the Word is Christ. Likewise, God is the Spirit and the Spirit is God. Here we see the Triune God embodied in the Word.

The Triune God is embodied in the Word, and the Word has come to us. The very Word which was with God and which is God became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:1, 14). According to John 20, this Word who became flesh was worshipped as God. Thomas said concerning Him, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The Word is not only our God, but also the coming of our God to us. Our God comes to us embodied in the Word. Furthermore, according to Ephesians 6:17, the Spirit is the Word. The wonderful Triune God is embodied in the Word, and the Word has come to us. When the Word comes, God, Christ, and the Spirit come. The Three of the Triune God come with the Word.

The first function of the Word is to infuse us with faith. I do not believe it is possible for someone to repeat a Bible verse ten times without being infused with faith. Suppose an atheist reads John 3:16 and repeats this verse again and again. Even this atheist would be infused with faith through the Word.

The faith infused into us through the Word is the function of the Spirit. Faith is both the issue of the Word and the function of the Spirit. When the Word comes to us and is contacted by us, we receive the Spirit. This means that when the Word reaches us and we touch it, the Word becomes the Spirit in our experience. Thus, the Word first comes to us and then it becomes the Spirit in us.

The Word becoming the Spirit in our experience can be illustrated by the lighting of a match. The head of a match is a ball made of phosphorus. When we strike a match in a proper way, the phosphorus bursts into flame. Is the flame different from the phosphorus? No, it is simply the explosion of the phosphorus. In like manner, the Spirit is the "explosion" of the Word. When we experience this explosion, we are "burned" by the "fire." This burning is faith.

As a young Christian, I earnestly desired to have faith. I read a number of books about faith. However, none of these books told me what faith is in actuality. Only in recent years have I discovered through my experience what faith is. Faith comes out of the word that infuses us with the divine element. Hence, faith is the issue of the word and of the Spirit's function. When we have the word with the Spirit, we spontaneously have faith. As we have pointed out, faith, the word, and the Spirit are one.

If you consider this definition of faith in the presence of the Lord, you will worship Him. You will see that whenever there is genuine faith in you, the word is implied and the Spirit is realized. Apart from the word and the Spirit, it is impossible for us to have faith.

STRENGTHENED BY THE ELEMENT OF FAITH

Ephesians 3:16-19 says that when the Father grants us according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into our inner man, Christ will make His home in our hearts by faith. Then, being rooted and grounded in love, we shall be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, length, height, and depth, and know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God. If we take time to pray-read these verses and to muse upon them, our faith will be strengthened. Something within us will be strengthened to realize that Christ is making His home in our hearts, that we are being rooted and grounded in love, that we are apprehending the dimensions of Christ, and that we are even being filled

unto all the fullness of God. A certain element has been infused into us to strengthen us, and this element is faith.

Before we pray-read these verses, we may feel weak. But after we pray-read them, we shall be empowered. We shall be like an automobile tire that has been filled with air. In our experience we shall realize that faith, the word, and the Spirit are truly one as our portion. Furthermore, we shall have the enjoyment of Christ in faith. We shall enjoy being strengthened with power, having Christ make His home in our hearts, being rooted and grounded in love, experiencing the dimensions of Christ, and being filled unto all the fullness of God.

THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

If we take a portion from Paul's Epistles and dwell on it for a period of time, we shall sense something rising up in us with power. This is the mingling of the word and the Spirit with our faith. This mingling always results in the enjoyment of Christ. What we enjoy in particular will depend on what specifically the Word conveys to us. For example, should a sinner dwell on 1 Timothy 1:15, a verse which says that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, he will be infused with an appreciation of Christ as his Savior. He will know that Christ is able to save him. This appreciation of Christ in this aspect is faith. As we have pointed out elsewhere, faith is the appreciation of Christ and the reflection of what He is and does for us. Whenever a sinner has such an appreciation of Christ, he has the faith to be saved. He truly enjoys Christ as his Savior.

We can also enjoy Christ by pray-reading Ephesians 3:17. In particular, we shall enjoy Christ making His home in our hearts through faith, for this is what this verse conveys to us. What we enjoy in faith always depends on what is conveyed to us by the Word. For this reason, among Christians the enjoyment of Christ is of different degrees.

With genuine faith there is both the joy, or enjoyment, of faith and the sacrifice of faith. We have seen that

Ephesians 1:13 speaks of faith. Faith is the issue of the Word and the function of the Spirit.

At least two verses in the book of Ephesians indicate that faith brings us the enjoyment of Christ. Ephesians 2:8 says, "By grace you have been saved through faith." Because we have been saved through faith, it is by faith that we enjoy Christ as our Savior. Thus, faith brings us the enjoyment of the Savior with His salvation. Ephesians 3:17 says that Christ makes His home in our hearts through faith. This indicates that faith brings us the enjoyment of Christ making His home in us. Although all Christians can say amen to 2:8, not many can say amen to 3:17. I doubt that very many believers enjoy Christ making His home in them. If we would enjoy Christ making His home in our hearts, we need to read Ephesians 3:15-19 and dwell on these verses. Furthermore, we should pray-read this portion of the Word and even sing it.

Galatians 2:20 also indicates that faith is related to the enjoyment of Christ: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." According to this verse, Christ lives in us, and the life which we now live we live in faith. Therefore, according to this verse, faith brings the enjoyment of Christ living in us. What a marvelous enjoyment this is!

In Galatians 5:6 Paul goes on to say, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love." The Christ revealed in Galatians can be enjoyed only through faith. It is faith which brings us the enjoyment of Christ.

The book of Colossians also relates faith to the enjoyment of Christ. After referring to the believers' "faith in Christ Jesus" (1:4), Paul says that the Colossians were "buried together with Him in baptism" and in Him "were raised together through the faith of the operation of God" (2:12). Faith brings us the enjoyment of God's operation. Once we were dead, but now we can enjoy being raised up

from the dead. Faith brings us the enjoyment of the operating God who raises us from the dead.

All these verses illustrate the fact that with genuine faith there is joy or enjoyment. The particular enjoyment we have depends on what portion of the Word we are receiving by faith. In other words, the enjoyment of faith depends on what a certain verse conveys to us.

In Colossians 1:25 Paul speaks of completing the Word of God. If it were not for Paul's ministry, especially as contained in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, the Word of God would not be complete. This means that if we do not get into Paul's words in these four books, our enjoyment of Christ through faith will not be adequate. It will not match the riches contained in these books.

Many Christians have a certain kind of enjoyment of Christ through faith. But they do not enjoy the all-inclusive Christ for the church, in the church, and with the church. I can testify that, as a young Christian, I did enjoy Christ to a certain degree. However, I did not enjoy Him in a rich way with the church until I came into the Lord's recovery. Through my years in the recovery, the four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians have all become faith to me. Today my faith is not simply the issue of verses such as John 3:16 and 5:24; it is the issue of these four books written by Paul.

I by no means belittle any book of the Bible. Nevertheless, I am sure that by reading the book of Ecclesiastes, you will not have much enjoyment of Christ. You may realize that all things are vanity, and you may earnestly desire that in your living nothing will be vanity. However, this book does not bring you into the rich enjoyment of Christ. The full enjoyment of Christ is found in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

Before you came into the Lord's recovery, did you enjoy the all-inclusive Christ? Did you enjoy this Christ in the church, for the church, and with the church? You probably enjoyed something of Christ as revealed in Luke 15, but not the all-inclusive Christ revealed in Paul's Epistles. We

did not enjoy the all-inclusive Christ before coming into the Lord's recovery because we did not get into the four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. During the years I was with the Brethren, I attended many conferences which covered the subjects of the tribulation and Bible prophecy. I heard messages on the man of sin, the last trumpet, the rapture, the image in Daniel 2, the seventy weeks in Daniel 9, and the beasts in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. There is no doubt that every chapter of the Bible is God's breath, even His breathing. Nevertheless, it is a fact that in Daniel 7 we do not enjoy as much of Christ as we do in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Even though Acts speaks a great deal about the church, we cannot enjoy as much of Christ in this book as through the four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

THE JOY OF FAITH

To have the enjoyment of Christ is to have the joy of faith. Paul speaks of the joy of faith in Philippians 1:25: "And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith." Paul was constrained by two things: the desire to depart and be with Christ and the need to remain in the flesh for the sake of the saints (vv. 23-24). Eventually he concluded that he would remain and continue with the believers for their progress and enjoyment of faith. Paul's expectation was that he would minister more of Christ to the saints so that they would have more experience of Him. Through Paul's ministry they would receive more infusion and as a result would have more faith. This faith would then bring them a greater enjoyment of Christ. In this way they would have the progress and joy of the faith.

Today we have the completed word of God. I encourage you to study the whole Bible, but especially to study the four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, books which complete God's word. If you would have the faith which brings you into the full enjoyment of

Christ with the church, you need to become thoroughly familiar with these four books.

CONSTITUTED OF CHRIST TO BE A SACRIFICE

The enjoyment of faith constitutes us into a sacrifice. This sacrifice is the very Christ experienced and enjoyed by us. Through the enjoyment of Christ, we experience Christ, gain Christ, and possess Christ. Our being is even constituted of Christ. In this way our faith becomes a sacrifice which can be offered to God.

I look forward to seeing the sacrifice of faith among the saints. I do not want to spend many years ministering Christ and the church to the believers only to find that they do not have much experience of Christ or enjoyment of Him. If we do not gain Christ, there can be no sacrifice. We shall not have the enjoyment of Christ, and the ministering one will not have the sacrifice of faith to offer to God. In order to have the sacrifice of faith, we need to touch the word of life in such a way that it becomes in our experience the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Then we shall have faith, faith which is the result of the Word and the Spirit mingled with our appreciation. This is the sacrifice which can be offered to God.

As used in 2:17, faith stands for the enjoyment of Christ, the experience of Christ, and the gaining of Christ. Our enjoyment, experience, and gaining of Christ become a sweet sacrifice offered to God. Then the ministering one will be happy to offer this sacrifice to God and at the same time pour out himself upon it as a drink offering.

I encourage all the saints to spend more time in the books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, musing upon them, pray-reading them, and even singing them. We need to "strike the match" and experience the "burning" that we may gain Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, and possess Christ. Then we shall have the faith as a sacrifice offered to God. We all need to have a faith which is mingled with the Word of God and the bountiful supply of the Spirit that we may have the sacrifice for God's enjoyment.

FAITH AND HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

Philippians 2:16 and 17 should be taken together. According to grammar, these verses are joined by the conjunction "but." This indicates that the faith in verse 17 is related to the holding forth of the word of life in verse 16. In other words, the holding forth of the word of life is related experientially to the sacrifice of faith. Paul's concept in these verses is that if the saints hold forth the word of life, he will have something of which to boast in the day of Christ. The present age is the day of man (1 Cor. 4:3), and the coming age will be the day of Christ. The one whose day it is, is the one to exercise authority. Because now is the day of man, man has authority on earth. But in the day of Christ, He will have authority. If in the day of man the believers hold forth the word of life, Paul will be able to boast concerning them in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain or labored in vain.

After speaking of the believers' holding forth the word of life and of his being able to boast in the day of Christ, Paul goes on to say in verse 17, "But if even I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith, I rejoice and rejoice together with you all." Even now, in the day of man, Paul could be poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice produced by the believers' holding forth of the word of life. This means that when the believers hold forth the word of life, Paul has a basic sacrifice on which to pour out himself as a drink offering.

As we consider these verses carefully, we see that whatever we experience of Christ issues out of our faith. Our faith is the sum total of our experience of Christ. The holding forth of the word in verse 16 is the very faith mentioned in verse 17. The conjunction "but" joining these verses indicates this fact. On the day of Christ, Paul desired to boast that the believers held forth the word of life. However, even at present, in the day of man, Paul could have the sacrifice of faith as a basic sacrifice upon which to be poured out. This sacrifice of faith is identical to the saints' holding forth of the word of life.

In verse 16 Paul speaks of boasting, and in verse 17, of rejoicing. In these verses the words boast and rejoice may

be regarded as synonyms. Paul could boast in the believers' holding forth of the word of life and rejoice in the sacrifice of their faith. In verse 16 we have the boasting related to the holding forth of the word, and in verse 17 we have the rejoicing related to the sacrifice of the believers' faith. The rejoicing in verse 17 is synonymous with the boasting in verse 16, just as the sacrifice of faith is identical to the holding forth of the word of life. Once again we see that faith here is the sum total of our experience, enjoyment, and gain of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-ONE

TO BE FOUND IN CHRIST IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH THE FAITH OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:7-9; Gal. 2:19-20

Philippians 3:9 says, "And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith." According to this verse, Paul's own righteousness was intimately related to the law. If we are to be found in Christ, we must fulfill the condition of not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but a righteousness which is not our own--that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith. Therefore, the title of this message is "To Be Found in Christ in the Righteousness of God through the Faith of Christ." In the righteousness of God we may be found in Christ, and this righteousness is through the faith of Christ.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

In 3:8 Paul speaks of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." The excellency of the knowledge of Christ does not refer to Christ's knowledge; it refers to our knowledge of Christ. It is the knowledge by which we know what kind of Christ He is. This knowledge has its excellency.

Paul obtained the excellency of the knowledge of Christ through revelation. When he was in Judaism, he was under the law. His vision and his thought were occupied with the law. Paul earnestly sought the knowledge of the law and pursued it. To him, the knowledge of the law was so excellent that he was even willing to sacrifice for it. But

one day on the road to Damascus, the Lord opened Paul's eyes to see God's economy concerning Christ. From that time onward Paul turned from the excellency of the knowledge of the law to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

In the four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians Christ is revealed not only as the all-inclusive One, but also as the all-extensive One. Christ Himself is the breadth, length, height, and depth. As such, His dimensions are immeasurable. Who can measure this height or depth? Peter received the revelation concerning Christ as the Son of the living God for the building up of the church. However, Peter did not see as much concerning Christ as Paul did. The revelation given to Paul issued in an excellent knowledge of the extensiveness of Christ.

On account of the excellency of this knowledge, Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them to be refuse. In other words, after seeing the revelation concerning Christ, all other things became refuse, trash, dung. Spontaneously he realized that not only religion was refuse, dog food, but culture was refuse as well. Why did Paul count all things loss? It was because of the excellency of the knowledge of the extensive, all-inclusive Christ. Furthermore, he was willing to count all things loss in order to gain Christ.

TO GAIN CHRIST AND BE FOUND IN HIM

To have the revelation concerning Christ does not mean we have already gained Christ. After seeing the revelation, there was the need for Paul to pursue in order to gain Christ. Likewise, we may have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, but Christ may not yet be ours in our experience. Therefore, like Paul, we need to pursue Christ that we may gain Him.

At the end of verse 8 Paul speaks of gaining Christ, and in verse 9 he speaks of being found in Him. These are two aspects of one thing. Paul desired to gain Christ and be found in Him. To have the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ is one thing. However, it is another thing to gain Him and be found in Him. Although I may have seen the revelation concerning the extensiveness and all-inclusiveness of Christ, I may be found in ethics, culture, or good behavior and not in Christ. If someone visits you at home, will you be found in Christ? You may declare, "Hallelujah, I am in Christ! I have been transferred out of Adam and into Christ." However, this may be merely a declaration, not a fact of actual experience.

In 2:14 Paul says, "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." Instead of being found in Christ, we may be found in our murmurings and reasonings. For example, a wife may murmur to her husband, and he may react by reasoning. In such a case, neither the wife nor the husband is found in Christ.

We have spoken a great deal about Christ versus religion, culture, and philosophy. Nevertheless, most of the time we are found in our culture, self-imposed religion, and self-made philosophy. We may make up a certain policy for ourselves to follow in our married life or in the church life. Hence, others may find us not in Christ, but in our self-made policy concerning married life and the church life. This policy may be the source of much of our murmuring, reasoning, and criticizing. We may also use this policy as a yardstick for measuring others. Oh, it is crucial that, having the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we gain Him and be found in Him!

A NECESSARY CONDITION

We have pointed out that there is a certain requirement or condition for being found in Christ. This condition is that we do not have our own righteousness which is of the law, but that we have the righteousness which is of God based on faith. It may seem to us at times that we are found in Christ. However, there will be no reality in these times unless we fulfill the condition of having the righteousness of God through the faith of Christ. To repeat, we need to be found in Christ in the righteousness of God

through the faith of Christ. The phrase "in the righteousness of God" used in the title of this message points to the fact that this is the condition of being found in Christ in reality. Thus, the crucial aspect of the condition is the righteousness of God.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AND OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

At this point I would like to present a new definition, or interpretation, of righteousness as found in 3:9. In this verse righteousness signifies a daily living which is right with God and man. Speaking of his past, Paul says in 3:6 that "as to the righteousness which is in the law," he had become blameless. Before he was transferred into Christ, he was a Pharisee blameless in the law. Paul thought that in his daily living he was right with man and God. Actually he was not right with God at all. The righteousness which signifies a living that is truly right with God and man must be a righteousness which is of God. The expression "righteousness of God" does not simply mean that righteousness belongs to God; it also means that this righteousness is God Himself. For example, the terms life of God, light of God, and love of God do not mean merely that life, light, and love belong to God. The life of God is God Himself. The same is true of the light of God and the love of God. God Himself is light and love. In principle, this is also true of the righteousness of God. Just as the life of God and the light of God are God Himself, so the righteousness of God is God Himself. Therefore, the living which is right with both God and man must be God as our expression in our daily living, God Himself lived out through us.

This becomes more clear when we consider what it means to speak of our own righteousness. Our own righteousness is the expression of ourselves, the expression of "I." My righteousness is just the living out of me. But the righteousness of God is God lived out from us. It is God becoming our daily living and expression. When we love others, our love is God expressed. Furthermore, our

humility is not mere ethical humility; it is a divine humility, God Himself living out of us. If we are to be found in Christ, we must be in such a condition that God is expressed through us and becomes our daily living.

When I was young, I thought that the righteousness in verse 9 referred to the righteousness God gives us through justification. However, for many years I sensed deep within that this was not the accurate meaning of righteousness here. One day I realized that the righteousness of God in 3:9 is actually God Himself becoming our daily living. If we would have this righteousness, we must have a living which is the expression of God. We must fulfill this condition in order to be found in Christ in reality.

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

How can the righteousness of God become our daily living? This can take place only through the faith of Christ. Just as the righteousness of God is God Himself, so the faith of Christ is Christ Himself. The faith of Christ is not simply something which belongs to Christ; it is actually Christ Himself. Only through the hearing of the Word can the faith of Christ become ours. Through the Word we are infused with the element of Christ. At the same time, we experience the function of the Spirit. The issue of this infusion and function is the faith which brings about an organic union between us and the Triune God. This faith, which is really Christ Himself, causes us to be organically united with God. In such an organic union we and God are one spirit. We live, and God lives in us. God lives, and we live in Him.

We should not think that we are in God but God is not in us, or that God is in us but we are not in God. On the contrary, there is a mutual relationship between us and God: we are in God, and God is in us. For this reason the Lord Jesus could say, "Abide in Me and I in you" (John 15:4). By means of the organic union which joins us to the Triune God and makes us one spirit with Him, we have the

righteousness of God. This righteousness of God definitely is not of the law. It is altogether of faith. In the organic union produced by faith we live out God, and God lives out from within us and becomes righteousness to us. When we are in this righteousness, we are in the proper condition to be found in Christ. The thought here is very deep. But if we see it, we would experience the highest aspect of God's salvation and be rescued from all other things. May we all aspire to gain Christ and to be found in Him in such a condition.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

To have a proper understanding of 3:9 we should consider it according to the context of the whole book of Philippians. In 1:19 Paul speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This bountiful supply does not merely belong to the Spirit; it is actually the Spirit Himself. In the same principle the expression "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" does not mean that the Spirit simply belongs to Christ; it means that the Spirit *is* Christ. Just as the Son of God is God Himself, so the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself. Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the bountiful supply.

In 2:16 Paul goes on to speak of the word of life. Once again we see that the word here does not simply belong to life, but actually is life. In New Testament usage, the word of life is life itself. First John 1:1 mentions the Word of life, and in John 6:63 the Lord Jesus says that the words He speaks are life. In the book of Philippians, on the one hand we have the Spirit of Jesus Christ as the supply and, on the other hand, the word of life as the means.

We need to consider Philippians 1 through 3 as a whole and put together the supply of the Spirit, the word of life, and the righteousness which is of God based on faith. When in our experience we have the Spirit, the word, and faith, we are infused with God Himself. Then the very God who has been infused into us becomes our daily living, the living which Paul describes as the righteousness of God.

INFUSED WITH GOD

When we have the supply of the Spirit, the word of life, and the righteousness of God through faith, we are infused with God. This infused God will then be lived out of us as our daily life. This kind of daily life can be called the righteousness of God. This is not merely the gaining of Christ; it is the experience and enjoyment of Christ in a very practical way. This is to be found in Christ under the condition of enjoying God's infusion that we may live Him out through the supply of the Spirit, the word of life, and the righteousness of God through faith. I am fully persuaded and assured that this was Paul's concept when he composed the book of Philippians.

Paul was very experienced in this matter. From the word of life and through the supply of the Spirit he obtained faith. This faith brought him God's infusion. Spontaneously Paul lived God out as his daily living and could be found in Christ, having the righteousness of God. It was Paul's expectation and also his aspiration that he would always be found in Christ in such a condition. Paul desired not only to gain Christ, but also to be found in Him in such a marvelous condition that people could recognize that he was a man living out God. As such a person, Paul was not a man in culture, religion, philosophy, ethics, or morality; he was absolutely a man in Christ who lived out God as his daily life.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-TWO

TO OBTAIN CHRIST BY EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10-16; Rom. 1:4; 8:11

The four books which make up the heart of the divine revelation--Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians--are an inexhaustible mine. The more we dig into this mine, the more we realize that its riches are inexhaustible. In one verse, Philippians 3:10, we see at least four "diamonds." Here Paul first says "to know Him." The pronoun "Him" here denotes Christ as the all-inclusive One. Second, this verse speaks of the power of Christ's resurrection; third, of the fellowship of His sufferings; and fourth, of being conformed to His death. What riches are in this verse!

In verse 11 Paul goes on to say, "If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." Here we find another "diamond"--the out-resurrection from among the dead, the outstanding resurrection.

In 3:7 through 16 Paul uses at least three different Greek words to express the thought of gaining. In verse 8 he says that he suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse that he "may gain Christ." The King James Version renders the Greek here as "may win Christ." But this does not convey Paul's meaning. The Greek word means to secure, to obtain, to lay hold of. In verse 12 Paul uses two other words which mean obtain and lay hold of. Thus, he speaks of gaining, obtaining, and laying hold of Christ. To lay hold means to grasp or to take possession. Paul's desire was not only to gain Christ, but also to obtain Him and even lay hold of Him.

According to verse 12, Paul's desire was to lay hold of that for which he had been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. On the way to Damascus, Paul inquired of the One who had appeared to him, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). When the Lord answered, "I am Jesus," He laid hold of Paul. Now in Philippians Paul can say that he was seeking to lay hold of that for which Christ had laid hold of him.

When we were saved, Christ laid hold of us. Perhaps we did not realize this at first. But as all those who have tried to escape His grasp realize, it is impossible to run away from Him. Christ has indeed laid hold of us so that we may now gain Him, obtain Him, and lay hold of Him.

THREE STAGES OF SECURING CHRIST

Paul's use of three different Greek words to express the idea of gaining indicates the Lord's desire is that we gain Him, obtain Him, and lay hold of Him. Some readers may think that these expressions are mere repetitions. However, instead of being repetitious, they point to three stages of the securing of Christ. In verse 8 Paul says, "I have suffered the loss of all things and count them refuse that I may gain Christ." This marks the beginning of securing the Lord. In verse 10 Paul goes on to say, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Here we have the second stage, the process of obtaining Christ. What we have in this verse is actually the way to obtain Him. Eventually, in the third stage, we lay hold of Christ (v. 12). This is the completion of the securing of Christ.

We all have experienced the first stage, for we all have gained Christ. When we believed in the Lord and received Him, we gained Him. This was the beginning of our gaining of Christ. Now we need to gain Him continually. To gain Christ continually is to obtain Him. Eventually the completion of this process is that we lay hold of Christ.

We know from verse 12 that Paul did not regard himself as one who had already obtained. Here Paul seems

to be saying, "I have not yet obtained, but I am on the way. I am in the process of obtaining Christ that I may lay hold of Him."

In verses 8, 10, and 12 we see the initial gaining of Christ, the continual gaining of Him, which is the obtaining, and the completion of the obtaining, which is the laying hold of Christ. In this message I am not burdened to cover either the initial gaining of Christ or the final laying hold of Him. My burden is related to the process of the continual obtaining of Christ, the process which takes place between the initial gaining of Christ and the final laying hold of Him.

SUFFERING FOR THE BODY

This process of obtaining Christ, as revealed in verse 10, is to know Him by knowing the power of His resurrection. However, if we would know the power of Christ's resurrection, we must share in His sufferings and know the fellowship of His sufferings.

In a very real sense, Christ's sufferings have not yet been completed. When some hear this, they may say, "Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected once for all. Now He is on the throne. How can you say that His sufferings have not been completed?" Consider Paul's word in Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church." To be sure, Christ is on the throne, but there is still a lack with respect to His sufferings. As the Head, Christ's sufferings are complete. But the sufferings of Christ for the Body are not yet finished. Such sufferings are also called "His sufferings." Furthermore, in Colossians 1:24 Paul regarded his own sufferings as the filling up of what is lacking of Christ's sufferings for His Body. For this reason, Paul indicates in Philippians 3:10 that we need to share in Christ's sufferings. The sufferings of Christ for His Body are still going on, and we need to share in them. When Christ was on earth, He suffered. As those who follow Him,

we must share in His sufferings for His Body. If we would know Christ by experiencing the power of His resurrection, we must share His sufferings. The process of obtaining Christ is related to His resurrection, His sufferings, and His death. To know Him we must share His sufferings and be conformed to His death that we may experience the power of His resurrection.

FREE FROM EARTHLY ENTANGLEMENTS

Verse 10 opens with the infinitive "to know Him." This infinitive is related to a compound predicate found in verses 8 and 9: "that I may gain Christ and be found in Him." First we need to suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse that we may gain Christ. To gain Christ in this way is not simply to believe in Him or receive Him. It is to count all things as loss, to suffer the loss of all things, and then to count them as refuse. Paul was one who suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse. He was free from all earthly entanglements. To gain Christ he had given up everything, including religion and culture, and counted it all as refuse, trash, dog food. Therefore, the way was clear for Paul to gain Christ and to be found in Him in order to know Him.

The rendering "to know Him" is a literal translation of the Greek. Many versions, however, do not use the infinitive. Instead, they say "that I may know Him," or "in order that I may know Him." Nevertheless, according to the Greek, Paul was saying that he wanted to gain Christ and be found in Him to know Him. Like Paul, we need to be free from all earthly entanglements and also count everything as refuse. Then we shall be able to say, "Lord Jesus, I care only for You. I want to gain You, be found in You, and know You."

We have pointed out that the obtaining in verse 12 is a continuation of the gaining of Christ in verse 8. Paul's desire was to gain Christ in order to know Him and obtain Him. Paul was seeking to gain Christ that he might obtain

Him by knowing Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND SUFFERINGS

"To know Him" refers to knowing Christ in a general way. But knowing the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings and being conformed to His death are details related to knowing Christ. Actually to know Christ here means to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Some Christians claim that they have known Christ for years, but they do not know the power of Christ's resurrection, although they may realize that Christ is powerful and that He displayed this power by raising Lazarus from the dead. However, the resurrection of Lazarus is very different from the power of Christ's resurrection. Eventually, Lazarus died and was again buried in the tomb, but Christ's resurrection was a resurrection that brought Him to the throne. When Paul speaks of the power of Christ's resurrection, he has in mind something different from the power manifested in the resurrection of Lazarus. Paul is speaking of a resurrection that can be called *Christ's* resurrection. He wanted to know the power of *His* resurrection.

In verse 10 Paul mentions the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. It is possible to suffer without participating in Christ's sufferings. For example, someone may lose his job because he fails to work properly, and this may cause him to suffer. But this suffering has nothing to do with Christ's sufferings.

There is also a difference between those sufferings which are for our transformation and those which are for the Body. Paul's word in 3:10 does not refer to suffering for transformation. If we compare 3:10 with Colossians 1:24, we shall see that the sufferings about which he is speaking here are those which make up the lack of Christ's afflictions for the Body. It is when we suffer for the Body that we shall experience the power of Christ's resurrection. No doubt, sufferings are needed for us to be transformed.

But we should not identify such sufferings with the sufferings of Christ, for He did not suffer in this way.

Many Christians do not even have a proper understanding of those sufferings which are for transformation, much less those sufferings which are for the Body. Some Bible teachers stress suffering as a discipline or punishment. They warn others to obey the Lord and to walk according to the Word of God, lest they be disciplined by Him. Some use Hebrews 12 to point out that sufferings may work to make us holy (v. 11). However, they often do not explain what it means to be holy.

In the book of Romans Paul does not speak of suffering as a discipline. However, he refers to transformation and conformation. Romans 8:28 says that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God. Certain Bible teachers place great emphasis on this verse without connecting it to the following verse, which indicates that God's intention is to have us conformed to the image of His Son. This conformation is the result of transformation. All things work together for our good that we may be transformed and conformed to the image of the Son of God. No doubt, this process involves suffering, suffering which helps us become mature sons. As we undergo this kind of suffering, we also can experience the power of Christ's resurrection, but not as much as when we suffer for the Body.

Just as there is more than one kind of suffering, there is more than one kind of resurrection. All the dead will be resurrected, some to the "resurrection of life" and others to the "resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29). The kind of resurrection with which we are concerned in this message is Christ's resurrection and its power. Not many Christians know the power of this unique resurrection.

Knowing the power of Christ's resurrection is related to knowing the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul experienced the power of Christ's resurrection in this way. When we suffer for the sake of the Body in the name of Christ, we also shall experience the power of His resurrection. I can

testify that when I am bold to stand for the Lord, I experience anointing and empowering. However, if you are ashamed to say that you are a Christian, especially a Christian in the church life, you will have no power. But if you testify that you are a Christian standing on the church ground, you will be empowered.

CONFORMED TO HIS DEATH

As we partake of Christ's sufferings for the Body, we are conformed to His death. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was dead to everything other than God, including His family and relatives. The Lord lived a crucified life; He continually put His natural life to death. By living such a crucified life, He was alive to God and lived Him.

When we are willing to suffer for Christ and His Body, we also shall be dead to everything other than Him, and we shall live only to Him. Then we shall truly be conformed to His death, for we shall share in His death. Day by day we shall experience the power of His resurrection. This is the way to know Christ in an experiential way. By knowing Christ in this way, experiencing Him in the power of His resurrection, we obtain Him.

THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The reality of the power of Christ's resurrection is the Spirit. Romans 1:4 proves this by saying that Christ was "designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." Furthermore, Romans 8:11 says, "If the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who indwells you." Both verses indicate that the Spirit is the reality of the power of Christ's resurrection. Actually, Christ Himself is the power of His resurrection, and the Spirit is Christ in resurrection. We need to experience this power that we may obtain Christ.

THE INTRINSIC POWER OF THE DIVINE LIFE

There is a difference between the power of Christ's resurrection and His power exhibited in creation. Creation testifies that God is powerful: "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, being apprehended by the things made, are clearly seen, both His eternal power and divinity" (Rom. 1:20). However, what we need to experience for the Body is not God's creating power, but the power of Christ's resurrection. Resurrection power is not an outward physical power; it is an inward, intrinsic power. As such, it is a life power. If we would obtain Christ, we must experience this intrinsic life power. The more we experience the power of Christ's resurrection, the more we obtain Him. Thus, we obtain Him by experiencing the power of His resurrection.

To exhibit the intrinsic power of His resurrection, Christ first became a man. Then He died and visited Hades, the realm of the dead. Through His resurrection the intrinsic power of life within Him was manifested. Angels cannot experience this power. But we, human beings of blood and flesh, can experience it, if we share in Christ's sufferings and are conformed to His death.

Many Christians today emphasize Christ's creative power, not the power of Christ's resurrection. When these Christians speak of the power of Christ, they think of creative power, not resurrection power. As the One who has passed through death, never to die again, Christ has manifested in His resurrection the intrinsic power of the divine life. This is the power of His resurrection. By experiencing the power of Christ's resurrection we obtain Christ in reality.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-THREE

TO OBTAIN CHRIST BY ATTAINING TO THE OUT-RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10-14

In 3:10-14 Paul emphasizes the out-resurrection. Verse 11 says. "If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." Paul's endeavor was to attain to this outstanding resurrection. In verse 12 he goes on to say, "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Here Paul admits that he had not yet attained the out-resurrection, but he continued to pursue that he may lay hold of it. For this out-resurrection, Christ had laid hold of him, and now Paul's desire was to lay hold of the out-resurrection. The purpose of Christ in laying hold of him was that he might obtain the out-resurrection. Hence, in verses 11 and 12 the out-resurrection is Paul's goal, the object of his pursuit.

In verses 13 and 14 Paul continues, "Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing--forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here we see that Paul did not reckon himself to have laid hold of the out-resurrection already. However, he pursued toward the goal, the goal of the out-resurrection, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THE GOAL AND THE PRIZE

There is a difference between the goal and the prize. Paul pursued toward the goal for the prize of God's high

calling. Every calling has a purpose with a goal. What are the purpose and goal of God's high calling? The expression "high calling" used here does not mean that the calling is high; it means that this calling is from above, that is, from the heavens. Literally translated, the Greek means "the above calling." In Hebrews 3:1 Paul uses the term "heavenly calling." The out-resurrection is both the purpose and the goal of God's heavenly calling. Therefore, if we consider 3:10-14 carefully, we shall realize that the out-resurrection is Paul's subject.

The term "out-resurrection" is found in the Bible only in 3:11. According to my knowledge, most translations ignore the Greek prefix *ek*, which means "out." Here Paul adds this prefix to the usual Greek word for resurrection. What was his reason for doing this? According to his vision and experience, Paul realized that God's intention in the universe is altogether related to something which is new, something in resurrection, but resurrection in a very particular sense, not resurrection in an ordinary sense.

OUT OF THE OLD CREATION AND INTO THE NEW CREATION

The common meaning of resurrection is that something dies and comes to life again. Lazarus was resurrected in this way. He had died, had been buried, and had even begun to smell bad. Then the Lord Jesus came and cried out, "Lazarus, come forth!" and Lazarus came out of the tomb (John 11:43-44). Was the resurrection of Lazarus a case of the out-resurrection? No. Even though Lazarus was raised from the dead and came to life again, nothing of the new creation was wrought into him. Instead, he continued to be a person in the old creation. At most, Lazarus experienced restoration; he was restored from death to the natural life. But he was neither regenerated at that time nor did he receive a new constitution. Have you ever heard a message telling you that the resurrection of Lazarus was still in the realm of the old creation and that Lazarus was not resurrected into the new creation? The fact that

Lazarus was not brought into the new creation through resurrection is proved in that one day he died again and his once-resurrected body was laid once more in a tomb.

The out-resurrection in 3:11 is very different from the resurrection of Lazarus. Did Paul expect to return to the tomb once he obtained the out-resurrection? Certainly not! The resurrection Paul was pursuing in Philippians 3 was something absolutely apart from the old creation and in the new creation. What Paul terms the out-resurrection refers to a resurrection out of the old creation and into the new creation.

PAUL'S GOAL

According to grammar, the out-resurrection in verse 11 is the goal of what Paul is seeking in verse 10. In these verses Paul says, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." In verse 10 we see that Paul aspired to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. He wanted to know Christ, experience Christ, and enjoy Christ. Paul's goal is found in verse 11--attaining to the out-resurrection. In fact, this is the goal not only of verse 10, but also of verses 8 and 9. Paul counted all things refuse in order to gain Christ (v. 8) and be found in Him (v. 9), to know Christ, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, that he might attain to the out-resurrection. According to grammar, this is the proper interpretation of verses 8 through 11. Paul's goal was to attain to the out-resurrection.

In this message we need to consider how to attain this goal of the out-resurrection. For this, we must know Christ in the power of His resurrection, we must know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings, and we must know Him by being conformed to His death.

DYING TO THE OLD CREATION AND LIVING TO GOD

By incarnation the Lord Jesus took on human nature. He put on a body of blood and flesh. Did this body belong

to the old creation or the new creation? Blood and flesh are part of the old creation. First Corinthians 15:50 says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." This includes the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus. The principle here is that nothing which belongs to the old creation has anything to do with the kingdom of God. Therefore, the body taken on by the Lord Jesus belonged to the old creation.

During His years on earth, the Lord Jesus lived a human life. Was the Lord's human living part of the old creation or of the new creation? Although the Lord Jesus had a body of flesh and blood belonging to the old creation and although He lived in the environment of the old creation, the life He lived did not belong to the old creation. On the contrary, the life lived by the Lord Jesus belonged wholly to the new creation. But how could He, a person with a body belonging to the old creation and dwelling in the environment of the old creation, live a life that belonged to the new creation? He could do this by continually dying to His old creation body and environment and living to God. This was the way He lived a life belonging entirely to the new creation.

We should not think that the Lord Jesus died only when He was crucified. No, He began to die, to live a crucified life, as soon as He was born. The Lord surely lived a human life, but it was a crucified life. By living a crucified life He died to the old creation.

The Lord's living of a crucified life is illustrated by an incident which took place when He was twelve years of age. When His mother and father found Him after spending days looking for Him, His mother said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke 2:48). The Lord Jesus replied, "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (v. 49). Here we see that even at

the age of twelve the Lord was living a crucified life. Through His mother, Mary, He had received the life of the old creation. But instead of living according to this old creation life, He died to it and lived according to another life, according to the life of His Father.

John 6:57 helps us to understand this. Here the Lord Jesus said, "The living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father." Yes, the Lord Jesus lived, but He lived by the Father. The Father lived in Him, and He lived the Father. This means that He did not live the life of the old creation received from His mother. Therefore, even though He had a body belonging to the old creation and was in the environment of the old creation, He did not live the life of the old creation. Rather, He lived a life which is divine and eternal, God's life lived out in the old creation. Such a living is the element of the new creation.

Paul speaks twice of the new creation. In Galatians 6:15 he says, "For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." In 2 Corinthians 5:17 he declares, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (lit.). When did this new creation begin? The old creation began in Genesis 1:1, a verse which says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (lit.). The new creation had its beginning when the Lord Jesus began to live another life, a crucified life. He lived the life of the new creation while in a body belonging to the old creation and in the environment of the old creation. As He lived in this way, He was continually dying to everything of the old creation.

One day, with the help of Satan and his followers, the body of the Lord Jesus was put to death actually and absolutely. Then His old creation body was buried in a tomb. After three days this body was resurrected. However, there was a great difference between the resurrected body of Lazarus and the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. The resurrected body of Lazarus was unchanged; it still belonged to the old creation. But the resurrected body of Jesus Christ was changed both in

nature and in form. As a body in the old creation, it was a body of flesh and blood, but as a body in the new creation, it became a spiritual body.

KNOWING CHRIST IN RESURRECTION

This incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ has become a seed sown into us. The Christ we have received is not a natural Christ, but a resurrected and transformed Christ. Peter knew Christ in the flesh, when He was still in the old creation body. But the Christ we experience today is a Christ altogether in the new creation. Are you still envious of the disciples who knew the Lord Jesus in the flesh? Do you still desire, like John, to lean upon His bosom? Deep within, perhaps subconsciously, we may secretly wish that we had lived at the time of Peter, John, and James, for they were with the Lord in the flesh. However, it is far better to know Christ in the power, sphere, and element of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His sufferings.

CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S DEATH

We may despise the old creation and want to be free from it. But the more we loathe it, the more it clings to us. Only in the Body can we be free from the old creation. Only when we are occupied with the Body and by the Body are we able to be free from spending so much time thinking about ourselves. Paul was so occupied with the Body that in his being there was no capacity for him to consider his own things. Because Paul was so concerned for the Body, he shared in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. In this way he was conformed to the death of Christ.

There are four important matters in verse 10: to know Christ, to know the power of His resurrection, to know the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be conformed to His death. Actually, being conformed to Christ's death is related to knowing both the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. The words "being conformed" indicate how we may know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

We have indicated that Christ's death took place throughout His life on earth. As He was living, He was also dying, dying to the old creation in order to live a life in the new creation. This is the meaning of "His death" in verse 10. We need to be conformed to Christ's death both in the church life and in our family life, dying to the old creation that we may live the new creation.

Paul's use of the word conformed in 3:10 implies that Christ's death is a mold. Often when sisters bake a cake they use a mold. Dough is placed into the mold and conformed to its shape. On the day we began to live the Christian life, we, like a piece of dough, were put into the mold of Christ's death. When we suffer for the Body, we are shaped into the form of the death of Christ. This is what it means to be conformed to His death.

By being conformed to the death of Christ, we experience the power of His resurrection and enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. It is in this way that we attain to the out-resurrection and reach the goal of being fully out of the old creation and wholly resurrected into the new creation.

LIVING IN THE NEW CREATION

If a brother attains to the out-resurrection in his experience, even his love for his wife will be in the new creation. No longer will it be a natural love, a love in the old creation. A brother may love his wife very much, but his love may have nothing to do with the out-resurrection. Likewise, a wife may be submissive to her husband according to her ethics and cultural background, but her submission may also be altogether in the natural realm, in the old creation, not at all in the new creation. Suppose a sister makes herself submit to her husband. She does not want to submit, but, perhaps with tears, she forces herself to do so. This submission is in the old creation. God does not want a natural love or a natural submission, a love and submission which are not in the out-resurrection. Instead, He wants us to live the kind of life revealed in Philippians

3. For this, we need to gain Christ and be found in Him to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, that we may attain to the out-resurrection.

As Paul was writing the Epistle to the Philippians, he did not regard himself as having attained to the out-resurrection. Therefore, he could say, "Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Paul cared for one thing--forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, he pursued toward the goal for the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus. All the things behind are of the old creation, but the things before are of the new creation. God has rescued us from the old creation and put us in a race toward the goal for the prize. Now we must run this race to attain to the out-resurrection from the dead and all the things of the new creation.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FOUR

PURSUE TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10-14; Rom. 8:11; Rev. 20:6

This message will focus on two words found in 3:14--goal and prize. If we reach the goal, we shall receive the prize. Thus, pursuing toward the goal is for obtaining the prize. But what is the goal, and what is the prize? Many would answer that both the goal and the prize are Christ. Although such an answer may be regarded as correct, in this message we need to see from 3:10-14 something particular concerning the goal and the prize.

Philippians 3:10-13 helps us understand the goal and the prize in verse 14. In verse 11 we may say that the out-resurrection is actually a synonym for Christ. In verse 10 Paul speaks of knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. This verse indicates clearly that if we would know Christ, we must know His resurrection. However, many Christians neglect this important matter. At most, they know only Christ and His death, not the power of His resurrection. Among Christians today rarely is there a proper and adequate message on the power of Christ. Few preachers speak of the power of Christ's resurrection in the way Paul spoke.

We have pointed out that Paul's desire was to gain Christ and be found in Him, to know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. Knowing Christ in this way is the result of gaining Him and being found in Him. The thought here is so deep that few Christians have given it the attention it deserves. Our natural mind cannot touch the depths of what it means "to know Him and the power of His resurrection."

At this juncture we need to ask an important question: Where is Jesus Christ today? In this message I would answer by saying that Christ is in resurrection. No doubt, on the one hand, Christ is in the heavens and, on the other hand, He is in us. However, I want to emphasize the marvelous fact that Christ today is in resurrection. One day, as the One who existed in eternity, Christ became a man by incarnation. Eventually, He was crucified and buried. Through death He entered into another realm, the realm of resurrection. In His preexistence, Christ was God and was with God in eternity; by incarnation He became a man in the flesh; and then, through crucifixion and burial, He entered into resurrection. Have you ever heard that Christ is now in resurrection? On the day of His resurrection angels told the women that Christ could not be found in the tomb, for He had risen from the dead (Luke 24:1-6). This indicates that Christ is in resurrection.

Because Christ is now in resurrection, we cannot know Him experientially unless we know the power of His resurrection. Today some Christians know Christ in His incarnation and crucifixion. But in Philippians 3 Paul aspires to know Him not only in His death, but even the more in His resurrection.

In verse 11, a continuation of verse 10, Paul says, "If by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." The expression "the out-resurrection" is puzzling. After Christ was resurrected, He became a person wholly in resurrection. Furthermore, the resurrection wherein Christ is today is not an ordinary resurrection, like the resurrection of Lazarus; it is an extraordinary resurrection. For this reason, Paul adds the prefix *ex* to the Greek word for resurrection to show that Christ's resurrection is extraordinary. His resurrection is the out-resurrection.

A DEFINITION OF OUT-RESURRECTION

To be in the out-resurrection means to leave everything of the old creation and to be brought into God. Although

Lazarus was resurrected, he neither left the things of the old creation nor was he brought into God. At the end of the coming age all the dead unbelievers will be resurrected. Nevertheless, that resurrection will not bring them out of the old creation, and it will not bring them into God. There is only one kind of resurrection which brings us out of the old creation and into God, and this is the resurrection of Christ. Thus, Christ's resurrection is the outstanding resurrection. Christ is the unique One to pass out of the old creation and to enter into God. In the foregoing message we pointed out that Christ lived in an old creation body and environment for thirty-three and a half years. Through His death and resurrection He left the old creation behind and was brought into God.

We should not think that Christ was never in the old creation. According to Colossians 1:15 Christ was the Firstborn of God's creation. His physical body belonged to the old creation and, living in a carpenter's home in Nazareth, He lived in the environment of the old creation. Eventually, He took the old creation upon Himself as a burden and nailed it to the cross. Now in resurrection Christ is absolutely out of the old creation and in God. All He is, all He has, and all He does are in God. This is the significance of the out-resurrection.

If we would know Christ, we must know this out-resurrection and attain to it. Paul's words "attain to the out-resurrection" imply a goal. This goal, mentioned in verse 14, is the out-resurrection in verse 11. Hence, to attain to the out-resurrection is to arrive at the goal. In verses 12 and 13 Paul confessed that he did not reckon himself as one who had attained to this goal. But forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things before, he pursued toward the goal of the out-resurrection.

In a previous message I said that the goal is Christ Himself, and now I am saying that the goal is the out-resurrection. To say that Christ is the goal is to speak in a general way according to verses 8 and 9. But to speak in a specific way, the goal is the out-resurrection. If we consider

verse 14 in relation to verse 11, we shall see that the goal must be the out-resurrection. Therefore, in general the goal is Christ, but in particular the goal is the out-resurrection.

Now we need to ask an important question: Can we reach the goal of the out-resurrection in this age, or can we only run the race and hope to reach the goal in the coming age? Some may think that we must wait until the coming age to reach the goal. But if we do not arrive at the goal in this age, we shall not attain to it in the next age. We must endeavor to arrive at the goal during our lifetime.

In 1:21 Paul says, "To me to live is Christ." This Christ was his goal. Hence, for Paul to live was the goal--Christ as the out-resurrection. Furthermore, for us to live should also be the out-resurrection, for the very Christ whom we should live is Himself the out-resurrection. This means that day by day we should live the out-resurrection. For example, suppose a certain brother loves his wife very much. He needs to ask himself whether this love is natural or in resurrection. Even non-Christian husbands may love their wives in a natural way. If a brother loves his wife in resurrection, his love will be out of the old creation and in God. This shows that to live Christ is to live the out-resurrection, to live a life absolutely out of the old creation and in God.

When I was young I wondered why it seemed difficult for Paul to reach the goal. I thought that the persecutions he suffered made this difficult. It seemed to me opposition from others hindered him in running the Christian race. Years later, through experience I came to see that it is easier for me to overcome persecutions than to love my wife in the out-resurrection and not according to the natural life. I have been in Christ for more than fifty years. During all this time I have been a zealous Christian. Having encountered many hindrances in the Christian race, I have learned that the greatest hindrance is the natural life with its thoughts and habits. The natural life frustrates in running the race toward the goal.

Have you ever asked yourself how much of your daily conversation is natural and how much is in the out-resurrection? Although you may not speak in an evil, slanderous way, your talk may be natural. You may speak many positive things, but your words may be spoken in a natural way, not in resurrection. It is easy to improve our character, behavior, ethics, or morality, but it is extremely difficult to live in resurrection.

One characteristic of the natural life is anxiety. Are you free from anxiety and worry? Recently I had a problem with my health, and I was anxious about it. I claimed the Lord's word in Philippians 4:6 and 7: "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." However, immediately after declaring that I stood on this promise, I was anxious again. I wanted to be free from anxiety, but it refused to let me go. Do you know why I was anxious? I was anxious because I was not fully in resurrection. There is no anxiety in the out-resurrection. Anxiety belongs to the old creation, and it cannot enter into the realm of resurrection, into the sphere of the new creation.

Paul knew from experience that it is not easy to live a life which is wholly out of the old creation and in God. In 1:21 he could declare, "To me to live is Christ." But in chapter one we simply have the declaration, not the explanation or definition. In chapter three we see that to live Christ is to live the out-resurrection and that this should be our goal. Our deeds and words must be in resurrection. If a certain deed is not in resurrection, we should not do it. If a certain word is not in resurrection, we should not say it. The question is not whether a particular thing is right or wrong, but whether or not it is in resurrection. Even our love needs to be in resurrection.

In the out-resurrection there is no element of the old creation. Instead, everything is full of the divine element. This is the reason that people sense God when they are

with a person who lives in the out-resurrection. The living of such a person, his deeds and words, is in resurrection. This is the out-resurrection in our daily life. In Philippians 3 Paul was pursuing this kind of living. This is what he had in mind when he declared that his desire was to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and by any means to attain to the out-resurrection. Not regarding himself as having attained, he pursued toward the goal of the out-resurrection.

We thank the Lord for showing us the depths of these verses in Philippians 3. What He has spoken regarding the out-resurrection will not be in vain. I believe that many among us will have a living which is out of the old creation and in God.

Just as the goal is the out-resurrection, so the prize is also the out-resurrection. The goal is for us to gain, whereas the prize is for us to enjoy. We may reach the goal in this age, but we shall enjoy the prize in the coming age.

In Romans 8:11 Paul says, "But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who indwells you." This verse indicates that we can attain to the out-resurrection in this age. Here Paul says that the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from among the dead will give life to that part of our being which is dying, our mortal bodies. We have seen that the Spirit is the reality of Christ's resurrection, the reality of the out-resurrection. The Spirit is dwelling in us to work the out-resurrection into our being in a real and practical way. Thus, Romans 8:11 indicates that we should attain to the out-resurrection in this age.

Revelation 20:6 refers to the prize in the coming age, the prize of the first resurrection: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no authority; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years." The Greek word rendered "first" is the same word used for the "best" robe given to the returned prodigal in

Luke 15. The first resurrection is the best resurrection, the out-resurrection. If in this age we do not pursue a life which is absolutely out of the old creation and fully in God, we shall not have the prize for our enjoyment in the coming age. But if we obtain the out-resurrection today, it will become a prize to us in the next age. Then what is now our goal will become our prize when, during the millennium, we reign as co-kings with Christ. That will be the enjoyment of the out-resurrection as our prize. In Christ God has called us from above for this prize. This prize should be the goal we pursue and obtain in this age.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FIVE

THE UNIQUE MIND AND THE UNIQUE WALK

Scripture Reading: Phil 3:15-16; Gal. 5:25; 6:15-16

In Philippians 3 we have a revelation of a unique Person--the excellent, all-inclusive Christ. In this message we shall see that, as Christians, we should have the unique mind inwardly and the unique walk outwardly.

A MIND TO PURSUE THE OUT-RESURRECTION

In verse 15 Paul says, as a word of conclusion to 3:1-14, "Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you." What does Paul mean by "this mind"? To answer this question we need to consider Paul's word in verses 13 and 14: "Brothers, I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold, but one thing--forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What Paul means by "this mind" is to have a mind to forget the things behind and to stretch forward to the things before in order to pursue toward the goal for the prize.

We have pointed out that the goal is to live, walk, and have our being absolutely out of the old creation and in God. This is the goal of the out-resurrection (v. 11). To pursue toward the goal of the out-resurrection is to pursue a life which is out of the old creation and wholly in God. This out-resurrection is actually Christ Himself in resurrection. We may also say that in His Person Christ portrays the out-resurrection. Before the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ, there was no such

portrait, for there was not yet such a thing as the out-resurrection. Before Christ's incarnation, God had not been joined to His creation. But one day the Son of God came into the old creation. When He was crucified, He brought the entire old creation to the cross and nailed it there. Hence, through crucifixion, Christ terminated the old creation. Furthermore, when He was buried, He brought the old creation, which was symbolized by the graveclothes, with Him into the tomb. When He was resurrected, He left the graveclothes behind (John 20:6-7). This indicates that the old creation was left in the tomb. When Christ came forth in resurrection, He was a Person absolutely out of the old creation and in God. This is the meaning of the expression "the out-resurrection." Christ attained to this out-resurrection through crucifixion and resurrection.

According to the New Testament, we should not separate the out-resurrection from the Person of Christ, for Christ Himself is actually the out-resurrection. This means that when we received the Lord Jesus, we also received the out-resurrection. However, throughout the centuries, from the first century until the present, this matter has not been proclaimed adequately. How we thank the Lord that, in His mercy, He has opened our eyes to see what is the out-resurrection from among the dead!

Having "this mind" is related to pursuing the out-resurrection. To have this mind is to have the understanding and realization that, as those who have been chosen, redeemed, and regenerated by God, we must pursue one thing--to have our living out of the old creation and in God. This means that our whole life should be in the out-resurrection. We have seen that this out-resurrection is actually the dear, precious, excellent Person of Christ, the very One who, through crucifixion and resurrection, has passed out of the old creation and has entered into God. This wonderful One is far more excellent than the angels. Angels still belong to the old creation. They have not experienced crucifixion or resurrection. But after Christ

was crucified and buried, He was resurrected out of the old creation and into God. Have you ever heard such a description of the Lord Jesus? Hallelujah, Christ Himself is the reality of the out-resurrection! Now we must pursue a life which is this wonderful Person of Christ. With Paul we should be able to say, "To me to live is Christ" (1:21). Paul could also testify that he had been crucified with Christ and that Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). The very Christ who lived in Paul is the One who, in His own Person, is the out-resurrection.

As long as we have our living in the old creation, we do not live Christ, even if the things we do are very good. Suppose someone lives according to an ethical standard higher than that of Confucius. Nevertheless, such a living is not Christ; it is merely an ethical living, the living of ethics in the old creation. We must seek not only to overcome sins, but also to overcome the best aspects of the old creation, including the ethics of the old creation. We need to pursue toward the goal--the goal of the out-resurrection, which is our dear and excellent Christ Himself. What a blessing it is to see this! How blessed we would be in our family life if we pursued a life which is out of the old creation and in God.

We all need to have "this mind," a mind to pursue Christ as the out-resurrection. For a young person to pursue this goal is not merely to improve his behavior or character or to become a better student. It is to live a life which is actually Christ Himself in resurrection. This is a life which is fully out of the old creation and in God. May we all have this unique mind.

NOT OTHERWISE MINDED

In verse 15 Paul says that if in anything we are otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to us. Being "otherwise minded" is common among Christians today. Christians have hundreds of different ways of thinking, understanding, and realizing matters. Oh, how many minds there are among believers! But Paul encourages us to have one mind, "this mind."

Sometimes when I was preaching the gospel in China, others accused me of narrow-mindedness. They advised me not to say that Christ alone is the Savior. They claimed that it is too narrow-minded to preach that Jesus Christ is the unique Savior of mankind. I told them that, concerning Christ, I was not yet narrow-minded enough, that I needed to be narrowed down to nothing other than Christ Himself. Christians also have exhorted me not to be narrow-minded. In particular, they urged me not to say that the way we follow in the Lord's recovery is the right way. I replied, "If this way is not right, I cannot follow it. But if it is the right way, I must both take it myself and encourage others to do so. Otherwise, I shall first cheat myself and then cheat other believers. You consider yourselves to be broad-minded. But actually you are cheating yourselves and others. You do not know the right way and you are not on it." Concerning spiritual matters, God condemns man's broad-mindedness. The Lord Jesus said that the gate is narrow and the way is constricted which leads unto life (Matt. 7:14).

According to the Bible, we have one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one church. The emphasis in the Word is on oneness. There is one Creator and one Savior, and it is utterly devilish to teach otherwise.

The fact that Paul says that if we are otherwise minded, "this also God shall reveal" indicates that to be otherwise minded is to be lacking in revelation. If we are otherwise minded, we need revelation. For this reason, Paul does not say in verse 15 that God will teach us; instead, he says that God will reveal this to us.

Believers cannot have one mind simply by reading the Bible in letters. When the Lord Jesus came, the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament had already been written. But even though the religionists searched the Scriptures, they were not willing to come to Christ that they might have life. In John 5:39 and 40 the Lord Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that testify concerning Me; and

you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. If we search the Scriptures without coming to the Lord, we shall have many different minds. Some may prefer Moses and others, Elijah or Jeremiah. Only when we come to Christ, the unique One, can we have one mind.

After His resurrection, the Lord said to His disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). This indicates that in the Scriptures we need to see Christ.

The situation among Christians today is a repetition of that of the religionists when the Lord Jesus was on earth. In fact, today's situation is worse. Now readers of the Bible have sixty-six books instead of thirty-nine. There are more "Pharisees," "Sadducees," and "scribes" today than in the first century, for there are many more readers of the Bible and more believers who are otherwise minded.

Although there are hundreds of different minds among Christians today, it is not our goal to unify the believers. However, when Christ, the unique Person, is revealed to us, we are unified in Him and by Him. In fact, He Himself is our unification.

Not only is it not our aim to try to unify the believers; actually we do not expect that a great number of believers will take the way of the Lord's recovery. At the end of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus did not have a large following. According to Acts 1, only one hundred twenty were gathered together in that upper room in Jerusalem. It is not our goal to be warmly welcomed or to have a huge number. At this point, we need to be reminded that Paul did not write the book of Philippians at a time when he was welcomed by the multitudes. On the contrary, this Epistle was written when Paul was rejected, persecuted, and imprisoned.

Probably if millions of Christians took the way of the Lord's recovery, the recovery would cease to exist. It would be terminated by the many different minds among the

believers. The Lord's recovery truly is a narrow way, a way difficult for most Christians to take. All those in the recovery must heed Paul's word to have "this mind."

A REALIZATION AND A RESOLUTION

We cannot deny that we have received revelation from the Lord concerning the all-inclusive Christ. Only God's revelation can cause us to have "this mind," the unique mind, the mind which was in Paul and in many who love the Lord Jesus and seek Him. This is a mind not to pursue a work or a movement, but to pursue a life which is absolutely out of the old creation and in God. This is the unique mind in Philippians 3.

"This mind" involves both a realization and a resolution to pursue toward the goal. The practice of religion and ethics is altogether different from the realization of God's goal and the resolution to pursue it. To have this mind is to have a mind to pursue Christ in His resurrection that we may live Him as the out-resurrection. We all need such a mind, such a realization and resolution, that we may pursue toward this goal.

GOVERNED BY THE UNIQUE MIND TO HAVE THE UNIQUE WALK

If we have the unique mind, we shall also have the unique walk. As human beings, we are under the control of our mind. It is the mind which directs the walk, not the walk that directs the mind. What we think governs what we say and do. Hence, our thinking directs and controls our entire life. This is the reason we need to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

We have been falsely and slanderously accused of mind-bending. We by no means practice mind-bending, but we do promote the renewing of the mind. Our mind needs to be renewed in order to have a proper realization and resolution. Then our Christian walk will be directed by a mind which has been renewed by God.

The Greek word rendered walk in verse 16 is not the ordinary word for walk, but the word found also, for example, in Galatians 5:25. It is a very particular word, the verbal form of the noun "element." At least one translation renders the Greek here as "to observe the elements." The Greek word, *stolcheo*, derived from *steicho*, means to walk orderly, to march in military rank, to keep step. To walk in this way is to walk in a certain lane or path. This is a walk which is regulated like that of soldiers marching in cadence, who walk at the same time and in the same rhythm.

Some may wonder how it is possible for saints with different degrees of experience to walk in the same steps or in cadence. How, for example, can a brother with over fifty years' experience in the Lord walk in the same steps as one who has recently been saved? Do not think that such a walk is impossible. The way of teaching in the Bible is different from that practiced in the worldly educational system. In schools there are different textbooks for students of different ages. As Christians, however, we have the Bible as our unique textbook. Both for those who, spiritually speaking, are in kindergarten and for those who are in graduate school, the Bible is our only textbook.

In verse 15 Paul refers to "as many as are full-grown." This implies that some believers are more mature than others. But in verse 16 Paul goes on to say, "Only this, whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk." The words "whereunto we have attained" indicate that all the saints, regardless of their degree of maturity, are included. We all must walk by the same rule. Even the very youngest of the saints should walk the same path as those who are very mature. Concerning this, God's mind is higher than ours. We all should have "this mind" and walk the same path.

Eventually we all shall be governed by the revelation of the unique mind and the unique walk. Then spontaneously we shall say, "Lord Jesus, I love You in a way I have never loved You before. Lord, in Your presence I resolve to

pursue You as the out-resurrection. I want everything in my life to be out of the old creation and in God." If we see this revelation and have this resolution, we shall have the unique walk controlled and directed by the unique mind.

WALKING BY THE RULE OF THE NEW CREATION

Galatians 6:15 and 16 indicate that this unique walk is a walk by the rule of the new creation: "For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, even upon the Israel of God." To walk by the rule of the new creation is to walk by the rule of the out-resurrection. If we walk by this rule, we shall be the true Israel of God.

The name Israel means "a prince of God." We become a prince of God by having the unique mind which directs us to take the way of the unique walk, that is, to pursue toward the goal of the out-resurrection. Today the Lord desires to have a group of people pursuing this goal. May we all see the crucial importance of the unique mind directing the unique walk, and may we all pursue toward the unique goal--Christ as the out-resurrection.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SIX

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(1)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:1-7; 1:8; 2 Cor. 10:1a

In our reading of the book of Philippians it may seem that Paul's thought in 4:1-7 is not nearly as high as that expressed in the first three chapters. In chapter one he speaks of living Christ and magnifying Him; in chapter two, of taking Christ as our pattern, of shining as lights in the world, and of holding forth the word of life; and in chapter three, of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and of pursuing toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Then in chapter four Paul uses expressions that apparently are quite ordinary: "Rejoice in the Lord"; "Let your forbearance be known to all men"; and "In nothing be anxious." Suppose as you are pursuing toward the goal for the prize someone suddenly encouraged you not to be anxious. Would you not consider this an interruption and say, "I am pursuing Christ. I want to arrive at the goal of the out-resurrection. Why do you talk to me about anxiety?" Many readers of Philippians treasure the first three chapters, but, perhaps unconsciously, they may consider chapter four to be on a lower level than chapters one through three.

Years ago I appreciated the first three chapters of Philippians much more than I appreciated chapter four. It seemed to me that after ascending a high peak in chapters one, two, and three, Paul suddenly came down to a lower level in chapter four. I could not understand why there was such a sudden change in Paul's writing.

THE NEED TO LEARN THE SECRET

In 4:12 Paul says, "I have learned the secret." To do the things spoken of in chapter four requires the divine life. Paul had learned the secret of being able to do all things in the One who empowered him. In verse 4 he exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord always. We may think that it is easy to rejoice in the Lord. Actually, rejoicing in Him requires the out-resurrection. In order to rejoice in the Lord we need to be in Him as the One who empowers us. Thus, even the apparently simple matter of rejoicing in the Lord requires that we learn the secret. If we do not know the secret, we shall not be able to rejoice.

In 4:5 Paul says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men." In 2 Corinthians 10:1 he says, "I beseech you through the meekness and forbearance of Christ" (lit.). The forbearance mentioned in 4:5 is not an ordinary forbearance or an ethical forbearance. It is the forbearance of Christ, a spiritual attribute or a virtue of Christ. This forbearance must become our forbearance, and then we should make our forbearance, the forbearance of Christ, known to all men.

What is the meaning of forbearance, and why does Paul mention forbearance in 4:5 instead of some other virtue? If Paul had told us to let our love or kindness be made known to all men, this verse would not be a problem to us. But here Paul does not speak of love, kindness, humility, or some other human virtue. Instead, he singles out forbearance. We know what love, kindness, and humility are, but who can give an adequate definition of forbearance? If I had been asked years ago to define forbearance, I would have said that to forbear means to carry a heavy burden for a long period of time. However, this definition is natural. It does not help us to understand why Paul speaks of forbearance in 4:5 instead of some other virtue.

After telling us to let our forbearance be known to all men, Paul goes on to say, also in verse 5, "The Lord is near." Many expositors think that this means that the

coming of the Lord is at hand. I dare not say that this meaning is not included; however, here Paul does not say that the Lord is coming soon, but that He is near already. Then in the next verse Paul tells us not to be anxious in anything, but "in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving" to make our requests known to God. In the midst of making our forbearance known to all men, in not being anxious in anything, but in everything making our requests known to God, Paul declares that the Lord is near.

In ourselves, we are not able to make our forbearance known to all men, to be free from anxiety, or even to make our requests known to God. Some may think that it is easy to pray; actually, prayer is a difficult thing. In order to do all these things we, like Paul, must learn the secret. We also need to be in the One who empowers us.

STANDING FIRM IN THE LORD

Philippians 4:1-7 is part of Paul's concluding word to chapters one, two, and three. What he says in 4:1-7 is based on what he has previously written about living Christ, magnifying Christ, taking Christ as our pattern, knowing the excellency of Christ, pursuing toward the goal, and living in the out-resurrection.

In 4:1 he says, "So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, beloved." We know from chapter three that Paul aspired to be found in Christ. In 4:1 he tells us to stand firm in the Lord. Standing firm in the Lord is the key to letting our forbearance be known to all men. If we do not stand firm in the Lord, there is no way to make our forbearance known. In order to do anything we must have a proper standing. This is true of making known our forbearance. For this, we must stand firm in the Lord; that is, we must remain in Him. Hence, Paul's word about standing firm in the Lord is equal to the Lord's word about abiding in Him (John 15:4).

In verse 2 Paul goes on to say, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord." As those who stand firm in the Lord, we should also "think the same thing in the Lord." Apart from the Lord, we cannot think the same thing. If we would think the same thing in the Lord, we must first stand firm in Him.

Verse 3 continues, "Yes, I ask you also, genuine yokefellow, assist them, who contended with me in the gospel, with both Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life." Here Paul is asking those who were genuine yokefellows to help Euodias and Syntyche to think the same thing. Paul seems to be saying, "These two sisters are my co-workers, but at least temporarily they are not in the Lord. I encourage you, genuine yokefellow, to do your best to bring them back to the Lord and help them to think the same thing in the Lord." These sisters were co-workers who had labored with Paul and contended with him in the gospel and whose names were in the book of life. Nevertheless, for the time being they were not in the Lord.

In verse 4 Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." When in our experience we are not in the Lord, we do not have any joy and we cannot rejoice. Formerly Euodias and Syntyche could rejoice, but now, because they are not in the Lord, they cannot rejoice in Him.

There is a practical way by which we can know whether or not we are in the Lord. As long as you are not one with a certain brother or sister in the church, you are not in the Lord. Of course, as far as position is concerned, you are in Christ eternally. Nothing can affect our position in Christ. But practically and experientially we may not remain in Him. The fact that we are not one with a particular saint proves that we are not in the Lord.

It is very serious not to be one with even one brother or sister. Most of the saints have at least one other saint with whom they are not one. For example, suppose some sisters are serving together at a love feast. One sister may not like

the way another sister is serving and she may refuse to serve with her. She may even walk away from this sister. By walking away from the sister, she actually walks out of the Lord. Instead of refusing to serve with the sister, she should make her forbearance known in that situation.

It is not easy to serve with the saints in the church. If an employee in a factory does not do a good job, the boss can fire him. But in the church life no one is hired and no one can be fired. Just as we have been born into a family and cannot be fired from being a member of the family, so we have been born into the church and cannot be fired from being a member of the church. When difficulties arise, we should not walk away from the saints or refuse to serve with them. Instead, we should exercise our forbearance.

NO ANXIETY

If we exercise forbearance, we shall not be anxious. Whenever we make our forbearance known, our anxiety is crossed out. When we exercise forbearance, we can rejoice in the Lord, and when we rejoice in the Lord, our anxiety disappears. Thus, forbearance maintains our rejoicing, and rejoicing drives away our anxiety. But whenever we do not exercise forbearance, we are not able to rejoice. Then the way is open for anxiety to enter in. This is not a mere doctrine; it is a word which touches the actual situation of our Christian life.

SATISFIED WITH LESS THAN OUR DUE

At this point we need to consider in a fuller way the meaning of forbearance. Forbearance means that we are easily satisfied, even with less than our due. This is the meaning of the Greek word rendered forbearance. To be satisfied with less than our due is in contrast to being just in an exacting way. To forbear is to make no demands on others; it is to be satisfied with whatever another party does to us or for us. Suppose a brother's wife serves him a

cold drink when he preferred a hot one, and, very dissatisfied, he rebukes her for what she has done. This is not forbearance; it is being just in a very exacting manner. If the brother had shown forbearance toward his wife, he would have been satisfied with whatever she served him, even if he had not been able to drink it. He would have been satisfied with less than his due.

AN ALL-INCLUSIVE VIRTUE

In his *Word Studies* Wuest points out that the Greek word rendered forbearance not only means satisfied with less than our due, but also means sweet reasonableness. The word includes self-control, patience, moderation, kindness, and gentleness. Furthermore, according to Christian experience, forbearance is all-inclusive, for it includes all Christian virtues. This means that if we fail to exercise forbearance, we fail to exercise any Christian virtue. If a brother's wife serves him a cold drink contrary to his preference and he complains about it, then at that time he does not exhibit any Christian virtue. But if by the grace of Christ he is satisfied with less than his due and exercises forbearance toward his wife, not criticizing her or condemning her, he will show in his forbearance an all-inclusive Christian virtue. His forbearance will include patience, humility, self-control, looking to the Lord, and even the virtue of admitting that the Lord is sovereign in all things.

The reason we sometimes behave in an unseemly manner is that we lack forbearance. Negative attitudes and unkind words also come from a shortage of forbearance. When we fail to love, it is because we have no forbearance. Likewise, we may be intolerant because we lack forbearance. Even talkativeness may result from having no forbearance. If we do not have forbearance, we shall not have peace. If we do not show forbearance toward the members of our family, there will be no peace in our family life. Peace comes out of forbearance.

MAGNIFYING CHRIST BY MAKING KNOWN OUR FORBEARANCE

Paul realized that forbearance is an all-inclusive virtue. This is the reason he says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men." This forbearance is actually Christ Himself. In 1:21 Paul says, "To me to live is Christ." Since Christ is forbearance, for Paul to live was forbearance. Paul's earnest expectation was that Christ would be magnified in him, whether through life or through death. For Paul to magnify Christ was for him to make known his forbearance. Thus, for Christ to be magnified in us is equal to making our forbearance known to all men. The reason for this is that forbearance is Christ experienced by us in a practical way. We may speak of living Christ and testify that for us to live is Christ. However, day by day in our life at home what we need is forbearance. If we have forbearance, then in our experience we truly have Christ. If a brother's wife offends him, what he needs to make known to her is Christ as his forbearance.

It is very difficult to be a good husband or wife. The key to being a good husband or wife is forbearance. To repeat, forbearance includes much more than gentleness or humility. As an all-inclusive Christian virtue, forbearance is Christ Himself. In both the family life and in the church life, we need to live Christ by living a life of forbearance.

The more we consider the significance of forbearance, the more we can appreciate why Paul spoke of it in 4:5. Our failures and defeats in the Christian life come because we are short of forbearance. All the saints, young and old alike, have a tendency to neglect forbearance. If we would live Christ, we must be satisfied with less than our due. We should not make exacting demands on others.

The Lord Jesus lived a life of forbearance when He was on earth. In one sense, He was very strict, but in another sense He was very tolerant. For example, although He prayed a great deal, He did not make demands of His disciples concerning prayer or condemn them because they did not pray enough.

THE NEARNESS OF THE LORD

Immediately after speaking about forbearance, Paul goes on to say, "The Lord is near." As I have indicated, I do not oppose the understanding that this refers to the nearness of the Lord's coming. Nevertheless, according to experience, not according to doctrine, I would say that this word refers to the Lord's presence with us today. It also strengthens Paul's exhortation that we make our forbearance known to all men. Because the Lord is near, we have no excuse for not making known our forbearance. Often we fail to exercise forbearance because we forget that the Lord is near. We do not even remember that He is actually within us. When a brother's wife serves him a cold drink instead of a hot one, will he care for the drink or for the Lord? If he cares about the drink instead of the Lord, then in his experience only the drink will be at hand, for the Lord will be far away. Because we do not realize that the Lord is near, we do not exercise forbearance. Instead, we are strict in dealing with others and make exacting demands of them without considering their situation. The more we realize the nearness of the Lord, the more satisfied we shall be and the more we shall be considerate of others and sweetly reasonable regarding their situation. If we realize that the Lord is near, we shall turn from the old creation to the new creation, to the out-resurrection, which is expressed as forbearance.

THE EXPRESSION OF THE OUT-RESURRECTION

For Jesus, the Nazarene, to live a life full of forbearance required that He live a life in resurrection. Only a life in the out-resurrection can be a life of forbearance. Forbearance is actually the expression of a living which is in the out-resurrection, in the new creation instead of the old creation. To let our forbearance be known to all men is not simply to be kind or patient. Rather, it is to let others see a proper Christian living. This living is Christ as the out-resurrection expressed through forbearance.

CONSIDERING OTHERS

We have emphasized the need of forbearance in the church life and in our family life. If we are forbearing, we shall be considerate in dealing with others. For example, suppose one sister wants to help another sister improve her way of serving in the church. The sister who wants to offer help needs to consider whether or not the sister she intends to help is able to receive correction. She should also consider whether in offering correction she herself is in the spirit or in the flesh.

Forbearance requires that we not speak to others in haste. On the contrary, we need to have much consideration before saying anything. We can damage brothers and sisters in the church and also members of our family by being too hasty in dealing with them.

I can testify that, as an elderly man, I now deal with my family in a way much different from the way I practiced forty years ago. Today I show much more forbearance than I did then. Previously I stood on my position as a husband and father and said whatever I felt was necessary. However, I learned that this practice was often harmful to others. Now before saying certain things to my wife, I consider her and her situation. I ask myself if she is able to bear what I intend to say and when is the right time to say it. I also consider how happy and comforted she is and how much she is able to receive what I desire to say to her. All this is involved in showing forbearance.

When the Lord Jesus walked with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, He displayed forbearance. When He asked them what they were talking about, one of them replied, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" (Luke 24:18). Even though He knew all things, the Lord asked them, "What things?" (v. 18). Then He patiently listened to them while they told Him what had happened. Later, at the appropriate time, the Lord made Himself known to them. He certainly was forbearing with those disciples.

If we show forbearance toward others, they will be nourished, healed, and helped to grow. We shall not cause them to stumble or hurt them in any way. However, because of our lack of forbearance, we have damaged others in the church and in our family life.

LIVING IN THE OUT-RESURRECTION

I wish to emphasize the fact that forbearance is not a matter of ethics. Forbearance is Christ. In chapters one, two, and three of Philippians, Paul has much to say concerning Christ. Then in 4:5 he speaks of forbearance, not of Christ. Actually, when he says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men," he is saying, "Let Christ be manifested and magnified before all men." After speaking about living Christ, magnifying Christ, taking Christ as the pattern, and pursuing Christ as the goal, Paul indicates that we need to live this Christ as our forbearance. We all need the Lord to be our forbearance. To live Him as forbearance is truly to live in the out-resurrection.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SEVEN

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(2)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:1, 4-5, 11-13; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17

In 4:5 Paul says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men." Although we are familiar with the word forbearance, it is not easy for us to define it adequately. Many would say that forbearance is patience. However, this term is used at the end of a book which emphasizes the experience of Christ. Philippians is not primarily concerned with morality, behavior, character, or ethics. The subject of this Epistle is the experience of Christ. All four chapters of this book are related to the experience of Christ.

MAKING CHRIST KNOWN

As we read the first several verses of chapter four, we may not have the impression that these verses still have the experience of Christ as their subject. But verse 13 says, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me." "All things" must include the exercise of forbearance spoken of in verse 5. Paul charged the saints to have forbearance. Certainly he himself lived a life of forbearance. Otherwise, he would have been hypocritical in exhorting others to make their forbearance known when he himself did not practice forbearance. Paul's word in 4:5 must be based on his own living, experience, and practice. Thus, forbearance must be an experience of Christ. Furthermore, the fact that Paul says that he can do all things in Him who empowers him is an indication that forbearance is Christ.

In 1:20 and 21 Paul speaks of magnifying Christ and of living Him. In chapter two he presents Christ as our unique pattern and then speaks of holding forth the word of life. Holding forth the word of life is equal to expressing Christ. In chapter three we see that Christ should be our goal and prize. We need to pursue toward the goal for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (3:14). Whether we are young or old, we all should pursue Christ. This was Paul's concept when he said in 3:16, "Only this, whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk." We all should live Christ, magnify Christ, express Christ, and pursue Christ. Then in chapter four Paul speaks of standing firm in the Lord, rejoicing in Him, and letting our forbearance be known to all men. If we have a proper understanding of the subject of Philippians, realizing that this book is focused on the experience of Christ, we shall see that to make our forbearance known is actually to make Christ known. I believe that this was Paul's thought.

The best way to understand the Bible is to get into the thought of the writer and grasp the major points according to which he wrote a particular book. No doubt, by considering the four chapters of Philippians, we shall see that Paul's basic thought in this Epistle is that Christ was his living, pattern, goal with the prize, and power. In this book Paul is saying that we need to live Christ, take Christ as our pattern, pursue Christ as our goal, and experience Christ as our power. All this should result in a certain kind of living, a living which expresses Christ.

AN EXPRESSION OF CHRIST

What word would you use to describe a life that expresses Christ? Would you describe it as loving, submissive, patient, humble, kind? None of these words is adequate. Yes, a life that expresses Christ certainly is loving, submissive, patient, humble, and kind; however, it includes much more than this. It is significant that Paul does not use any of these terms in 4:5. Instead, he uses the

word forbearance. He does not tell us to make our love or patience known, but to make our forbearance known.

In 4:5 why does Paul tell us to make our forbearance known to all men? Why does he not speak of some other virtue, such as holiness or righteousness? What word would you have used if you were writing this Epistle? Perhaps some would use faithfulness, obedience, or oneness. But none of these words seems to fit. It does not seem adequate to say, "Let your faithfulness be made known," or, "Let your oneness be made known." Try as we may, we cannot find an adequate replacement for the word forbearance. Even though we cannot fully define forbearance or explain what it is, we sense as we read this verse that forbearance is the only word which is fitting in this verse.

When Paul says that we should make our forbearance known to all men, he indicates the fullness of our forbearance. A forbearance which can be made known to all is not a limited or partial forbearance; it is the fullness of forbearance.

If we would understand the meaning of forbearance, we should not turn to books of philosophy or ethics. Instead, we need to turn to the Bible and seek to learn from the Scriptures the significance of forbearance in 4:5. As we have seen, this must be an expression of Christ. First Paul charges us to make our forbearance known to all men. Realizing that we are not able to do this, he goes on to say, "I can do all things in the One Who empowers me." This indicates that forbearance is at least part of the expression of Christ.

That forbearance is related to the expression of Christ becomes even more clear when we consider 4:5 in the context of the whole book of Philippians. In 1:20 and 21 Paul speaks of magnifying Christ and living Him. Certainly making our forbearance known must involve living Christ and magnifying Him. This means that our forbearance must be the very Christ we live and magnify. We should not separate chapter four from the rest of the book. In chapter one Paul speaks of magnifying Christ and

then, toward the end of the book, of making our forbearance known. The forbearance we make known must be the very Christ we magnify.

In chapter two Paul presents Christ as our unique pattern. Certainly, forbearance must be related to Christ as our pattern. This means that forbearance must involve the experience and the expression of Christ as the pattern revealed in chapter two.

As we have pointed out, in chapter three we have Christ as our goal. With Paul, we must pursue toward this goal. Christ as the goal toward which we pursue must include forbearance. Otherwise, how could Paul encourage us to pursue Christ in chapter three and then in 4:5 charge us to make something other than Christ known to all men? That would not be logical. For Paul to be consistent, what he charges us to make known in 4:5 must be the very goal toward which he encourages us to pursue in chapter three. Since Paul encourages us to pursue Christ, in 4:5 he must not be telling us to make something other than Christ known to all men. Since Paul speaks so much of Christ in the first three chapters of the book, what he says in chapter four must also be related to Christ. Therefore, we believe that the forbearance in 4:5 is Christ.

If the word forbearance in 4:5 can be replaced by any other word, it must be the word Christ. Instead of saying, "Let your forbearance be made known," we can say, "Let your Christ be made known." This means to let the Christ whom we live and magnify, whom we take as our pattern and pursue as our goal, be made known to all men.

MAKING OUR FORBEARANCE KNOWN

Forbearance is Christ as our living. The Christ whom we live becomes the forbearance we exercise and make known. If we see this, we shall realize that forbearance is a matter of great significance. It is by no means an isolated virtue in the Christian life. On the contrary, forbearance is act ually a synonym for Christ in our Christian living. On

the one hand, we may say that our Christian life is Christ. On the other hand, we may say that the Christian life is a life of forbearance. To make our forbearance known, therefore, means to make our Christ known.

If we do not make known our forbearance, we shall have Christ only in doctrine or terminology, but we shall not have Christ in our experience. Young people, your parents may know that Christ is in you. However, you need to let Christ be made known to your parents by making your forbearance known to them. To all those whom we contact day by day we need to let our Christ be made known. This is to let our forbearance be known to all men.

I wish to emphasize the fact that forbearance is nothing less than Christ Himself. In doctrine, we may talk about Christ; but in our experience, we need to have forbearance. To let our forbearance be made known is to make known to others the Christ whom we experience, live, and magnify. This is the proper understanding of 4:5 in the light of Christian experience.

In every chapter of Philippians Christ is revealed. However, in chapter four a particular term--forbearance--is used to denote Christ in our experience. Do not think that chapter four of Philippians is on a lower level than chapters one, two, and three. No, in chapter four we have Christ experienced by us and expressed through us as forbearance. We may say that the central focus of our Christian life is Christ. I certainly agree with such a statement. But from the standpoint of our practical Christian experience, the focus of the Christian life is forbearance. Forbearance is an all-inclusive Christian virtue. It includes love, patience, kindness, humility, compassion, considerateness, and submissiveness, a willingness to yield. If we have such an all-inclusive virtue, we shall also have righteousness and holiness.

The Christian life is a life full of forbearance but without anxiety. Only when we have forbearance can we have a life without anxiety. If our whole being is filled with forbearance, there will not be any room for anxiety.

FITTING AND SUITABLE

The Greek word for forbearance is rendered different ways by different translations. Some versions translate the Greek word as yieldingness. The word used in the Chinese version means to give in humbly. These understandings are correct, but they are rather shallow. Other translators point out that the Greek word means reasonable, considerate, suitable, and fitting. A forbearing person is one who always fits in, one whose behavior is always suitable.

Certain saints are good, but they do not fit in. They may move from place to place, but no matter where they may go, they are not happy. The reason these saints do not fit in is that they are not forbearing. A forbearing person is one who always fits in, whose behavior is always suitable, no matter what the circumstances or environment may be.

Forbearance also includes peacefulness, mildness, and gentleness. If you are reasonable, considerate, and able to fit in, you will no doubt be gentle, kind, mild, and peaceful. You will also be meek and moderate, full of compassion for others. As we pointed out in the previous message, the opposite of forbearance is being just in a very exacting way. A person who lacks forbearance will be exacting and demanding of others. But to be forbearing means that we are satisfied with less than our due. Alford says that the Greek word for forbearance means to not be strict with respect to legal rights. For example, a certain thing may be ours, but we do not claim it according to strict, legal right. This is forbearance.

THE FORBEARANCE OF CHRIST

The life of the Lord Jesus is the best illustration of forbearance. Consider how He spoke to those two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Luke 24:15 says that while these disciples "communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them." The Lord Jesus said to them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" (v. 17). With

a rebuking tone, one of the disciples answered, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" (v. 18). Appearing not to know anything, the Lord asked, "What things?" (v. 19). Then they proceeded to tell Him about Jesus of Nazareth, One they described as a "prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." They went on to say that the chief priests and the rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. How forbearing the Lord was to listen to the disciples speak things which He knew much better than they did! After walking quite a distance, "they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further" (v. 28). However, "they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them" (v. 29). The Lord even sat down to dine with them. When He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, "their eyes were opened, and they knew him" (v. 31). In all this we see the Lord's forbearance.

Besides the Lord Jesus, no human being has ever practiced a life of such forbearance. If you study the biographies of famous people, you will see that not one was truly a person of forbearance. However, if you read the four Gospels, you will see that the human living of the Lord Jesus was full of forbearance. The Lord Jesus exercised forbearance with His disciples. Can you find a case where the Lord Jesus "fired" one of them? The Lord was forbearing even with Judas.

CHRIST AS OUR FORBEARANCE

We need forbearance in the church life, especially in our serving together. Suppose a particular sister is serving in a way that is not adequate. The sister serving with her faces at least four options: walk away, join her in serving in her poor way, correct her, or try to improve her. None of these options involves forbearance. If the one sister exercises forbearance, she certainly will not walk away from the

other sister. At least for a while, she will join the sister in her serving. Then she will exercise wisdom to see the sister's situation and to determine whether or not she can speak a word of correction or improvement in love. If the sister is not able to receive such a word, the other one needs to wait before saying anything. Eventually, she may have an opportunity to speak not according to her own intention, but according to the leading of the Spirit. This is to exercise forbearance. If we all exercise forbearance, the church will be built up in a wonderful way.

The virtue of forbearance is all-inclusive. It includes love, kindness, mercy, reasonableness, the ability to fit in, and many other virtues. Perhaps now we can understand why Paul speaks of forbearance toward the end of a profound book on the experience of Christ. When Paul exhorts us to let our forbearance be made known to all men, he is saying something of great significance. No human being is able by the natural life to fulfill such a requirement. Confucius may have been very good, but he was still sinful and fallen. Only the Lord Jesus lived a life full of forbearance, and only Christ can be our perfect forbearance today. The best word to sum up the totality of Christ's human virtues is forbearance. To make known our forbearance is to live a life which expresses Christ; it is to express the Christ by whom we live. Such a life is Christ Himself as the totality of all human virtues. This is Christ as our forbearance.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-EIGHT

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(3)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:1-2, 4-7, 11-13; 3:15-16

The Greek word for forbearance is composed of two words. The first is the preposition *epi* which, when added to another word, can have the meaning of extensive or full. This word is a component of the Greek word for full knowledge used in 2 Timothy 2:25. The second Greek word has various meanings: reasonable, considerate, and suitable. Thus, the meaning of the Greek is extensively reasonable or fully reasonable.

AN ALL-INCLUSIVE VIRTUE

Based on the analysis of the Greek word, our spiritual experience, God's activities in His economy, and the Lord's living on earth, we can realize that to have adequate forbearance requires that we also have many other virtues. Forbearance is an all-inclusive virtue.

Of the many human virtues, Paul chose to speak of forbearance in 4:5. As we shall see, this particular virtue is related to other important matters in Philippians 3 and 4. For example, it is related to being able to do all things in Christ and also to learning the secret of contentment in all circumstances. Furthermore, in order to have forbearance we must be qualified according to what is mentioned in 3:15 and 16.

Forbearance means to be fully reasonable, considerate, and suitable. This requires a genuine understanding of the

situation at hand. Suppose two students are arguing about a problem in mathematics. Unable to settle their argument, they bring the problem to you. But if you are ignorant of mathematics, it will not be possible for you to give them a fair and reasonable judgment. Even if you have the necessary understanding, you may lack wisdom to deal with the people involved.

THE NEED OF FORBEARANCE IN OUR FAMILY LIFE

There is a great need of forbearance in our family life. A good family life is the product of forbearance. If a husband and wife show forbearance toward each other and toward their children, they will have an excellent married life and family life. However, if they do not exercise forbearance, they will seriously damage their life together as a family.

In dealing with their children, parents should be neither too strict nor too tolerant. Both excessive strictness and excessive tolerance are damaging to children. Then what is the right way for parents to care for their children? The right way is the way which is full of forbearance.

Suppose a child does something wrong, and the matter is made known to his father. He should not rebuke his child in a hasty way or spank him in anger. In Ephesians 6 Paul tells us not to provoke our children. Usually parents provoke their children by dealing with them in anger. If you are angry with your child, you first need to ask the Lord to take away your anger. Once your anger has been dealt with by the Lord, you need to exercise your understanding to realize why the child made that particular mistake. No doubt, the child was wrong. Nevertheless, you still must understand his situation. Perhaps he was wrong because you were careless. If you had not been careless in that particular way, the child would not have made that mistake. Because your carelessness afforded him the opportunity to do something wrong, you should not put the full blame on him. Rather, first you must blame yourself and then discipline the child.

All this is included in exercising forbearance toward our children.

Parents need to exercise wisdom in speaking to their children. A child may need correction, but the parents need to sense when is the right time to speak to him. A father should ask himself whether or not he should rebuke his child in front of other children or even in front of the mother. Sometimes it is not wise to discipline a child in the presence of others. How much wisdom we must exercise in caring for our children! If we do not have forbearance, we shall not exercise wisdom. On the other hand, if we do not have adequate wisdom, we shall not be able to exercise forbearance.

If we would show forbearance, we also need patience. Most parents find it difficult to be patient when they are disciplining their children. Suppose a brother is about to rebuke one of his children. It would be much better if he waited a few hours before saying anything. However, it is extremely difficult to wait even a few minutes, much less a few hours. The natural tendency is to deal with the children in haste. Such impatience is damaging.

Impatience is also damaging in our married life. Suppose a brother feels it is necessary to speak to his wife about a certain matter that is not pleasant. If he is truly forbearing, he will wait for the right time to speak, a time when the conversation will be constructive. In the same principle, a wife needs to be patient with her husband and wait for the proper time to express her feelings about certain matters. However, to be patient and forbearing in such a way is very difficult for us.

As an all-inclusive virtue, forbearance implies not only understanding, wisdom, and patience, but also mercy, kindness, love, and sympathy. The list of virtues is almost endless. As we have pointed out, the Greek word rendered forbearance implies considerateness. To be forbearing is to consider the situation of others. If we would exercise forbearance in our married life and family life, we would have a pleasant married life and an excellent family life.

NEEDED BY ELDERS

In 1 Timothy 3:3 Paul indicates that the elders in a local church need to be forbearing. If the elders do not have adequate forbearance, the church in their locality will not be built up.

We know from Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 that the church is the new man, made up of believers with different nationalities and cultures. A great deal of forbearance is needed to build up a church composed of saints with many different backgrounds. The elders need a proper understanding of all the saints and their particular characters. They also need to exercise wisdom in caring for them. If the elders lack understanding and wisdom, they will not be able to exercise forbearance and may cause a great deal of damage. For the building up among the saints in a local church, the virtue most needed by every elder is forbearance.

NEEDED BY ALL THE SAINTS

In the church forbearance is needed not only by the elders, but also by all the saints. We especially need to exercise forbearance when we come together in different groups for the church service. As we serve together in the church, we need to show forbearance toward one another. On the one hand, we should not reject anyone; on the other hand, we should not be excessively tolerant with someone who serves in a way that is not adequate. How we need forbearance!

GOD'S FORBEARANCE

The Bible reveals that in His economy God has exercised great forbearance. Immediately after the fall of man, God began to show forbearance in His dealings with man. If you read Genesis 3 from the viewpoint of forbearance, you will see how forbearing God was with fallen man. God exercised His understanding, fully realizing man's situation and need. He also exercised His wisdom to deal with fallen man.

For the accomplishment of His eternal purpose, for the carrying out of His economy, God has always exercised forbearance. With His forbearance, He has understanding, wisdom, mercy, kindness, love, and grace. Even the rich supply of life is included in God's forbearance. God never commands us to do anything without considering our need and granting us His supply. If a parent charges his children to do a certain task but does not supply them with what they need, that parent is not forbearing. Forbearance always includes the adequate supply to meet the need.

As we read the Bible, we see that God dealt with different people in different ways. For example, He dealt with Adam in one way, with Abel in another way, and with Cain in yet another way. Some students of the Bible say that in the Scriptures there are different dispensations, different ways God deals with man. These dispensations are actually related to forbearance. For God to deal with people in a particular way during a certain age is for Him to show forbearance. Because God is forbearing, He knows how to deal with everyone. He may come to you in a certain way because He knows that you are a certain kind of person. However, He may approach another person in a very different way.

The Bible reveals that God exercises forbearance in carrying out His economy. If God had dealt with fallen man in the way we deal with others, there would have been no way for Him to fulfill His purpose. But God has made His forbearance known to all men. Thus, God Himself set up an example, a pattern, of forbearance, making known His forbearance to men throughout all generations. God makes known His forbearance by dealing with us in a way that is reasonable, suitable, and considerate. God never disciplines anyone without proper consideration. He often waits a long period of time before chastising someone. God certainly is forbearing and full of understanding, wisdom, patience, consideration, sympathy, mercy, kindness, love, and the supply of life. Consider, for example, how forbearing He

was in dealing with Israel. If you read of Israel's journey in the wilderness, you will see that God truly was forbearing toward them. God has also been forbearing with us. He has dealt with us like a wise and loving father, full of forbearance.

A BOOK OF FORBEARANCE

The entire Bible reveals the divine forbearance. We may even say that the Bible is a book of forbearance and that, as revealed in the Scriptures, God Himself is forbearance. Hence, if you ask me to define forbearance, I would say firstly that forbearance is God.

CHRIST'S FORBEARANCE

As we have pointed out in foregoing messages, Christ Himself is our forbearance. The four Gospels reveal that the Lord Jesus lived a life of forbearance. He was forbearing with Judas and in His dealings with Peter. When He was twelve years old, He exercised forbearance toward His mother, Mary, and Joseph. In case after case, the Lord displayed understanding, wisdom, patience, mercy, kindness, and love. He was kind toward Judas, and with Peter He was full of grace.

An excellent example of Christ's forbearance toward Peter is found in Matthew 17:24 and 25. Those who received the half-shekel for the poll tax came to Peter and asked, "Does not your teacher pay the half-shekel?" (v. 24). Immediately Peter answered, "Yes." When he came into the house, the Lord Jesus did not rebuke him. Rather, He spoke to him in a way that was full of forbearance. Eventually, the Lord Jesus even gave Peter a means of supply to pay the poll tax. By exercising forbearance toward Peter the Lord Jesus also taught him forbearance. No doubt, when Peter was waiting for a fish with a shekel in its mouth, he had a good opportunity to be forbearing.

In John 11 we see the Lord's forbearance with Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. Instead of acting in haste, when He heard that Lazarus was sick, the Lord

deliberately delayed. Through this delay others were exposed. In dealing with this situation the Lord exercised much understanding, wisdom, consideration, mercy, and kindness. Eventually there was a great supply of life manifested in the resurrection of Lazarus.

PAUL'S FORBEARANCE

Paul's life was also a testimony of forbearance. He wrote the book of Philippians from a prison in Rome. Paul was suffering and, according to chapter four, he was short of supply and in want. Among all the churches, the church in Philippi was the best in caring for Paul's needs. But for some reason, according to the Lord's sovereignty, there was a period of time when the Philippians seemingly forgot Paul and his need. This was the reason he says in 4:10, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you caused your thinking for me to blossom anew." This word implies that Paul had passed through a "winter" of suffering and that "spring" had come with the blossoming anew of the Philippians' concern for him. But even though Paul was suffering imprisonment, persecution, attack, negligence, and the lack of supply, he still exercised forbearance and could declare, "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in Him Who empowers me" (4:11-13). Before he charged the saints to let their forbearance be known to all men, he exercised forbearance himself. No doubt, Paul's forbearance was made known to those around him. He was full of understanding, wisdom, considerateness, sympathy, mercy, and kindness. He was also full of the life supply.

If we read the book of Philippians carefully, we shall see that 3:17-21 is a separate section. This means that, spiritually speaking, 4:1 is the continuation of 3:16. After exhorting the saints to walk by the same rule, Paul charges them to "stand firm in the Lord" (4:1). Then he urges them

to rejoice in the Lord (v. 4) and to let their forbearance be known to all men (v. 5). Later in chapter four he testifies that he can do all things in the One who empowers him. Thus, Paul could make his forbearance known to the saints because he was in the One who empowered him. Furthermore, he was content, having learned the secret both how to be abased and how to abound.

THE NEED OF GROWTH

It is not easy to make our forbearance known to all men. This requires growth, in both our human life and our spiritual life. The more a person grows and matures, the more forbearance he has. Therefore, forbearance requires the growth of life. It demands maturity.

In 3:15 Paul says, "Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind." We have pointed out that to have this mind is to have the mind to live Christ and pursue Him. However, the very Christ whom we live and pursue should be expressed as forbearance. If we put together these verses from chapters three and four, we see that forbearance requires maturity. Without growth and maturity it will be extremely difficult to make known our forbearance.

We should not expect a new believer in Christ to be able to exercise much forbearance. Instead of requiring a new believer to exercise forbearance, we should be the ones to be forbearing. For example, in a family the parents must first be forbearing and thereby set up an example of forbearance for the children to follow. If a brother is not forbearing toward his wife and children, he should not expect his children to know what forbearance is. Instead of commanding others to be forbearing, he himself should establish a pattern of forbearance for his children to follow. As we have indicated, to have such forbearance requires maturity.

WALKING BY THE RULE OF FORBEARANCE

In 3:16 Paul says, "Only this, whereunto we have

attained, by the same rule let us walk." It is true that the rule here is the rule of pursuing Christ. But since in our practical daily life Christ is to be expressed as forbearance, we may say that to walk by the same rule is to walk by the rule of forbearance.

THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

After speaking of forbearance in 4:5, Paul says, "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content" (v. 11). Paul had learned the secret of contentment. By this we see that in order to be forbearing, we must be satisfied and content. If we are not content, we shall not be able to forbear.

From experience I can testify that whenever I am not satisfied, I am not able to exercise forbearance. But whenever I am satisfied and content, it is easy to be forbearing.

When a person is happy, he is not easily upset. But if he is unhappy, tired, hungry, and thirsty, he can be upset easily. A satisfied person, on the contrary, is pleasant and happy. When we are full of joy, it is difficult for us to become angry. Those who are parents know that if a child misbehaves when we are satisfied and happy, we shall deal with the child in one way, in a way full of forbearance. But if he behaves in exactly the same way when we are dissatisfied and unhappy, we shall deal with him differently, in a way that is short of forbearance. The difference is that on one occasion we are full of Christ and are happy and satisfied, whereas on the other occasion we are short of Christ and short of satisfaction in Him.

Paul could let his forbearance be known to all the saints because he was content. He did not lack anything, but was fully satisfied. No matter how he was treated by others, no matter whether the saints in Philippi cared for his need or not, Paul was satisfied. His life was full of contentment.

Now we can see that forbearance requires maturity of life and also satisfaction and contentment in Christ. Few of us are fully mature, but we can thank the Lord that we are mature at least to some extent. According to our

degree of

maturity, we enjoy the contentment of the Lord's life. Knowing contentment and satisfaction, we can then exercise our forbearance.

The more the elders in a church become mature and content, the easier it will be for them to exercise forbearance in the house of God. In like manner, the more a father is mature and content, the easier it will be for him to exercise forbearance with the members of his family. No doubt, as the ancient One, our God is mature, satisfied, and content to the uttermost. Thus, He is able to exercise His forbearance in full. The Lord Jesus also had the growth in life, the satisfaction of life, and the contentment of life. Therefore, wherever He was, He was full of forbearance and could exercise His forbearance toward all.

When we live such a life full of forbearance, we shall not have any anxiety. In the following messages we shall see that when our living is full of forbearance, we shall be free from anxiety.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-NINE

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(4)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:4-7, 10-13

In the foregoing message we emphasized the need of forbearance in our married life, family life, and church life. For the building up of the church, the elders and all the saints need to exercise forbearance. Likewise, for a pleasant married life and an excellent family life we need to be forbearing. I hope that all the saints with children will be deeply impressed with the need to exercise forbearance in their daily living at home.

THE MEANING OF FORBEARANCE

The Greek word rendered forbearance in 4:5 is composed of two words: *epi*, a preposition which means unto, and *eikos*, which means seemly, fitting, or suitable. When the preposition *epi* is added to other Greek words as a prefix, it often bears the meaning of full or extensive. Consider, for example, the word *epignosis* used in 2 Timothy 2:25. In this verse Paul speaks of "the full knowledge of the truth." Hence, *epi* added to *gnosis* gives a word which means full knowledge. The use of this preposition as a component of the Greek word for forbearance in 4:5 indicates that the meaning of this word is to be fully reasonable, or fitting or suitable to the fullest extent. We need to have a full and extensive reasonableness and considerateness. Furthermore, we need to act in a way that is fitting and suitable to the fullest

extent. All these meanings are included in the Greek word used by Paul in 4:5.

The Greek word rendered forbearance in 4:5 is not actually a noun; it is an adjective used as a noun with a definite article. This use of an adjective as a noun serves to emphasize the meaning of the word. For example, in 1 Timothy 6:17 Paul says, "Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded." This is more emphatic than saying, "Charge the rich man not to be high-minded." In 4:5 Paul deliberately uses an adjective as a noun in order to place special emphasis on forbearance.

A RICH SUPPLY

In the previous message we pointed out that forbearance requires understanding, wisdom, patience, and many other virtues. If we would be forbearing, we need to be merciful, kind, and compassionate. Furthermore, to forbear definitely requires a certain ability in a number of areas. We need the ability to understand, to be patient, to help others, and to afford them the necessary supply. In His forbearance toward us, God certainly has given us a rich supply.

God forbears with fallen man for a purpose. His purpose in showing forbearance is to accomplish His economy. If God did not afford man the adequate supply and show forbearance to man, there would be no way for God to fulfill His purpose of accomplishing His economy.

REJOICING IN THE LORD

We have seen that forbearance requires maturity and also satisfaction and contentment. Now we need to see that forbearance is also related to rejoicing in the Lord. In 4:4 Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Immediately after this he says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men." If we do not rejoice in the Lord, we shall not be able to forbear. If we would make known our forbearance, we need to be happy and joyful in the Lord. Those who are sad or sorrowful cannot have

forbearance. Instead, they find it easy to be upset, to complain, or to lose their temper. Forbearance in 4:5 is the issue, the result, of rejoicing in the Lord, mentioned in verse 4. From experience we know that rejoicing and forbearing go together.

A PATTERN OF FORBEARANCE

In 4:11-13 we see the relationship between contentment and forbearance. In verse 11 Paul testifies, "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content." In verse 12 he goes on to say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want." Because Paul had learned the secret of contentment, he was able to forbear with all the churches and all the saints. He says, "I can do all things in Him Who empowers me" (v. 13). According to the context, this includes the ability to make His forbearance known to the saints.

Consider Paul's situation when he wrote the book of Philippians. His circumstances were not at all positive. He was a prisoner in Rome; he was opposed by the religionists; and even the saints, including the Philippians who had been faithful to supply his needs in the past, neglected him for a period of time. In 4:10 Paul says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you caused your thinking for me to blossom anew; wherein you did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity." The words "blossom anew" imply that Paul had passed through a "winter" in his experience, but now it was "spring," with the Philippians' concern for him blossoming anew. Although Paul alluded to his "winter" experience and the saints' temporary neglect of him, he exercised great understanding in writing to them. As he was composing this epistle, he exercised forbearance. Thus, the Apostle Paul, one who was full of understanding concerning the situation and concerning the saints, was an excellent pattern of forbearance.

Often we are not forbearing because of misunderstanding. In the church life often we may not understand the brothers and sisters. In our family life we may fail to understand our husband or wife. This lack of understanding causes a lack of forbearance. Suppose Paul had misunderstood the Philippians. He certainly would not have written them such a marvelous epistle. Instead, he might have pointed out that when he most needed their help, it was not forthcoming. Now that they remembered him and sent him a gift, it arrived too late. Paul, however, had a full understanding of God's economy and His move; he also understood the subtlety of Satan's attack. Moreover, he understood the saints in Philippi and their situation. To him everything was crystal clear. Thus, on his part there was no misunderstanding. He could exercise much forbearance in writing to the believers in Philippi.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul also exercised wisdom. He knew what to say and how much to say. If we read this epistle carefully, we shall realize that Paul's wording is very exact. Paul wrote in a way that was neither too lengthy nor too brief. Here we see Paul's wisdom.

Paul needed to exercise wisdom in writing to the Philippians, and there is the need for us also to exercise wisdom in our married life. Husbands need wisdom in speaking with their wives, and wives need wisdom in sharing matters with their husbands. Here I would emphasize the need for the wife to have wisdom toward her husband. Suppose a sister intends to talk about a particular matter with her husband. Before she says anything, she needs to exercise understanding, consideration, and wisdom. If she speaks to him at the wrong time or if she says too much to him concerning the subject at hand, she may cause him to become angry not only with her, but also with others in the church life, even with the elders. Sometimes a husband becomes upset with the elders simply because his wife gives him information without exercising understanding, consideration, and wisdom. Even in passing on information to her husband, a

sister needs a great deal of forbearance. For this, she needs a proper understanding of her husband and of his situation. If she realizes that her husband is a quick person, one who reacts hastily to things and who is easily angered or upset, she needs to consider how to help him to be patient and slow down. In particular, she needs to consider how much she should speak to him. Perhaps at first she should share only part of the information. Before saying more, she should consider the atmosphere and discern whether it is the proper time for her husband to hear more. She may share something at one time, something further at another time, and the remainder at still another time. If the sister is forbearing, exercising understanding, consideration, and wisdom, the result of her speaking with her husband will be very profitable both for their married life and for the church life.

PRAYER AND FORBEARANCE

Just as verse 5 is the continuation of verse 4, so verse 6 is the continuation of verse 5. If we see the continuation here, we shall realize that forbearance requires prayer. In verse 6 Paul says, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." There does not seem to be a relation between the words "Let your forbearance be known" and "Let your requests be made known." Actually, they are closely related. When we exercise forbearance, we shall realize how much we need to pray. We may be anxious and fearful about many things concerning our family or concerning the church. Furthermore, we may realize that if we talk about our concerns, we may cause problems. What then should we do? After charging us not to be anxious, Paul urges us to pray. If we pray, the Lord will give us the understanding, consideration, and wisdom we need. If a sister prays before sharing a particular matter with her husband, she will know what to say to him and when is the proper time to speak. Furthermore, if she is faithful to pray, she will also

have a rich supply to minister to her husband. Then her forbearance with its rich supply will accomplish God's purpose in that situation.

If all the saints in the Lord's recovery exercise forbearance in their married life and also in training their children, we shall have the best family life. Then we shall be able to sing about the wonderful, glorious church life. We shall be able to testify not only of a wonderful church life, but also of a wonderful married life.

MARRIED LIFE, FAMILY LIFE, AND THE CHURCH LIFE

First we need to build up the proper married life and family life, and then we shall be able to build up the church life. If a brother does not know how to build up a pleasant married life at home and an excellent family life with his children, it will be very difficult for him to share in building up the church. When he comes together with others for the church service, he may exercise politeness. However, he may not be polite to his wife or children. We may be polite to the brothers and sisters in the church, but be very impolite to our husband or wife or to our children.

Our home life is where we are exposed the most. Do not think that simply because a certain brother is nice, kind, and polite with the saints in the church he is necessarily that way at home. If you want to know him, you need to see how he lives with his wife and children. Oh, how much we need forbearance in our married life and family life that we may build up the proper church life!

The more we realize the need of forbearance, the more we shall see how difficult it is to be a proper human being. It is not easy to be a wife or husband, a parent, or a member of the church. Most Christians today know nothing of the genuine church life. At most, many gather together for a worship service for an hour on the Lord's Day. There is no practice of the church life. Furthermore, in our society married life has been severely damaged. Many even live together without being married because

they do not want to accept the limitations of marriage. This is to utterly forsake the practice of forbearance.

We need to be fully committed to our married life, family life, and the church life. The ties that bind us together are permanent. In the genuine family life and church life, no one is hired or fired. Can we hire someone to be our child, or can we fire one of our children? Of course not. Neither can members of the church be hired or fired. Likewise, if a servant of the Lord can fire one of his co-workers, then they are not truly working together in the Lord. In the Lord's work there is no such thing as hiring or firing. Therefore, in the family life, in the church life, and in working together for the Lord's interests, we need forbearance. Forbearance is necessary because we are bound together permanently.

Once again I would remind you that forbearance is an all-inclusive virtue. This virtue includes understanding, wisdom, patience, consideration, and the ability to help and render the adequate supply. If we all exercise forbearance, we shall have a pleasant married life, an excellent family life, and a wonderful church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SIXTY

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(5)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:4-7; 1:18-21; 4:10-13

We have repeatedly emphasized that the book of Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. To experience Christ we need to live Him that we may magnify Him (1:20-21). Then we need to take Him as our pattern and pursue Him as our goal. In our Christian life we should have the unique mind--the mind to pursue Christ and gain Him. After covering these aspects of the experience of Christ, Paul, somewhat to our surprise, speaks in chapter four of forbearance and anxiety. On the positive side, we need forbearance; on the negative side, we should not have any anxiety.

Why at the conclusion of such a profound book on the experience of Christ does Paul mention forbearance and anxiety? Apparently there is no connection between the matters covered in chapters one, two, and three and Paul's word about forbearance and anxiety. Years ago, I did not consider it worthwhile for Paul to speak of anxiety. According to my concept, he should have continued to speak about higher things, although I was not clear what these higher things should be.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES ASSIGNED BY GOD

In Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 Paul talks about the heavenlies. In your experience day by day are you in the heavenlies or in anxiety? More often than not, we are in anxiety, not in the heavenlies. After the fall of man, human

life became a composition of anxiety and worry. If you read Genesis 3 carefully, you will see that anxiety comes from the environment assigned to us by God. For example, we have anxiety with respect to our children. From the moment a child is born, his parents worry about him. Those who do not have children may dream of having a child one day. But they do not realize the worry and anxiety associated with giving birth to a child and raising him. Everything that affects the living of our children gives rise to anxiety. We may worry about their breathing, their diet, and their clothing. Most parents can testify that as far as their children are concerned, their days are filled more with anxiety than with happiness.

Genesis 3 indicates that fallen man is also anxious about making a living. In Genesis 3:17 the Lord said to the man, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." In verse 19 the Lord says, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Because man must labor to maintain his existence, he is full of anxiety. Every farmer is anxious about his crops. He worries about the weather and also about damage caused by disease and insects. Actually there is not one kind of work which leaves us free from anxiety. Even those who are successful in their profession are anxious about their work. Anxiety is unavoidable.

There is also a good deal of anxiety related to married life. Young people desire to be married. Married life is good, but it involves more worry and anxiety than happiness. I encourage all the young people to get married at the proper time, but they should not expect a married life free from anxiety.

Human life is full of anxiety. Angels, however, are not subject to anxiety because they do not have any circumstances to worry about. They do not marry, and they do not need to be concerned about earning a living or taking care of a family. It is not even necessary for angels to sleep. Some people make the mistake of trying to live as if they were angels. But God has ordained all the

circumstances of human life, even though these circumstances give rise more to anxiety than to happiness. It seems that sorrow always lasts longer than happiness. There may be a short period of happiness and then a much longer time of sorrow, worry, or anxiety.

What is God's purpose in assigning circumstances to us which cause anxiety? According to Romans 8, in addition to redemption and the indwelling Spirit, we need "all things." Verse 28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to the purpose." To be sure, included in "all things" are sufferings, anxieties, and worries. In order for God to perfect us, sufferings are necessary. From our experience we know that virtually every matter included in "all things" involves anxiety.

THE TOTALITY OF HUMAN LIFE AND OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

As an elderly person, I have passed through a great many experiences in human life. Under the sovereign hand of the Lord, I have been in a great many different circumstances. I have known poverty, and I have known what it is to have my needs supplied. I can testify that in all the circumstances of human life anxiety is present. Anxiety is a word that can sum up human life. The totality of human life is anxiety. If you ask an older person about anxiety, he will tell you that he has known anxiety almost every day of his life.

Paul speaks of anxiety in 4:6 because he realizes that it is the totality of man's life. Paul also realized that forbearance is the totality of a proper Christian life. Paul knew that human life is constituted of anxiety and that the Christian life is constituted of forbearance. Thus, to live Christ is to have forbearance without anxiety.

It is not possible to understand Philippians 4 adequately simply by studying this chapter in letters. We need experience with the Lord in order to understand Paul's meaning. Fifty years ago I did not have a proper

understanding of this chapter. But through many years of study and experience, both in human life and in the Christian life, the Lord has opened my eyes to see that the genuine Christian life is a life of forbearance. I have come to realize that just as anxiety is the totality of human life, so forbearance is the totality of the Christian life. This is the reason Paul uses the words forbearance and anxiety together in charging the saints. Positively, we should make known our forbearance. All those who come in contact with us should know our forbearance. Negatively, we need to have a life without anxiety.

To be a proper human being we need to be Christians, and to be normal Christians we need to have the church life. However, if we are to have the proper and genuine church life, we need a life full of forbearance but without anxiety. To have such a life is to live Christ.

LIVING CHRIST

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Years ago, I began to read books on this verse. However, I could not understand what it meant for Christ to live in me. The explanation of Galatians 2:20 is found not in Galatians, but in Philippians. In Philippians Paul says not only that Christ lives in us; he goes on to reveal that to live is Christ. To live Christ surpasses simply having Christ live in us. Living Christ means that we have a life full of forbearance but without anxiety.

Any amount of anxiety decreases the measure of Christ in our experience. Even a little anxiety causes the measure of Christ to diminish. The extent to which Christ is present in our daily life is determined by the amount of forbearance and anxiety. If we have forbearance, we have Christ. But if we have anxiety, we are short of Christ. In your living day by day, how much forbearance do you have and how much anxiety? Which is greater--the degree of forbearance or of anxiety? Probably most of us would have to admit that in

our daily life we have more anxiety than forbearance.

I wish to emphasize the fact that to live Christ is to have forbearance but no anxiety. If we have forbearance we shall not have anxiety. But if we have anxiety, we shall not have forbearance. Forbearance and anxiety cannot co-exist.

MAGNIFYING CHRIST

Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Paul opens 4:10 with the words, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly." Furthermore, in 1:18 Paul, speaking of his affliction, says, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice." Paul's word about rejoicing is especially significant when we consider his circumstances. He was a prisoner in Rome, and certain of his opposers were doing everything possible to damage his ministry. Nevertheless, Paul declares, "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (v. 19). As we have pointed out previously, salvation here means to magnify Christ by living Him. Thus, Paul says, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (v. 20). Paul did not expect to be put to shame in anything.

Suppose one of Paul's co-workers visited him in prison and found him anxious, sorrowful, and full of worry. No doubt the one visiting him would have said, "What a shame to see the very apostle who ministered Christ to us so sorrowful and anxious!" If this had been Paul's situation, he would have been put to shame. But Paul magnified Christ. No matter how difficult his circumstances were, he did not have any anxiety. Because Paul was not anxious in anything, he was not put to shame in anything. Instead, Christ was magnified in him.

Paul could magnify Christ because he had forbearance. Even during his imprisonment, Paul had a great deal of forbearance. He considered the churches, he had a proper understanding of the saints, and he had the ability to supply the saints and those around him with love, mercy, kindness, and sympathy. Because he exercised his forbearance in full, there was not a trace of anxiety. Paul could even say that he expected Christ to be magnified in him whether through life or through death. This indicates that Paul was not worried about death. The thought of death did not make him anxious.

CONTENTMENT AND FORBEARANCE

We have seen that anxiety is opposed to forbearance. Anxiety is like a worm which devours our ability to forbear. If we have no forbearance, it will be easy for us to be upset or to lose our temper. Anger often comes out of anxiety. If I am worried about my future, my circumstances, or my family, I will not be happy with others. This worry will cause me to be upset with everyone. Only when we are happy and contented do we have forbearance.

In a previous message we pointed out that happiness and contentment are two elements which produce forbearance. Only a happy, satisfied person can forbear. One who is sorrowful and discontented, on the contrary, is easily irritated or offended. Because Paul was full of happiness and contentment, with him there was no anxiety, but an abundance of forbearance.

We know from Paul's word in 4:10-12 that, at least for a period of time, he was short of supply. But he could testify, "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content." He could say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want." Because Paul had learned the secret, he could be content and, as a result, have an abundance of forbearance.

Many have pointed out that Philippians is a book of joy.

Again and again Paul exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord. Paul's environment would have made it difficult for anyone to be joyful. We do not usually think of a prison as a place for rejoicing. But because Paul had no anxiety, no worry about his circumstances or future, he could rejoice in the Lord and be forbearing.

GOD'S ASSIGNMENT

If we would have a life free of anxiety, we need to realize that all our circumstances, good or bad, have been assigned to us by God. We need to have this realization with a full assurance. Suppose a brother is in business as a merchant. His business may prosper, and he may earn a good deal of money. Later his business may fail and he may lose much more than he earned. Both earning money and losing it are God's assignment to him. If this brother has the full assurance that his circumstances come from God's assignment, he will be able to worship the Lord for His arrangement. Perhaps losing money will benefit him more than earning money, for through such a loss he may be perfected and built up.

Likewise, both illness and good health come from God as His assignment. We should all aspire to be healthy. But sometimes good health does not perfect us as much as a period of illness. Furthermore, when our health fails, we may be more inclined to pray than when we are in good health.

The first prerequisite to having no anxiety is to have the full assurance that all the sufferings we experience are God's assignment. What need is there to worry about things? God has assigned them to us. He knows what we need.

When I was very young, I read a story about a conversation between two sparrows who were talking about the sorrows and the worries common among human beings. One sparrow asked the other why people worry so much. The other sparrow answered, "I don't think they have a Father who cares for them like we do. We don't need

to worry about anything because our Father takes care of us." Yes, our Father does care for us. But sometimes He sends us hardships and sufferings to serve in fulfilling our destiny to magnify Christ. We can be freed from worry not because God has promised us a life without suffering, but because we know that all our circumstances come to us as God's assignment. Paul did not care about life or death. He cared only that Christ would be magnified in him. He realized that every circumstance was for his good. This is the way to have no anxiety.

Why do certain saints worry about losing money? Simply because their desire is to have more money. Why are others anxious about their health? They are anxious because they are afraid to die. If we are ill, we need to declare, "Satan, what can you do to me? I am not worried about death. Death does not make me anxious. Rather, the possibility of dying gives me another opportunity to magnify Christ." Instead of fearing poverty, illness, or death, we should welcome them if God sends them to us. Then we shall have no anxiety, for we shall know that every circumstance is an assignment from our Father. This does not mean, however, that we should seek suffering for its own sake. We should not do things that will cause us to suffer. Those who are in business should seek to make money, and those who are employees should try to get a promotion. But if we lose money or even lose our job, we need not be anxious. Such a loss comes from God's assignment, and we need not be anxious about it.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-ONE

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(6)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:4-7; 1 Thes. 5:16-18; Job 1:20-22; 2 Cor. 4:16-17; 12:7-9

In this message and in the message following we shall consider many of the details and fine points regarding a life full of forbearance but without anxiety. In particular we shall consider the way to fulfill Paul's word in 4:6, "In nothing be anxious."

We have pointed out repeatedly that the subject of the book of Philippians is the experience of Christ. In the first three chapters of this Epistle, the standard of Paul's writing is very high. However, in chapter four, the concluding portion of this book, Paul seems to descend to a lower level in emphasizing forbearance and anxiety.

More than fifty years ago, I was troubled by Philippians 4. I appreciated Paul's words in the first three chapters. In chapter one we see that we should magnify Christ by living Him; in chapter two, that we should take Christ as the pattern of the Christian life; and in chapter three, that Christ is far superior to all things of religion and culture and that we must count all things loss in order to pursue Him and gain Him. Then in chapter four Paul suddenly talks about forbearance and anxiety. I realized that forbearance was a virtue, but in my opinion Paul's word about forbearance could not compare with what he had written in the three previous chapters. Furthermore, I was troubled by the fact that Paul emphasized anxiety. But in recent years the light on the issue of forbearance versus

anxiety has gradually become brighter and brighter. Now I have a deep appreciation for Paul's words, "Let your forbearance be known to all men" (v. 5) and, "In nothing be anxious" (v. 6).

TWO LIVES

Anxiety is the totality of the natural human life. Day by day and even hour by hour, the common human life is filled with anxiety. Every normal human being is anxious. The more sober you are in mind, the more anxious you will be. If you are a person who is thoughtful and careful, you will have a great deal of anxiety. Sensitive people are especially bothered by anxiety. Those who are unusually dull or insensitive may not have much anxiety, but those who are sensitive usually have many anxieties.

Just as anxiety is the totality of common human life, so forbearance is the totality of the proper Christian life. Hence, the words anxiety and forbearance represent two kinds of lives. Among human beings there are only two kinds of lives: the human life and the Christian life. Human life is a life of anxiety, whereas the Christian life is a life of forbearance. If we see this contrast, we shall realize that it is a matter of great importance for Paul to emphasize forbearance and anxiety in chapter four of Philippians. He emphasizes forbearance and anxiety because they represent two different kinds of lives. Every human being is subject to anxiety. But if we are a Christian according to the divine standard, we shall have a life full of forbearance and without anxiety. The first point I would emphasize in this message is that forbearance and anxiety represent two kinds of lives.

TWO SOURCES

Second, forbearance comes from God, and anxiety comes from Satan. This means that forbearance and anxiety represent two different sources--God and Satan.

God, the Source of Forbearance

The source of forbearance is God. God gives us forbearance so that we may accomplish His purpose. God has a purpose with us individually, with our families, and with us in the church. In order to carry out God's purpose related to us, to our families, and to the church, we need forbearance. If we lack the all-inclusive virtue of forbearance, it will be impossible for us to fulfill God's purpose. This means it will not be possible for us to allow God to fulfill His purpose with us, with our family, and with the church.

God has a threefold purpose with every one of us. He has a purpose for us individually, a purpose for us in relation to our family, and a purpose for us in the church life. It is crucial for us to realize that God has such a threefold purpose concerning us. For the fulfillment of such a divine purpose, we need forbearance. Without forbearance we shall not allow God to fulfill His purpose with us, with our family, or with the church.

We have seen that forbearance means to be utterly reasonable, considerate, and understanding in dealing with others. If we are forbearing, we shall have the wisdom and the ability to supply others with what they need. We shall also have the full knowledge of what to say to them and when to say it. For example, a parent who is forbearing will know how and when to speak to his children. If we do not exercise forbearance in our family life, we shall not be able to build up our family for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Not only is forbearance the totality of the proper Christian life; it is also the means given by God for the fulfillment of His threefold purpose with each of us. How precious that the source of forbearance is God! The forbearance we exercise and make known to others comes from God.

Satan, the Source of Anxiety

The source of anxiety is Satan. Anxiety comes from Satan to frustrate the fulfillment of God's purpose. Do not

think that God assigns anxiety to us. In the foregoing message I said that anxiety comes from the circumstances assigned by God. To say that anxiety comes from God's assignment is quite different from saying that anxiety is God's assignment. Because of the fall, God has assigned sufferings to us. For example, God has ordained that women experience suffering in childbearing. He also ordained that men cope with thorns and thistles. Genesis 3:17-19, say, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee...in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Although God has assigned such sufferings, He has not assigned anxiety. After God made His assignment, Satan came in to cause anxiety through the sufferings assigned by God. Anxiety does not come from God. It comes from God's adversary, Satan, who uses the sufferings ordained by God to cause anxiety in human life. Therefore, anxiety comes from Satan and represents Satan, whereas forbearance comes from God and represents God.

How God Uses Satan

The Bible reveals that God uses Satan. We see this especially in the book of Job. When I first read this book, I was troubled by the fact that Satan had access to God's presence in the heavens. Job 1:6 says, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." The next verses record a conversation between God and Satan. I wondered how this conversation could take place. Why would God allow such an evil one to talk with Him? Why did He not destroy Satan, or at least drive him away? God used Satan to deal with Job. Job was righteous and perfect in himself; however, he did not truly know God. Thus, Job needed to be broken, to be dealt with thoroughly by God. God used Satan to accomplish this work, allowing Satan, within certain prescribed limits, to do certain things to Job.

From 2 Corinthians 12 we see that God also permitted a messenger from Satan to afflict Paul. Paul realized that his thorn in the flesh came from Satan. He says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (v. 7). The principle is the same both in the case of Paul and of Job. Just as Satan was permitted by God to afflict Paul, he was allowed to afflict Job.

According to the first chapter of the book of Job, soon after Satan received permission to afflict Job, he sent calamities. First, a report came that the Sabeans had stolen the oxen and the asses and slain the servants (Job 1:14-15). Immediately the report came of another calamity: fire had fallen from heaven and had consumed Job's sheep and other of his servants. Then the report came about the Chaldeans who stole the camels and slew still other servants. Then the news came of the fourth calamity: a "great wind from the wilderness" destroyed the house where Job's sons and daughters were feasting, and they all were killed. Here we see that Satan is able to use people, fire, and wind to bring in great destruction. When I first read Job 1, I did not understand why God allowed Satan to do such things. First Satan sends the calamities. Then he comes to cause anxiety.

God had a purpose in permitting Satan to afflict Job. God's purpose was to break Job, who was a perfect and self-righteous person. God used Satan to do what no human being was able to do. Since Job's friends could not deal with him, God used Satan for this task. Often the Devil accomplishes certain difficult assignments for God. Sometimes if God cannot get through by using other people, He will permit Satan to deal with you. Concerning Job, God's purpose was to break him. Concerning Paul, God's purpose in allowing Satan to send a messenger to afflict his body was to keep him from being proud because of the visions and revelations he received. No doubt,

Satan's purpose is always to attack God's people. This purpose is negative. But in permitting a satanic attack to take place, God has another purpose, a very positive one. All the sufferings we undergo are assigned to us by God for a positive purpose.

Paul speaks of this purpose in 2 Corinthians 4:16 and 17: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man is being consumed, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of the affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (lit.). Although the afflictions are assigned by God, they do not come from Him directly. Rather, every affliction, disaster, calamity, or catastrophe comes from Satan. But they come with God's permission and for His purpose to perfect us. This was the reason Paul could declare that the present lightness of affliction works for us an exceeding weight of glory. God has a purpose to fulfill concerning us, and this purpose sometimes requires Satan's help.

A few months ago I had a problem with my health. I knew this problem was caused by the Devil, Satan. But I also realized that it was permitted by God for a purpose. The Lord wanted to touch something in me, and He used this means to do it.

If we look at the cases of Job and Paul, we shall see that God permits Satan to cause affliction. As soon as the affliction comes, Satan comes to cause anxiety. The anxiety caused by Satan is for the frustration of God's purpose. To repeat, forbearance comes from God for the fulfillment of His purpose, but anxiety comes from Satan for the frustration of God's purpose. If we see this, we shall realize that it is not an insignificant matter for Paul to speak of forbearance and anxiety together in Philippians 4:5 and 6.

NO COEXISTENCE OF FORBEARANCE AND ANXIETY

If we have forbearance, we shall not have anxiety. But if we have anxiety, we shall not have forbearance. Just as

God and Satan cannot stand together, so forbearance and anxiety cannot coexist. Whenever forbearance comes, anxiety must go. But if anxiety is with us, we shall be utterly lacking in forbearance. No one who exercises forbearance can be anxious. But if you are not a forbearing person, you will be anxious and filled with worry.

From experience, not from doctrine, we have come to understand that when we exercise forbearance in full, all anxiety disappears. If by God's mercy and grace we forbear with everyone, everything, and every matter, we shall not be anxious in anything. By God's mercy and grace we need to forbear with persons, things, and matters. If we are forbearing in this way, we shall not be subject to anxiety.

LIVING CHRIST AS OUR FORBEARANCE

We have seen that forbearance is actually Christ Himself lived out of us. The Christ in Philippians 1, 2, and 3 is the very forbearance Paul speaks of in 4:5. Thus, to make our forbearance known is to make our Christ known. Forbearance is actually the magnification of Christ. In 1:20 Paul says that Christ will be magnified in him, but in 4:5 he tells us to let our forbearance be known. When we put these verses together, we see that to let our Christ be magnified is to let our forbearance be known. Therefore, in our experience forbearance is Christ Himself.

If we live Christ as our forbearance, it will not be possible for us to be anxious. Anxiety is an impossibility for those who have Christ as their forbearance. Do you know why we are anxious and why we worry? We are anxious and worried because we do not live Christ. The words "live Christ" may merely be a doctrinal term, a way of speaking, not our actual living in a practical way. But when we live Christ day by day, anxiety has no ground within us.

I repeat, to forbear is to live Christ. In such a life, a life of forbearing everything by the grace of God, there is no room for anxiety. When we magnify Christ by living Him, anxiety has no way to touch us. Then because we live Christ as our forbearance, we shall be anxious for nothing.

LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-TWO

A LIFE FULL OF FORBEARANCE BUT WITHOUT ANXIETY

(7)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 4:4-7; 1 Thes. 5:16-18; 2 Cor. 12:7-9

In the foregoing message we pointed out that forbearance and anxiety represent two kinds of life, that forbearance comes from God and anxiety comes from Satan, and that forbearance and anxiety cannot coexist. Furthermore, we saw that to live Christ as our forbearance is to have a life free from anxiety. Now in this message we shall consider some further matters related to a life full of forbearance but without anxiety.

ONE WITH THE LORD

If we live Christ, we are truly one with the Lord. In 4:4 Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." To rejoice in the Lord is to be one with Him. When we are one with the Lord, we are not anxious about anything, for we are not only under the Lord's sovereign hand, but we are in the Lord Himself. If we live this kind of life, how could we be anxious? The more we practice being one with the Lord, the more we shall realize that His destiny is our destiny. If He wants us to stay on earth for a longer period of time, He will keep us alive. But if it is His desire that we go to Him, He will take us to Himself. Since everything depends on His will and since we are one with Him in a practical way, there is no reason for us to be anxious.

When we are separated from the Lord, we are anxious about everything. Everything in human life gives rise to

anxiety. But when we are one with the Lord, we are separated from the natural human life and its anxiety. If we would make our forbearance known to all men and not be anxious in anything, we need to practice being one with the Lord. This is the reason Paul charges us to rejoice in the Lord before he exhorts us to make known our forbearance.

When I had a problem with my health a few months ago, I was bothered. One day the Lord checked with me and asked me if I was one with Him. When I said that I was one with Him, it was as if He said, "Since you are one with Me, you should not be anxious about your health."

We become anxious whenever we are not one with the Lord in a practical way. Doctrinally speaking, we are always one with Him. However, quite often we are not one with Him in practice. We may give messages to the saints, telling them that we are one spirit with the Lord. But in our daily living we need to be tested to see if we have the actual experience. If we are one with the Lord actually and practically, we shall not be anxious.

Even though Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he was not anxious about anything, because he was one with the Lord actually, practically, and thoroughly. He could even say that to die was better than to live. Paul was so one with the Lord that he knew that the Lord was his destiny. Not only was Paul's destiny in the hand of the Lord--his destiny was the Lord Himself. Because Paul was one with the Lord, he knew that Satan could not do anything to him, even though he might send a messenger, a thorn in the flesh, to buffet him. Paul was not worried about what Satan might do, for the Lord was his destiny.

THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION

If we are truly one with the Lord in our experience and something negative happens to us, we need not be anxious or troubled. If we are not one with the Lord in a practical way, virtually every person, every matter, and every thing will bother us. We may be disturbed by our husband or wife

or by our children. When we are not one with the Lord, nothing will be satisfactory to us. For example, apart from the Lord, no job is satisfying. The secret of satisfaction is to be one with Christ. When we are one with the Lord, we can be satisfied with our circumstances, and we can be forbearing with everyone, every thing, and every matter. Only when we are one with Christ can we be forbearing to the uttermost and be satisfied in all situations.

If we would not have any anxiety, we must recognize that all afflictions, sufferings, calamities, disasters, and catastrophies are assigned by God. We also must be one with the Lord in our experience. Yes, we may realize the necessity of passing through suffering and affliction. But if we would be free from anxiety, we need something more than this realization. We must also be one with the Lord. Otherwise, eventually our circumstances or the things which happen to us will cause anxiety, and we shall not be satisfied with anything or anyone.

The older a person becomes, the more difficult it is for him to be satisfied. Throughout the years I have observed a good number of elderly persons who did not have Christ. The older they were, the more dissatisfied they became. Some were disgusted with almost everything and everyone. If we do not practice being one with the Lord, our situation will also become worse as we grow older. Out of a feeling of dissatisfaction, we may blame our circumstances or the members of our family. It is easy to satisfy a child or a young person, but difficult to satisfy someone who is older. This fact should motivate us to be one with the Lord in a practical way that we may be free from anxiety and have a life of forbearance.

PRAYER AND PETITION WITH THANKSGIVING

In 4:6 and 7 Paul says, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God,

which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." Paul certainly composed these verses in a very thoughtful way. In verse 6 he speaks of prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. Prayer is general and includes the essence of worship and fellowship; petition is special and is related to particular needs. According to Christian experience, to pray is to have fellowship, communion, with the Lord and to worship Him. Daily we need to have a time to contact the Lord, to have fellowship with Him, and to worship Him. During the course of our fellowship, we may have particular requests. Thus, we not only pray in a general way, but make petitions to the Lord in a particular way. We offer our petitions to the One with whom we are having fellowship. Petition, therefore, is a special request made during the course of our prayer.

It is significant that in 4:6 Paul does not speak of prayer, petition, *and* thanksgiving, but of prayer and petition *with* thanksgiving. Both our prayer and petition should be accompanied by thanksgiving to the Lord. Recently I once again learned the lesson of being thankful to the Lord. When I asked the Lord to restore my health, I was rebuked by Him for not thanking Him for the measure of health I still had. Whenever we are ill, we need to say, "Lord, I thank You that I am still healthy to a certain degree. Lord, I am ill, but I am not so ill that I cannot minister Christ to the saints. But, Lord, You know that I am not altogether healthy. Therefore, I ask You to improve my health and make me fully healthy again." We all need to learn to petition the Lord in this way.

Suppose a brother prays that the Lord will change his wife. If he prays in this way, the Lord may ask him why he does not offer thanks for his wife. Then the brother should pray, "Lord, I thank You for giving me a good wife." After offering thanks to the Lord, he then may proceed to ask Him to transform his wife.

Another brother may lose his job and pray to the Lord concerning employment. Instead of saying, "Lord, I have lost my job and I need You to have mercy on me," he should

first thank the Lord. Perhaps he should say, "Lord, I thank You that I did not lose this job before now. Lord, I also thank You for the means I still have to support my family. O Lord, I have many things for which to thank You." Then along with his thanksgiving, he may ask the Lord to give him another job. But even as he prays concerning a new job, he should still be thankful and say, "Lord, I believe that You will give me a new job. Lord, You know what I need. I even thank You ahead of time for the job You will give me."

Let us all learn to pray and petition with thanksgiving. If we are thankful to the Lord, this will keep us from anxiety. But if we pray to the Lord out of worry, our anxiety will increase. Praying about our situation may actually cause our anxiety to grow. But if we pray and petition with thanksgiving, our anxiety will be driven away.

I must testify that I have learned to pray and petition with thanksgiving not from doctrine, but from my experience with the Lord. When I was ill recently, the Lord did rebuke me for not thanking Him. He reminded me that I am still healthy enough to function by releasing the Word. He rebuked me for allowing a little illness to disturb me and for complaining about my situation instead of exercising forbearance. By rebuking me for not thanking Him sufficiently, the Lord helped me to be satisfied in Him and not to be anxious. I thank the Lord for this training, which has come through a time of illness and through the Lord's rebuke.

ACCEPTING THE LORD'S WILL

Experiencing His Sufficient Grace

We have seen that to overcome anxiety we need to pray and have fellowship with the Lord and worship Him. Then with thanksgiving we need to make our petitions known. When we do this, we may think that the Lord will always answer us and give us what we ask. However, sometimes the Lord will say no. Consider Paul's experience of the thorn in the flesh. In 2 Corinthians 12:8 he says, "For this

thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." However, the Lord denied Paul's request, and said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9). Therefore, Paul could declare, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The crucial point here is that Paul accepted the will of God. He realized that God's will was to leave the thorn with him so that he could experience His sufficient grace. Because Paul accepted the Lord's will, he did not have any anxiety.

Yes, we need to pray and petition the Lord with thanksgiving. But when the Lord does not grant our petition, our anxiety may increase instead of decrease. At such a time, we realize that the Lord will not change our situation. Instead, He allows the "thorn" to remain. He knows that we need the thorn. He also needs it that He may reveal His sufficient grace and in addition train us to trust in Him. If we do not accept the Lord's will but insist on making petitions according to our own will, we shall not be able to escape anxiety.

Suppose you pray to the Lord when you are suffering from a certain illness. The Lord may answer your prayer and heal you. He does this especially on behalf of those who are rather young in their experience of Him. At a later time, however, you may again become sick and ask the Lord to heal you. Instead of healing you suddenly, He may heal you gradually, or He may not heal you at all. Eventually, it may become clear to you that the Lord intends for the illness to remain. If you accept His will in the matter, you will be at peace. You will not have any anxiety.

When Brother Nee was a young man, he suffered from heart disease. Often when he ministered the Word he was in such pain that he had to lean on a stand for support. Although he contracted this disease before he was thirty years of age, he lived with that illness for nearly forty years. Although he knew that he could die from that disease at any time, he accepted the Lord's will and was

not anxious. He realized that his illness was a thorn given him for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Trusting the Lord

Accepting the Lord's will in particular matters not only enables us to experience His sufficient grace; it also teaches us to have a life of trusting the Lord. If the thorn had been taken away from Paul, Paul probably would not have trusted in the Lord as much as he did with the thorn. Simply because the thorn was allowed to remain, day by day Paul had to live a life of trusting in the Lord.

We all prefer that hardships and sufferings be taken away from us. But sometimes the Lord will say, "No, I cannot answer your request. It is better for this thing to remain so that you may learn to trust Me and not be anxious." If we accept the Lord's will and trust Him, we shall not be anxious. However, if we do not accept His will or if we do not live by trusting in Him, we shall be anxious.

According to my natural life, I am the kind of person who likes everything to be perfect. If I become ill in some way, my desire is to be healed thoroughly. Even if there is something wrong with an article of clothing, I want it fixed and made perfect. I want everything under my management to be right in every way. But I cannot control whether or not sickness comes to me. The Lord may assign illness to me, realizing that I need it so that I may learn to trust Him and not worry. For this I need to say, "Lord, I thank You that this sickness is a help to me. I also thank You, Lord, that even this fulfills Your purpose." The more we thank the Lord in this way, the more we shall have forbearance in place of anxiety.

A PROPER REALIZATION

Whether or not we can exercise forbearance in difficult situations depends on the kind of realization and practice we have. If we realize that a particular situation is of the Lord, that it is needed to perfect us, and then thank Him for it, we shall not be anxious or threatened. We shall be able to say, "Lord, I thank You for this. I am not threatened by this thing, because I know that I am one

with You and that everything which comes to me is Your assignment. Lord, I also know that You allow this thing to remain that it may help You to fulfill Your purpose and to perfect me." If we realize that everything is the Lord's assignment and if we accept His will and thank Him for it, we shall be able to say with Paul, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man is consumed, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of the affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:16-17, lit.). Then we shall not have any anxiety.

Christians often say that the way to be freed from anxiety is simply to believe in the Lord. According to this understanding, the fact that a person is anxious means that he does not believe in the Lord. However, in 4:6 Paul does not say that it is by believing that we do not have anxiety in anything. In this context he does not say a word about believing.

SIX POINTS TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE

If we would be free from anxiety, we need to understand and practice the six points we have covered in the foregoing message and in this message. First, we need to realize that just as anxiety is the totality of human life, so forbearance is the totality of the Christian life. Second, we need to see that the source of forbearance is God and that the source of anxiety is Satan.

The third matter is to realize that forbearance and anxiety cannot exist together. The reason for this is that forbearance is actually a person, Christ Himself. Only when Christ is lived out of us do we have forbearance. This is indicated by the fact that in Philippians 1, 2, and 3 Paul speaks of Christ again and again. He emphasizes magnifying Christ, taking Christ as our pattern, and pursuing Christ as our goal. But in Philippians 4 he uses the term forbearance and charges us to make our forbearance known to all men. Actually, this forbearance is the very Christ revealed in the foregoing chapters. Therefore, to let our forbearance be known is to live Christ.

We have seen that God may assign certain sufferings to us. But although the sufferings are God's assignment, they do not come from God, but from Satan. The experiences of both Job and Paul illustrate this. The calamities assigned to us by God actually come to us from Satan. Satan is the messenger who brings these things to us. God assigned a certain thorn to Paul, and He permitted Satan to bring the thorn to him. Immediately after sending us a certain difficulty or affliction, Satan comes to cause anxiety. This anxiety is not assigned by God and it does not come from Him. On the contrary, it is always caused by Satan to frustrate God's purpose. If we have a full realization of this, we shall see the need for Christ as our forbearance. If we have this forbearance, we shall not have anxiety. But if we have anxiety, we shall not have forbearance.

The fourth matter we need to understand and exercise is that to have a life full of forbearance but without anxiety, we need to be one with the Lord in a practical way. To be one with the Lord experientially is to be in Him.

Fifth, we need to pray. This means we need to have a time of fellowship with the Lord and to worship Him. Prayer does not mean merely to ask the Lord for things. Prayer involves conversing with the Lord, communicating with Him in fellowship, and worshipping Him. As we spend time with the Lord in this way, we should make known our petitions with thanksgiving.

Sixth, after praying, having fellowship with the Lord, worshipping Him, and making our petitions known to Him, we shall know what the will of the Lord is. For example, if we are ill, we shall know whether the Lord intends to heal us or allow the sickness to remain. Once we know God's will, we should accept it, experience His sufficient grace, trust in Him, and thank Him. Then we shall have a life full of forbearance but without anxiety.