LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE ONE

A FOREWORD

How we thank the Lord that He has afforded us this training, a training that will cover the normal Christian life with the proper church life. We will pay our full attention to this matter of life--the Christian life and the church life. This means that our purpose is not to have a training in doctrines, although we still need to know the basic truths and the principles from the divine Word. The entire training will be devoted to the book of Romans. We need to study the Recovery Version of Romans thoroughly. This message serves as a foreword to the book of Romans.

I. THE POSITION OF ROMANS IN THE BIBLE

Firstly, we need to know the position of the book of Romans in the Bible. In order to know this, we need to consider the Bible as a whole.

1. The Bible--a Romance of a Universal Couple

The Bible is a romance. Have you ever heard this before? It may sound secular and unreligious. However, if you have entered into the deep thought of the Bible, you will realize that the Bible is a romance, in the most pure and the most holy sense, of a universal couple.

A. God in Christ as the Bridegroom

The male of this couple is God Himself. Although He is a divine Person, He desires to be the male of this

universal couple. This very God, after a long process, has resulted in Christ as the Bridegroom.

B. God's Redeemed People as the Bride

The female of this couple is a corporate human being, God's redeemed people, including all the saints of the Old Testament and the New Testament. After a long process this corporate person results in the New Jerusalem as the Bride.

C. This Romance in the Old Testament

This holy romance is repeatedly revealed throughout the Old Testament.

a. The Story of a Marriage

Immediately after the record of God's creation, we find the story of a marriage (Gen. 2:21-25). In this marriage Adam is the type of Christ as the husband, and Eve is the type of the church as the wife. In Ephesians 5 we see the couple typified by Adam and Eve--Christ and the church. The type of Adam and Eve reveals that the persons of this universal couple must be of the same source. God created one person, Adam, and out from this person a wife came. Eve was not created separately by God; she came out of Adam. Eve was made out of a rib, a piece of bone, that came from Adam, indicating that both Adam and Eve proceeded out of the same source. In this universal couple the wife must come out of the husband. Likewise, the church must come out of Christ. The two persons of this couple must be of the same source. They also must be of one nature. Furthermore they must share one common life. Adam's nature and life were also Eve's. Eve had the same nature and life as Adam. The two persons of this couple were of one source, of one nature, and had the same one life. Without doubt, they also had one living. They lived together. Eve lived by Adam and with Adam, and Adam lived by Eve and with Eve.

This couple is the secret of the universe. The secret of the whole universe is that God and His chosen ones are to be one couple. Hallelujah! We, God's chosen ones, and God are of one source, of one nature, and have one life. Now we also need to have one living. We are not living by ourselves or for ourselves; we are living with God and for God, and God is living with us and for us. Hallelujah!

b. God as the Husband and His People as the Wife

Several times in the Old Testament God referred to Himself as the Husband and to His people as His wife (Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 2:2; 3:1, 14; 31:32; Eze. 16:8; 23:5; Hosea 2:7, 19). God was desirous of being a husband and of having His people as His wife. Many times the prophets spoke of God as the Husband and of His people as His wife. Humanly speaking, we always think of God in a religious way as the Almighty, feeling compelled to worship Him. But do you married brothers expect this from your wives? Suppose your wife thought of you as a big body, as a giant, approaching you adoringly, bowing herself, and kneeling down to worship you. What would you say? You would say, "Silly wife, I don't need such a worshipper. I need a dear wife to embrace me and kiss me. If you will simply give me a little kiss, I will soar in the air." Our God certainly is the Almighty God, and, as His creatures, we must worship Him. Many verses speak about worshipping God in this way. However, have you never read in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea that God desires to be a husband? In ancient times God's people built the temple and established a system of worship complete with priesthood and sacrifices. One day God intervened and spoke through Isaiah saying, "I am tired of this. I am weary with your sacrifices. I want you to love Me. I am your Husband, and you must be My wife. I want to have a marriage life. I am lonely. I need you. I need you, My chosen people, to be My wife."

c. The Full Romance in Song of Songs

Among the 39 books in the Old Testament, there is one book called the Song of Songs. Song of Songs is more than

a romance; it is a fantastic romance. Have you ever read a romance like the Song of Songs? As far as I am concerned, the Song of Songs is the finest romance. It speaks of two people who fall in love. Although I do not like to use this term, "fall in love," I cannot deny the fact. In Song of Songs we find a woman falling in love with a man saying, "Oh, that he might kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. I am thirsty for this." Immediately, her beloved is at hand, and the pronoun changes from "he" to "you" (S. S. 1:2-3). "Your name is sweet, and your love is better than wine. Draw me, my beloved. Don't teach me, draw me. I don't need a pastor or a preacher. I don't need an elder or even an apostle. I need you to draw me. Draw me, we will run after you." What a romance!

In the case of Adam and Eve we saw that the couple had one source, one nature, one life, and one living. In Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea we saw that God desires to have a wife who will live together with Him. God longs to have a marriage life, to have divinity live together with humanity. But His people failed Him. In Song of Songs, however, we see the genuine marriage life. What is the secret of such a romance? The secret is that the wife must take her husband not only as her life and her living, but as her person.

As we pointed out during the informal training of 1972, the Lord used several figures of speech to characterize His seeker in Song of Songs as she passed through the various stages in the growth of life. The first figure He used was of a company of horses (S. S. 1:9). Horses are strong, energetic, full of personality, and seek a definite goal of their own. Gradually, by the working of love, this seeker was changed from a company of horses to a lily that was fragrant, beautiful, and blossoming (S. S. 2:2). The seeker became a lily without will, emotion, or person. Eventually,

she became a pillar. Although the word pillar denotes something strong, the seeker was likened to a pillar of smoke (S. S. 3:6), not a pillar of marble. She was a pillar of smoke that stood erect and steadfast in the universe; yet she was very flexible. I like to see young wives being pillars of smoke saying, "My will is in my husband's heart, my emotion is in him, and my mind is in his head. I am simply a pillar of smoke." A pillar of smoke has no person of its own; it has no mind, emotion, and will. When the husband says to such a wife, "Let us go," she will instantly obey. On the contrary, if the husband should say, "Let us stay here for eternity," there will be no problem. However, the reports that I receive about the young couples are absolutely different from this. If the brother says, "Let us go," the wife refuses. If the husband says, "Let us stay," the wife insists on going. She is still a wild horse from Egypt pulling Pharaoh's chariot. Such a sister may be seeking the Lord, but she carries Pharaoh. She needs to be unloaded. How? By losing her mind, will, and emotion and becoming a pillar of smoke.

The seeking one in Song of Songs eventually becomes a palanquin to carry her beloved (S. S. 3:9). She no longer has a person of her own; her beloved, Christ the Lord, is now the Person within her. She herself is a palanquin bearing the Person of Christ. Later, this seeker becomes a garden growing something to satisfy her beloved (S. S. 4:12-13). Finally, she becomes the city (S. S. 6:4), the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), without any person of her own, but with the strong Person of Christ within her. Praise the Lord! This is the holy romance.

D. This Romance in the New Testament

Now we need to consider this romance as it is portrayed in the New Testament.

a. Christ as the Bridegroom in the Gospels

There is no doubt that the gospels give us a full record of Christ as our Savior. However, have you noticed that

the four gospels also tell us that Christ has come as the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34; John 3:29)? He has come for His bride. When the disciples of John the Baptist saw many people forsaking John to follow the Lord Jesus, John told them not to be troubled, that Christ is the Bridegroom, and that all the increase belongs to Him (John 3:30). The Bridegroom has come for the bride. What is the bride? The bride is the increase of Christ. Each of the four gospels presents Christ as the Bridegroom coming for the bride.

b. The Husband and Wife in the Epistles

In the epistles Christ and the church are portrayed as husband and wife (Eph. 5:25-32; 2 Cor. 11:2). The epistles clearly liken Christ and the church to husband and wife. If we know what is unfolded in the epistles, we will see that Christ is revealed in them as our Husband and that the believers are revealed as His counterpart, as His wife. We must be one with Him in source, in nature, in life, and in daily living.

c. The Marriage of Christ and His People in Revelation

In the book of Revelation Christ is unveiled as having a wedding (Rev. 19:7) and the New Jerusalem is presented as His wife (Rev. 21:2, 9). In chapter 19 of Revelation we see that Christ will enjoy a wedding feast, and in chapter 21 we see that the New Jerusalem will be His wife. In Revelation 21 and 22, the last two chapters of the Bible, we see that the ultimate consummation of the whole Bible is this universal couple--the husband and the wife.

E. The Universal Couple and the Universal Man

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that this couple with the two persons are one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31). Adam and Eve were one flesh. Since they were one flesh, they were also one man. Christ and His chosen people are one, universal, corporate man with Christ, the Husband, as the

Head (Eph. 4:15) and with the church, the wife, as the Body (Eph. 1:22-23). Eventually, these two become one, all-inclusive, universal, corporate man. In Ephesians 5 the church is presented as a wife, and in Ephesians 1 the church is presented as the Body of Christ. She is Christ's wife and Christ's body. Christ is her Husband and her Head. So, Christ and the church are a universal, corporate man. This is the kernel of the divine revelation in the Word of God. The kernel is simply a couple and a man: a couple with the Triune God as the Husband and His chosen people as the wife, and a man with Christ as the Head and with His chosen people as the Body. This is the central revelation of the whole Bible. In the couple the main aspect is love, and in the man the main aspect is life. Christ and the church, as a couple, are a matter of love, and Christ and the church, as a man, are a matter of life.

2. The Old Testament as a Prediction

A. Prophecies of Christ

The Old Testament is a prediction of Christ by prophecies in plain words, types, figures, and shadows. If you read the Old Testament carefully, you will discover many kinds of clear and evident prophecies of Christ. The Old Testament tells us of whom Christ was to be born, where He was to be born, and about many of the events in His life. A great many verses are concerned with such prophecies of Christ. Besides these prophecies, there are types, figures, and shadows revealing and portraying Christ in a detailed way. So, the Old Testament is considered as a revelation of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39).

B. The Church in Types, Figures, and Shadows

The Old Testament is also a prediction of the church, not in plain words, but only in types, figures, and shadows. As far as plain words are concerned, the church was never mentioned in the Old Testament. In the Old

Testament the church was a hidden mystery (Eph. 3:3-6). Nevertheless, it was predicted by numerous types, figures, and shadows. The types and shadows of the church are mainly of two categories. The first category is composed of the wives of the men who typified Christ. Eve was a type of the church (Eph. 5:31-32). Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, was also a type of the church (Gen. 24). Ruth typified the church (Ruth 4) and so did the Shulamite in the Song of Songs (S. of S. 6:13). In the Hebrew language, Shulamite is the feminine gender of Solomon. Both Solomon and Shulamite are of one name, the one being a male Solomon and the other a female Solomon. This Shulamite was also a type of the church. The second category includes the tabernacle and the temple, both of which were types of the church. Although the church was not mentioned in the Old Testament in clear and evident words, it was nonetheless typified in a full way.

3. The New Testament, the Fulfillment of the Old Testament

What about the New Testament? The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Whatever the Old Testament predicted regarding Christ and the church has been completely fulfilled in the New Testament.

A. The Individual Christ in the Gospels

The four gospels are a living biography of a wonderful Person. The four gospels reveal a wonderful Person, the individual Christ, Who came to fulfill the Old Testament. Perhaps you have read the gospels frequently without recognizing the many aspects of Christ revealed in them. In the gospels of Matthew and John more than 60 aspects of Christ are presented. As we have pointed out on previous occasions, in chapter 1 of Matthew we see that Christ is Jesus, Jehovah the Savior, and also Emmanuel, God with us. In chapter 4 He is revealed as the great light. In the following chapters we see Him as the greater

David, the greater temple, the greater Solomon, the greater Jonah, the living Moses with the up-to-date regulations, and the living Elijah who fulfills the prophecies. If we read the book of Matthew carefully, we will find at least 30 more items concerning Christ. These items are listed in the first life study of Matthew. Christ is the real David, the real Moses, the real Solomon, and the real temple. Christ is everything. In the Gospel of John we find 20 or 30 items more. Christ is the light, the air, the water, the food, the Shepherd, the door, and the pasture. Christ is all-inclusive. He is everything. Have you seen this Christ? Although He is our Savior, He is much more than that. He is everything. He is a most wonderful Person.

You simply cannot say who Christ is. If you say He is God, I will say He is man. If you say He is man, I will say He is God. If you say He is the Son of God, I will say He is God the Father. If you say He is God the Father, I will say He is God the Spirit. If you say He is the Creator, I will say He is the Redeemer. Christ is everything!

B. The Corporate Christ in Acts

The book of Acts follows the gospels. What is the Acts? The Acts is the spreading, the increase, and the enlargement of this wonderful Person. This wonderful Person was limited and confined in the little man Jesus, but in Acts He has been reproduced, increased, and enlarged. He has increased by spreading into Peter, John, James, Stephen, and even Saul of Tarsus. He has spread into tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands of His believers, making all of them a part of Him. Collectively speaking, all of these believers along with Himself become the corporate Christ. Therefore, in the four gospels we have the individual Christ; in Acts we have the corporate Christ. By the end of Acts we see the individual Christ as well as the corporate Christ. However, we do not know how the individual Christ can become the corporate Christ. How can we, the vast multitude of believers, become a part of Christ?

C. The Full Definition of the Corporate Christ in Romans

This brings us to the book of Romans. Romans explains how the individual Christ can become the corporate Christ and how all of us who were once sinners and enemies of God can become parts of Christ and form His one Body. The book of Romans offers us a full definition of this, unfolding both the Christian life and the church life in detail. Thus, we come to the book of Romans for training on the Christian life and the church life. Romans provides a sketch of them both. Now we know the position of the book of Romans in the Bible.

II. THE SECTIONS OF ROMANS

At this point we need to consider the sections of the book of Romans. The Lord has given us eight words to denote the eight sections of this book: introduction, condemnation, justification, sanctification, glorification, selection, transformation, and conclusion. We all need to remember these eight words. I had never before seen such an outline of Romans until the Lord gave it to me just recently. Although I conducted a thorough study of the book of Romans 22 years ago with the saints in Taiwan, I must declare that the outline I used then is now too old. The present outline with the eight words denoting the eight sections is new and up-to-date. We must pay close attention to the content of these eight sections.

1. Introduction--the Gospel of God

The introduction (1:1-17) delineates the theme of the book of Romans, which is the gospel of God. This is the content of the introduction. In the next message we will see what is the gospel of God.

2. Condemnation--the Need of Salvation

Following the introduction, we have the section on condemnation (1:18-3:20) that unveils to us the need of

God's salvation. We all are hopeless and helpless cases and are under God's condemnation. We need God's salvation.

3. Justification--The Accomplishment of Salvation

The third section, justification (3:21-5:11), reveals the accomplishment of God's salvation. Related to this matter of justification we have three other items--propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. We will cover these terms when we come to chapter 3. At this point I will only say a brief word. God's justification depends upon the redemption of Christ. Without the redemption of Christ, God has no way to justify sinners. Therefore, justification depends upon redemption, and redemption has one major aspect--propitiation. Propitiation is the major structure of redemption. Propitiation is the major part of the redemption of Christ because, as sinners, we owed God a great deal. We were held by God to pay this debt, and this caused a tremendous problem. That problem has been resolved by Christ as our propitiatory sacrifice. Since this propitiation has solved our problems with God, we have been redeemed. Based upon the redemption of Christ, God can easily and lawfully justify us. Thus, justification depends upon redemption, and the major part of redemption is propitiation. What, then, is reconciliation? Reconciliation is the issue of justification. God's justification issues in reconciliation. All of this has been accomplished. Hallelujah! Although you may not be clear about all of these words at present, you can say to the Lord, "Lord, I don't understand all these terms, but I praise You that everything has been accomplished."

Justification brings us to God. In fact, it not only brings us to God, but also into God. Therefore, we may have the full enjoyment of God. The King James Version says, "We joy in God" (Rom. 5:11). We not only joy in God; we enjoy God. God is our enjoyment. This is justification.

4. Sanctification--the Life-Process in Salvation

Following this, we have sanctification (5:12-8:13). How good it is to be in God and to enjoy God' However, do not look at yourself. Many times as I was enjoying God,

praising Him, and sharing in His riches, the subtle one said to me, "Look at yourself. Think about how you dealt with your wife this morning." The moment I accepted this suggestion, I descended from heaven to hell. I was deeply disappointed. While I was in my room praising, my wife was in the kitchen cooking. When Satan raised the question of how I had treated my wife that morning, I was afraid she would hear my praises and come in to stop me, saying, "Don't praise anymore. Don't you know what you did to me this morning?" After being justified, we need to be sanctified.

What does it mean to be sanctified? Once again we may use the illustration of tea. If we put tea into a glass of plain water, the water will be "teaified." At best, we are plain water, although we are actually not plain, but dirty. Even if we are plain water, we lack the tea flavor, the tea essence, and the tea color. We need the tea to come into our very being. Christ Himself is the heavenly tea. Christ is in us. Hallelujah!

Recently, I pointed out to the saints in Anaheim that our God is progressively revealed throughout the book of Romans. In chapter 1 He is God in creation, in chapter 3 God in redemption, in chapter 4 God in justification, in chapter 5 God in reconciliation, and in chapter 6 God in identification. As we come to chapter 8, we see that our God is now within us. Christ is in us (Rom. 8:10)! He is no longer merely in creation, redemption, justification, reconciliation, and identification, but He is now within us, in our spirit. Christ is in us doing a transforming and sanctifying work, just as the tea, when put into the water, works the element of tea into it. Eventually, the water will be wholly "teaified. ' It will have the appearance, the

flavor, and the taste of real tea. If I serve you some of this beverage, I will be serving you tea, not plain water.

If I were to ask you whether or not you have been justified, you would all reply, "Hallelujah! We have been justified because Christ has accomplished redemption. God has reconciled us and we are now enjoying Him." This is wonderful. However, what about sanctification? Have you been sanctified? If some of the married brothers claim to be sanctified, their wives will disagree, saying, "The brothers certainly have been justified, but it is very doubtful that they have been sanctified." Brothers, have your wives been sanctified? Wives, do you think that your husbands have been sanctified? Some may say that their husbands have been sanctified a small amount. Others may feel that they are somewhat improved. However, I am not talking about being improved, but being sanctified--that is to have Christ wrought into our very being, just as the essence, flavor, and color of the tea are wrought into the water. This is sanctification.

5. Glorification--the Purpose of Salvation

The next section in the book of Romans is glorification (Rom. 8:14-39), unveiling the purpose of God's salvation. Following sanctification, there is the need of glorification. Our body needs to be glorified. Although a brother may be quite saintly, his body needs to be glorified because of its physical defects and limitations. When the Lord Jesus comes, we will be glorified. Presently, I must wear thick, peculiar eyeglasses, but when the Lord comes I will be glorified. We shall not only be justified and sanctified; we shall be glorified, that is, our body shall be redeemed. Glorification is the full redemption of our body.

This glorification reveals the purpose of God's salvation. The purpose of God's salvation is to produce many brothers to Christ. Originally, Christ was the only begotten Son of God. Now the only begotten Son has become the firstborn Son. We ourselves will be processed into the many brothers of Christ and the many sons of

God. In the next message we will see that Christ is the prototype and that we are His duplication, the mass production. The little Jesus has been processed and designated as the Son of God, and we also are in the same process to be designated as the many sons of God. He is the firstborn Son, and we, the many sons, are His many brothers. This is the purpose of God's salvation.

6. Selection--the Economy of Salvation

After glorification, we come to selection which reveals the economy of salvation (Rom. 9:1-11:36). God has a purpose and an economy. His economy is for the fulfillment of His purpose. God is very wise and He arranges everything for the fulfillment of His purpose. He knows what He is doing. He knows who are His chosen people and He knows when His chosen people should be called. In relation to God, selection is for the accomplishment of His purpose; in relation to us, selection is our destiny.

7. Transformation--the Life-Practice in Salvation

After this, we have the section on transformation, unfolding the life-practice in salvation (Rom. 12:1-15:13). In this section we see the life-practice of all that has been produced by the life-process. Whatever is produced in the section on sanctification is practiced in the section on transformation. Eventually, sanctification becomes transformation. In one sense, we are in sanctification; in another sense, we are also in transformation. We are in the process of life and in the practice of life that we may have the Body-life with a proper private life. Every aspect of the proper Christian life and church life is included in this section on transformation. While we are being sanctified, we are also being transformed from one form into another form and from one shape into another shape. Praise the Lord! We are all under the life-process of sanctification for the life-practice of transformation.

8. Conclusion--the Ultimate Consummation of Salvation

The last section of the book of Romans is the conclusion, indicating the ultimate consummation of salvation (Rom. 15:14-16:27). The ultimate consummation of God's salvation is the churches--not just the Body, but the local churches as the expressions of the Body. Hallelujah! The book of Romans begins with the Gospel of God and concludes with the local churches. In Romans, we do not have the local church in doctrine but the local churches in practice. As we will see in later messages, many churches are mentioned in Romans chapter 16.

III. THE MAJOR STRUCTURES OF ROMANS

The major structures of the book of Romans are three--salvation, life, and building.

1. Salvation

The first major structure of Romans is salvation, revealed in 1:1-5:11 and 9:1-11:36. Salvation includes propitiation, redemption, justification, reconciliation, selection, and predestination. In eternity past God predestinated us. Then He called us, redeemed us, justified us, and reconciled us to Himself. Thus, we have full salvation.

We need to differentiate between redemption and salvation. Redemption is what Christ accomplished in the eyes of God. Salvation is what God has wrought upon us based upon the redemption of Christ. Redemption is objective, and salvation is subjective. When redemption becomes our experience, it becomes salvation.

2. Life

Salvation is for the life unfolded in 5:12-8:39. In this section the word life is used at least seven times and, according to chapter 8, this life is fourfold, which we will see as we come to that chapter.

3. Building

In the last part of Romans, 12:1-16:27, we have the building, the Body with all of its expressions in the local churches. Salvation is for life, and life is for building. Thus, the three major structures of Romans are salvation, life, and building.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWO

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

The gospel of God is the subject of the book of Romans (1:1). Christians are accustomed to saying that there are four gospels, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, Paul also refers to his epistle to the Romans as a gospel. The gospel in the first four books of the New Testament concerns Christ in the flesh as He lived among His disciples before His death and resurrection. After His incarnation and before His death and resurrection, He was among His disciples, but not yet in them. The gospel in Romans concerns Christ as the Spirit, not Christ in the flesh. In Romans 8 we see that the Spirit of life who indwells us is simply Christ Himself. Christ is in us. The Christ in the four gospels was among the disciples; the Christ in Romans is within us. The Christ in the four gospels is the Christ after incarnation and before death and resurrection. As such, He is a Christ outside of us. The Christ in Romans is the Christ after His resurrection. As such, He is the Christ within us. This is something deeper and more subjective than the Christ in the gospels. Keep this one point in mind: that the gospel in Romans concerns Christ as the Spirit in us after His resurrection.

If we only have the gospel concerning Christ as in the first four books of the New Testament, our gospel is too objective. We need the fifth gospel, the book of Romans, to reveal the subjective gospel of Christ. Our Christ is not merely the Christ in the flesh after incarnation and before resurrection, the Christ who was among His disciples. Our Christ is higher and more subjective. He is the Spirit of

life within us. He is such a subjective One. Though John chapters 14 and 15 revealed that Christ will be in His believers, yet that was not fulfilled before His resurrection. The book of Romans is the gospel of Christ after His resurrection, showing also that He is now the subjective Savior in His believers. So, this gospel is deeper and more subjective.

I. PROMISED IN THE SCRIPTURES

This gospel was promised by God through the prophets in the scriptures. This means that the gospel of God was not an accident; it was planned and prepared by God. The Bible shows us that this gospel was planned by God in eternity past. Before the foundation of the world, God planned to have this gospel. So, numerous times in the Holy Scriptures, from Genesis through Malachi, God spoke in promise through the prophets regarding the gospel of God.

II. CONCERNING CHRIST

This gospel of God concerns a Person, Christ. Of course, forgiveness, salvation, etc. are included in the gospel, but they are not the central point. The gospel of God concerns the Person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. This wonderful Person has two natures--the divine nature and the human nature, divinity and humanity.

l. Come Out of the Seed of David

Paul mentions Christ's humanity first, not His divinity, saying that He was born out of the seed of David according to the flesh (1:3). This is His human nature, His humanity.

2. Designated the Son of God out of Resurrection

Then Paul says that He was "designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead" (1:4). This is a clear reference to Christ's divinity. Why is His humanity mentioned first and His divinity last?

Paul mentions Christ's humanity first because he maintains the sequence of Christ's process. Firstly, Christ passed through the process of incarnation to become flesh. Then He passed through the process of death and resurrection. By means of the second step of His process He became the Son of God out of resurrection. Christ has been processed in two steps: the first step--incarnation; the second step--death and resurrection. By these two steps Christ became two different things. He became flesh by incarnation and He became the Son of God through death and resurrection. His first step brought God into humanity. His second step brought man into divinity. Before His incarnation, Christ, as a divine Person, already was the Son of God (John 1:18). He was the Son of God before His incarnation, and even Romans 8:3 says, "God sent His Son." Since Christ already was the Son of God before the incarnation, why did He need to be designated the Son of God out of resurrection? Because by incarnation He had put on an element, the flesh, the human nature, that had nothing to do with divinity. As a divine Person Christ was the Son of God before His incarnation, but that part of Him which was Jesus with the flesh, the human nature, born of Mary, was not the Son of God. That part of Him was human. By His resurrection Christ has sanctified and uplifted that part of His human nature, His humanity, and He was designated out of this resurrection as the Son of God with this human nature. So, in this sense, the Bible says that He was begotten the Son of God in His resurrection (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5).

Let us consider the example of a small carnation seed. When this seed is sown into the earth, it grows and blossoms, a process which we may label its designation. When we behold a little carnation seed before it is sown into the ground, we may be unable to determine what kind of seed it is. However, once it has been sown, has grown, and has blossomed, it is designated. Its blossom is its designation. Therefore, everyone can say, "This is a carnation." Both the seed and the blossom are the

carnation, but the blossom is very different in form from the seed. If the seed should remain as a seed without blossoming, it is difficult for most people to realize that it is a carnation. But after it has grown and blossomed, it is designated as a carnation for all to see.

When Christ was in the flesh during His 33 1/2 years on the earth, He was exactly like the carnation seed. Although the Son of God was in Him, no one could recognize this easily. By being sown into death and growing up in resurrection, He blossomed. By this process He was designated the Son of God, and by this process He uplifted the flesh, the human nature. He did not put off the flesh, He did not put off humanity. He sanctified it, uplifted it and transformed it, and had Himself designated with this transformed humanity the Son of God with the divine power. When He was the Son of God before His incarnation, He had no human nature. After His resurrection He is the Son of God with humanity uplifted, sanctified, and transformed out of resurrection. He is now both of humanity and divinity. He is both the seed of David and the Son of God. He is a wonderful Person!

Christ became flesh to accomplish the work of redemption. Redemption requires blood. It is certain that divinity has no blood; only humanity has blood. Nevertheless, redemption demands blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Thus, Christ became flesh for the work of redemption. Redemption, however, is not God's goal. Redemption opens the way for life to be given. In the Gospel of John, Christ was first introduced as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). That was for redemption. Following this, John presents Him with the Dove who gives life (John 1:32-33). Firstly, Christ accomplished redemption for us; then He became our life. Christ became flesh to accomplish the work of redemption for us, and He was designated the Son of God out of resurrection that He may impart Himself to us as our life. The first step of His process was for redemption, and the

second step was for imparting life. Now we have the resurrected Christ within us as our life. The resurrected Christ as the Son of God is life to us. Whoever has the Son of God has life (1 John 5:12).

The first section of the book of Romans deals with redemption accomplished by Christ in the flesh. Romans 8:3 says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh. The second part of Romans deals with the imparting of life. Romans first reveals Christ as the Redeemer in the flesh and then reveals Him as the life-giving Spirit. In Romans 8:2 we find the term "the Spirit of life." This is the indwelling Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is actually Christ Himself within us (8:9-10).

Why does the book of Romans open the way it does? Every book of the Bible opens in a particular way, each one different from the others. Paul opens the book of Romans in the way he does because Romans has a goal, as seen in chapter 8, verses 29 and 30. This goal is to produce many sons of God. This goal of producing the many sons of God requires redemption, the imparting of life, and the living by this life. As fallen men and as sinners, we need redemption, we need the divine life, and we need to live by the divine life that we may be regenerated, transformed. and fully glorified as the sons of God. Eventually, we all shall be the sons of God in full.

God had only one Son, His only begotten Son. However, God was not satisfied to have just one Son. He wanted many sons to be brought into glory. Therefore, God used His only begotten Son as a model, as a pattern, to produce many sons. Do you realize that Christ has passed through the process to be designated the Son of God and that we also are passing through the same process to be designated the sons of God? Originally, Christ was the only Son of God. At a certain time, this Son of God came into the flesh by the name of Jesus. The Son of God in the flesh was named Jesus. After 33 1/2 years, Jesus was designated out of resurrection to be the Son of God. By this time, God had a Son with both divinity and humanity.

Before His incarnation God's Son only possessed divinity; after His resurrection this Son of God had both divinity and humanity. Hallelujah! Now humanity has a part in God's Son. The Son of God today has both humanity and divinity.

What about us? We were born the sons of man, but we have been reborn the sons of God. Whether we are male or female, we are all sons of God. In a sense, God has no daughters. Although the Lord Jesus has many brothers, He has no sisters. In this sense, every sister is a brother. We are all brothers and we are all sons of God. We are sons of God because the Spirit of the Son of God has come into us (Gal. 4:6). Just as the Son of God came into the flesh by incarnation, so now the Spirit of the Son of God has come into so many of us who are flesh. Therefore, in a sense, each one of us is the same as Jesus. Jesus was a man in the flesh with the Son of God in Him. We also are men of flesh with the Son of God in us. Are you not a man of flesh with the Son of God in you? Certainly you are. But we should not remain as we are, should we? We are waiting to be designated. Oh, this man of flesh is going to be designated by sanctification, transformation, and glorification. Hallelujah! This man of flesh with the Son of God in him is under the process of sanctification, transformation, and glorification. The time will come when we will all declare, "We are designated to be sons of God out of resurrection!" If you tell the people in the street that you are the son of God, they will think you are crazy. Remember how they treated Jesus when He confessed that He was the Son of God: they put Him to death. But by death and resurrection He was designated as the Son of God. After His resurrection, it was needless for Jesus to claim to be the Son of God, since He had been designated. Today if we tell people that we are the sons of God, they will think we are mentally disturbed. Nevertheless, the day is coming--the book of Romans refers to this day as the revelation or the manifestation of the glory of the sons of God--in which we will be designated in glory as the sons

of God. There will be no need for us to make a declaration. Spontaneously, we will be designated as sons of God.

Romans 1:3-4 give us Jesus as the prototype. In Romans 8:29-30 we have the many sons as the mass production. In this message we are considering the prototype. With the prototype there is the Spirit of holiness, the flesh, and the designation as the Son of God. Praise the Lord! We also have the Spirit of holiness within, the human flesh without, and we shall be designated in full as sons of God.

III. PREACHED BY THE SENT ONES

Now we need to proceed further and consider how the gospel of God is preached. It is preached by the sent ones. The sent ones are the apostles (1:5) separated for this purpose. Not all the believers are apostles, but, in a sense, all the believers are sent by the Lord for the gospel preaching.

1. In Spirit

This gospel is preached in spirit (1:9). Note that the word spirit here begins with a small letter, thereby indicating that it does not refer to the Holy Spirit. All Christians believe that we must be in the Holy Spirit in order to preach the gospel. However, I never heard anyone tell us that we must be in our spirit. But Paul says that we need to be in our spirit. Preaching the gospel depends on our spirit. Paul said that he served God in the spirit in the gospel of His Son. When we preach the gospel, we should not employ any gimmicks; we should exercise our spirit.

Why is it only in the book of Romans that Paul says he serves God in his spirit? Because in this book he argues with the religious people who invariably are in something other than the spirit--in letters, in forms, or in doctrines. In the book of Romans Paul argues that whatever we do toward God must be done in our spirit, that whatever we are must be in spirit, and that whatever we have must be in spirit. In chapter 2, verse 29, he says that the genuine people of God must be in spirit, that true circumcision is not outward in the flesh but in the spirit. In chapter 7,

verse 6, he says that we must serve God in newness of spirit. Paul refers to our human spirit eleven times in the book of Romans. The last instance is found in chapter 12, verse 11 where he says that we must be burning in spirit. Preaching the gospel of God is absolutely a matter of our spirit.

2. By Prayer

For the preaching of the gospel we need much prayer (1:9). We need to pray for souls and to pray for the gospel. In preaching the gospel, prayer is more needful than any kind of effort. If we are prayerless, we will be fruitless in the gospel preaching.

3. With Eagerness

Thirdly, we must preach the gospel with eagerness (1:13-15). If we mean business with the Lord in this matter of gospel preaching, we must exercise these three things: in spirit, by prayer, and with eagerness. Gimmicks and techniques will not be effective. We all need to exercise our spirit to touch people, to pray, and to be ready with eagerness. If the gospel does not inspire you, it will never inspire others. If the gospel cannot convince you, it will never convince others. If you yourself do not weep with the gospel, no one else will repent. If you weep, others will weep in repentance. Once I read a biography of a brother who was prevailing in the gospel. He did not preach very much. However, when he stood up he wept in front of all the people. After a period of weeping before them, tears of repentance came down from the eyes of the people. That was preaching the gospel with eagerness.

IV. RECEIVED BY THE CALLED ONES

The gospel of God is received by the called ones (1:6-7). What do these called ones do? They believe. Therefore, the gospel is received by the called ones and the believing ones. We are the called ones and the believing ones. To be called is to be called out; to believe is to believe into.

Romans gives us the example of Abraham. Abraham was called by God out of the created race. The created race had fallen into many things other than God and had become hopeless as far as God was concerned. God gave up that race, calling out of it a man named Abraham. So, Abraham became the father of the called race, a race that was not created by God, but a race that was called out by God. We have been called out of everything other than God: out of the old creation, the world, the human race, and ourselves. We have been called out of good things and out of bad things, out of everything that is not God Himself. Therefore, to be called is to come out of anything that is not God Himself.

After we were called, we believed. To believe means to believe into. To believe Jesus does not simply mean to believe that there is a Jesus. To believe Jesus means to believe into Jesus; to believe God is to believe into God. Believing requires us to admit that we are hopeless and helpless and that we can do nothing to please God. We need to forget ourselves and terminate ourselves, terminating all that we are, have, and do. This is believing. On the negative side, believing means to terminate all that we are, all that we have, and all that we can do. On the positive side, it means to take God as our everything, to put ourselves into God, trusting in what He has done for us, in what He can do for us, and what He will do for us. In other words, believing is simply terminating ourselves and putting ourselves into the full trust of God. This believing is reckoned before God as righteousness and binds God to save us.

The gospel is received by the people who have been called out of everything other than God and who have believed into the Triune God, terminating what they are, have, and do, and trusting in God for what He has done, can do, and will do. If, as such a person, you receive the gospel of God, you will confess, "I am finished. It is no more I, but Christ Who lives in me. I do not need to do anything, for He has done everything, and He will do

everything for me. All that I have, all that I am, and all that I can do has been terminated by my believing into Him. Now, He is my everything." This is the kind of person who receives the gospel of God.

1. Through the Obedience of Faith

The called ones receive the gospel of God through the obedience of faith (1:5). What is this? Under the law of Moses, God gave people ten commandments to obey. That kind of obedience was the obedience of the law, the obedience of the commandment. In this age of grace, God has given us one, unique commandment--to believe in Jesus. God does not require us to keep any commandment other than this. Regardless of who we are, we must obey God's commandment to believe in Jesus. Whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and whoever will not believe in Christ has been condemned already because of his unbelief (John 3:18). When we obey God's unique commandment, we have the obedience of faith. This is why the Lord Jesus said in John 16:8-9 that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin for not believing on Him. Today there is one, unique commandment--believing in Jesus--and there is one, unique sin--not believing in Him. If you believe, you have the obedience of faith and you receive the gospel of God through such obedience. In the eyes of God the most obedient person is the one who believes in Jesus. The most disobedient person is the one who will not believe in Him. Nothing is more offensive to God than not believing in Jesus, and, on the contrary, nothing is more pleasing to God than believing in Him. If any sinner, any prodigal son, will say, "O God, thank You for sending Jesus Christ--I believe in Him," the Father will be pleased. God is happy with you when you have the obedience of faith.

2. Unto Grace and Peace

The receiving of the gospel through the obedience of faith results in grace and peace. Grace is God in Christ as everything to us for our enjoyment, and peace is the issue of the enjoyment of God's grace. This peace is the inward rest, comfort and satisfaction, not something outward.

V. THE POWER OF GOD

This gospel is the power of God unto salvation (1:16). In the book of Romans salvation means a great deal. Salvation not only means to save us from God's condemnation and from hell; it means to save us from our naturalness, our self-likeness, our individualism, and our divisiveness. This salvation saves us to the uttermost, enabling us to be sanctified, conformed, glorified, transformed, built up with others as the one Body, and not divisive in the church life. The gospel of God is the power of God unto such a full, complete, and ultimate salvation. It is the power of God for all who believe. Praise the Lord! We believe.

VI. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

Why is the gospel so powerful? It is powerful because the righteousness of God is revealed in it (1:17). According to John 3:16, salvation is out of God's love. According to Ephesians 2:8, salvation is by God's grace. But here Paul does not say that salvation is out of the love of God or by the grace of God; he says that it comes by the righteousness of God.

Neither love nor grace is related to the law. No law forces people to love and no law compels people to give grace. Whether I love you or not, I am still lawful, and whether I extend grace to you or not, I am still legal. In a sense, God is not bound to love us. If He likes, He may love us; if He does not like, He may forget about us. Furthermore, God is not legally held to show us grace. Whenever He feels happy, He may say, "Here is grace"; when He feels unhappy, He may stay away from us. God is not bound to love; neither is He legally held to extend grace. Righteousness, on the contrary, is very much related to the law. Since Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, God is bound to save us. If you say, "Lord Jesus, You are my Savior," you can turn to God and say, "God, You have to forgive me.

Whether You like it or not, You must forgive me. You are righteous if You forgive me, but You are unrighteous if You don't forgive me." Be strong to speak to God in this way. Because Christ has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law, God is bound by His righteousness to save us. Righteousness is a mighty bond. God is under such a bond to save us. God cannot escape--He has to save us because He is righteous. 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, God is righteous to forgive us our sins because Christ has died for us and has shed His blood for us. Therefore, God must cleanse us. There was power in the gospel preached by Paul because the righteousness of God was revealed in it. When we come to chapter 3, we will see God's righteousness.

1. Out of Faith to Faith

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel out of faith and to faith (1:17), meaning that as long as we have the faith, we have the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God comes out of our faith and to our faith. Do not say that you have no faith. As long as you call on the name of the Lord Jesus, He is rich to you. When you call, "O Lord Jesus," He is your faith. Perhaps you will say you have no feeling that you believe. In response to this, I will tell you what happened to me over 40 years ago when I read a book about the assurance of salvation. This book said strongly that as long as we believe we are saved. Immediately I asked myself, "Have you believed? Do you have faith?" I began to doubt. For some days I was bothered about this and I was unable to eat and sleep well. I did not have the feeling that I believed. After I had been troubled for days, the Lord was merciful to me and helped me. The Lord said, "Stupid man, approach this question from another angle and ask yourself, 'Do you not believe?' Try your best not to believe." I tried not to believe in Jesus, but I was unable to do it. I simply could not stop believing in Him. This was the proof that I had the faith. If you feel that you have no faith, try to stop believing. As long as you are unable to cease believing, that proves you have the faith. Praise the Lord! We all have the faith. Provided we

have this faith, God's righteousness is revealed out of this faith and to this faith. Although you may make every attempt to cast away your faith, you cannot do it because faith has come into you. Within you there is something that the Bible calls "the faith." As long as you have the faith, you have the righteousness of God.

To say that the righteousness of God is revealed does not mean that it had no prior existence. It simply means that, although it had been in existence previously, it had not been revealed or made visible. For anything that can be revealed must exist already. This righteousness of God is revealed out of faith and to faith.

Let me illustrate by holding a lovely calendar before your eyes. This calendar has been in existence for some time, but is just now being revealed to you. How is it revealed? It is revealed out of your sight and to your sight. If you were blind, the calendar could not be revealed to you, for the revelation of the calendar is out of your sight and to your sight. God's righteousness exists and has existed for ages. Since we believe in Jesus, we have the faith, and this faith is our spiritual sight. Out of this faith and to this faith the righteousness of God is revealed. Therefore, the righteousness of God is revealed out of faith and to faith in the gospel. Praise the Lord!

2. The Just Have Life and Live by Faith

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel that the just may have life and live by faith (1:17). The Greek word rendered "live" in this verse means both "to live" and "have life." The Chinese version translates it "to have life." Young's Concordance also tells us that the Greek word means to live and to have life. This verse is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, a verse which has been quoted three times in the New Testament. It is found in Hebrews 10:38 where, according to the context, it means the just shall

live by faith. In Galatians 3:11 it means the just shall have life by faith because the context of Galatians 3 says that the law cannot give life to people (Gal. 3:21), that people can only have life by faith. Thus, in Galatians 3 it is not a question of living; it is a matter of having life. Romans 1:17 includes both of these meanings--to have life and to live. Therefore, we may translate the verse this way, "The just shall have life and live by faith."

This short sentence is a brief extract of the whole book of Romans. The book of Romans has three sections. The first section covers the issue of justification, showing us how to be righteous, how to be just, in the eyes of God. The second section tells us how to have life by being justified unto life (5:18). The way to have death is to be condemned by God; the way to have life is to be justified by Him. Then the third section tells us how to live. After we have received this life, we need to live it out mainly by practicing the Body-life. The last section of Romans, from chapter 12 through the end of chapter 16, deals with our living. We mainly need to have the church life. The local churches are the main part of our living as revealed in chapter 16. Therefore, the entire book of Romans covers three things: being just, having life, and living properly. Praise the Lord! We all have been justified and we all have received the divine life. Now we are living out this life mainly in the Body, in the local church. This is the way to live by the divine life. The just shall have life and live by faith.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THREE

THE SOURCE OF WICKEDNESS AND THE WAY OF RESTRICTION

In this message we will cover the source of wickedness shown in the condemnation of mankind and the way of restriction shown in the condemnation of the self-righteous. After the introduction, Paul presents the matter of condemnation in four aspects: on mankind in general (1:18-32), on the self-righteous in particular (2:1-16), on the religious specifically (2:17-3:8), and on all the world totally (3:9-20). Firstly, the book of Romans reveals that condemnation has come upon mankind in general. Then attention is given to two special classes of mankind--the self-righteous class and the cultured, religious class. Finally, the whole world is brought under condemnation. Whether we are good or bad, religious or non-religious, we are under God's condemnation. Although we do not want to dwell upon the subject of condemnation, there are two points related to it that are quite important. First is the source of evil, the source of wickedness. Because of this source mankind is evil. Thus, in this message we will see the source of man's wickedness. Second, we need to see the way of restriction. There is a way to restrict this wickedness. Since we have been saved from condemnation, we need not give it much attention. However, we need to return to it long enough to learn the source of evil and the way to restrict evil.

I. THE CONDEMNATION ON MANKIND

1. The Source of Wickedness

Now we need to consider the source of wickedness. This section of Romans (1:18-32) reveals four elements of the source of evil.

A. Holding Down the Truth in Unrighteousness

The first element in the source of wickedness is holding down the truth in unrighteousness (1:18). What is truth? Truth is not mere doctrine or knowledge. Truth is reality; it is solid and substantial. There is reality in this universe, and the prime reality is God Himself. To say that there is no God is to speak vanity; to declare the reality of God is to speak something solid, substantial, genuine, and true. God is real. No one can deny the reality of God or disclaim the fact that He exists, for the existence of God is a reality. However, from the very beginning, mankind did not respect the reality of God, but suppressed it. They simply did not care for this reality and refused to hold it in a proper way. They held down the truth in unrighteousness, suppressing it in an unrighteous manner. In the United States today we behold evil on every side, and the newspapers are filled with wicked and shameful things. Why are there so many shameful things in the leading country of the world? Because so many people will not maintain the truth, but instead, wrongfully hold it down. This is the most significant aspect of the source of wickedness.

B. Disapproving of Holding God in Full Knowledge

Although mankind knew there was God, they tested and tried Him, eventually deciding not to hold Him in their full knowledge. They disapproved of holding God in their full knowledge (1:28). Many professors and professional people do not believe in Christ. If you ask them about God, they will say, "We know there is a God, but we don't like to believe in Him." Such people disapprove of holding God in their knowledge. We must hold God in our knowledge, for it is dreadful to refuse to do this.

C. Not Glorifying God and not Worshipping Him

In the ancient times man knew God, but did not glorify Him as God. Neither did they thank Him, worship Him, or serve Him (1:21, 25). This is another element in the source

of evil. Refusing to glorify God, thank God, worship God, and serve God is a major aspect of the source of wickedness. However, if we glorify and thank Him, worship and serve Him, we will be protected from every evil. There are so many divorces and so much immorality throughout the world today because people will not glorify God and worship Him. A man who glorifies God, thanks God, worships God, and serves God, will never divorce his wife. All divorces and immorality come from one source--refusing to worship God. Never think that worshipping God is an insignificant matter and that glorifying Him is trivial. They mean a great deal to our human living. We need to thank God. We have many things for which to thank Him. Some people do not thank God until the hour of their death. Although that is very late, it is better than nothing.

We need to realize that glorifying God, thanking God, worshipping God, and serving God are extremely important. Suppose I have a bad temper, a shameful and ugly disposition. If I try to suppress it, I will never succeed. However, if I thank and praise God continually, I will find the best method of escape from my poor disposition. Whenever you are about to lose your temper, you should say, "I am going to serve God. I don't have time to lose my temper. God, I thank You that You are my God, that You are my Creator. Without You, I would have no being. I owe my very existence to You. I thank You, worship You, and serve You." If you do this, you will be freed from your disposition immediately. How much we need to worship God!

D. Exchanging God

Then mankind exchanged God (1:23, 25). It is terrible to exchange God, for God is the glory and the reality of the universe. When God is expressed, that is glory. To exchange God means to give Him up for something else. The people exchanged God for idols. God is glory; idols are vanity. God is reality; idols are a falsehood and a lie. How foolish and awful it was for man to exchange God for idols! Most of the people in the United States have learned not to

worship visible idols, although some people do practice this. Nevertheless, many people in this country have exchanged God for their self-made idols--their future, positions, degrees, and goals. This means that their future, position, degrees, and goals have become their idols. They care for these idols, not for God. Therefore, they also have exchanged God for idols.

If we consider carefully these four aspects of the source of wickedness, we will see that they constitute the origin of every kind of evil and sinfulness.

2. The Result of Giving Up God

Now we need to inquire into the result of giving up God.

A. Being Given Up by God

The first result of giving up God is being given up by God. When you give up God, this forces God to give you up. If you let go of God, God will be compelled to let go of you. This is most deplorable. It is terrible to be given up by God. We must say to God, "Even if I let You go, don't let me go. Perhaps I will be so foolish as to give You up. Lord, be merciful to me and never give me up." We need to pray in this way, for it is awful to be given up by God. When a person has been given up by God, he will never do good things. He will not improve but only descend lower and lower.

According to Romans 1, God gives people up to three things. First is uncleanness (1:24). When a person gives up God and forces God to give him up, that person will be defiled, immediately becoming involved with uncleanness. Second, God gives up people to passions of dishonor, to shameful lusts (1:26). I do not like to mention these

shameful lusts with my clean lips. Such people may become sodomites, indulging in evil passions and unrestricted affection, dishonoring their bodies with one another. Third, God gives people up to a disapproved mind (1:28). If you disapprove of holding God in your knowledge, God will allow you to have a mind that He disapproves. The mind of sinful men can never be approved by God. For example, God disapproves of a mind that is occupied with thoughts of divorce. Look at today's sinful society: no one has a mind that can be approved by God. All have been given up by God to a disapproved mind, for they do that which is improper. People are so foolish and shameful in their sinful ways. Their behavior is absolutely improper. Nevertheless, they continue in sin because God has given them up to a disapproved mind.

B. Having Fornication-- Confusion in Order

When a person has been given up by God to uncleanness, dishonorable lusts, and to a disapproved mind, the consequence is fornication (1:24, 26, 27). Do you know the true meaning of fornication? Fornication means to violate the governing and controlling principle. This brings about confusion in order. God's economy is one husband for one wife. This is not only God's economy; it is His ruling and controlling principle. The people who have been given up by God will do almost anything to break this principle, violating the governing principle of one husband for one wife. The result is fornication, confusion in order. Why do people engage in this? Because of uncleanness, passions of dishonor, and their disapproved minds. When people give up God, He gives them up to fornication.

Every kind of wickedness issues out of this fornication (1:29-32). At the end of Romans 1, Paul enumerates the various kinds of evil and describes the wicked persons, such as the whisperers, backbiters, and God-haters. By this we can see that if a person gives up God, God will give him up to lusts, confusion, and every evil imaginable.

II. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

The portion of Romans on the condemnation of the self-righteous (2:1-16), along with the condemnation on mankind, shows us the way of restriction.

1. The Way of Restriction

Now we come to the way of restriction, the way to restrict evil and wickedness. I like this part of Romans. All of us, especially the young people, need to pay our full attention to this way of restriction.

A. Knowing God by His Creation

The first item in the way of restriction is knowing God by His creation (1:19-20). The invisible things of God, His eternal power and divine nature, can be apprehended by His creation. The heavens and the earth manifest the invisible things of God. Approximately 20 years ago, the brothers in Taiwan collected biographical material on the famous scientists of the past centuries. They discovered that only a small percentage of these leading scientists said they did not believe in God. The distinct majority of them believed in Him. I once read an article in which Einstein was asked whether or not he believed in God. He replied, "Your question is an insult to me. How could a scientist such as I not believe in God?" If you study science, it will tell you that there is a God.

Although I do not know science, I know a little about our human body. Many times, as I preached to people about God, I have asked them to consider their bodies. I told them, "Think how wonderful you are. Who made you?" All the hair on our physical bodies, both inside and outside, grows downward except for the hair in our throat which grows upward. This is very meaningful. If the hair in our throat grew downward, we would die because phlegm could not be discharged. Who made us this way? Furthermore, consider the marvelous design of the human

face. The mouth has been properly positioned. How awkward and how terrible it would be for our mouth to be placed between our eyes! Also, have you ever thought about the function of our eyebrows? They function as breakwaters, keeping the perspiration out of our eyes. Who designed us this way? Recently I had two operations on my right eye. The surgeon showed me an artificial eye, especially pointing to the lens and the retina. Immediately I saw that this was an exact replica of the best camera. No one can make a camera to match the human eye. Who made these things? Our teeth are also marvelously designed. Our front teeth, the incisors, act like two knives, cutting whatever is placed in between them. Then the tongue sends the food back to the molars which are like grinding stones, grinding the food into a digestible substance. As the molars grind, saliva is secreted to liquefy the food. This is marvelous. Who made it? We must say, "Lord, thank You. You are my Creator. You have made me in such a wonderful way."

When we behold creation in general and the human body in particular, how can we say there is no God? Even an atheistic medical doctor has to confess there is an Almighty One who created the human body. Therefore, by the things made we can apprehend the eternal power and the divine nature of God. When we see God in the beauties and wonders of His creation, we have to worship and glorify Him. Knowing God by His creation is the first aspect in the way of restricting evil.

B. Holding the Truth in Righteousness

We must hold the reality of God in righteousness, approving of keeping God in our full knowledge (1:18, 28). We need to glorify, thank, worship, and serve Him (1:21, 25). It is very important to practice these four things. As a grandfather, I say a word to my grandchildren who are attending this training. I do know what is human life. Believe me when I say that worshipping God can never be

wrong. The first thing you teenagers need to learn is to worship God. Nothing is more important in your human life than worshipping God. I would hate it for my children to earn millions of dollars and yet not worship God. I do not want to see my second or third generation become wealthy and yet not worship God. I would rather see them come here to learn how to worship the Lord. The greatest blessing in human life is to be trained to worship our God.

C. Obeying the Laws of Nature

Next, we need to do things according to our nature (2:14). Some people are so spiritual that they condemn everything natural. They seem to feel that nothing natural can be good. In a sense, I agree with this almost completely. In another sense, however, I would caution you against forgetting our nature. Our original nature, as created by God, was good. Everything created by our Father, including our nature, was good originally. Of course, our nature was poisoned by the fall. There can be no doubt about this. Nevertheless, as human beings, we have a nature which God created good, and we need to act according to it. We should take heed to this nature. Although you may argue that it is not wrong to steal from others, the nature within you protests whenever you are tempted to steal. Even bank robbers will admit that, as they rob banks, their nature tells them, "Don't do this." However, they will not listen. It is the same with every evil-doer. Whenever they do something wrong, their nature disagrees. We need to observe the requirements of the nature within us.

In Romans 2:14-15 Paul says that when the nations who do not have the law practice the things of the law, they prove that the function of the law is written in their heart. The law of God has a function in our nature. In other words, our nature corresponds to God's law because our nature was made by God. God's law was given according to God's nature, for a lawgiver always enacts a law in accordance with his own being. God created man according to what He is. Therefore, the law given by God and the man created by God correspond to one another.

Thus, we do not need an outward law because we have the function of the law written in our nature. We simply need to live according to our nature.

D. Listening to the Conscience

Along with our good nature. we also have a conscience (2:15). The conscience is a wonderful entity and we should listen to it. Although medical doctors cannot locate it, no one can deny that we possess it. Our conscience protests continually. When you argue with your parents, the conscience says, "Don't do this." If you offend your parents, your conscience will trouble you for three nights. Every husband seeking to divorce his wife will also be convicted by his conscience. All men have a conscience. This is a great matter. In the normal Christian life we must all take care of our conscience in a suitable way.

E. Caring for the Proper Reasonings

In addition to our nature and our conscience, we have the reasonings in our mind (2:15). Do not be so spiritual to say that our mind is absolutely useless. In our mind we have the good reasonings. Sometimes these reasonings accuse and condemn, and other times they excuse and justify. Often, as we set out to do a certain thing, we experience a conflict in our reasonings, with some reasonings saying, "Yes, that's right," and others saying, "No, that's wrong." We have all experienced this. We need to take care of our nature, our conscience, and the reasonings within us.

We have seen the five items in the way of restriction: knowing God by His creation, holding the truth of God in righteousness, living according to our nature, listening to our conscience, and caring for our proper reasonings. If we observe all these things, we will be restricted from every kind of evil. Although we all are saved and are living somewhere in Romans 5 through 8, we still need to know the source of evil and the way to be restricted from doing evil. Hallelujah, we have found it! We need to know God by His creation and hold His truth in righteousness. We need to act according to our nature, heed the voice of our

conscience, and care for the proper reasonings within us. If we practice all these things, we will be protected.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FOUR

THE VANITY OF RELIGION AND THE TOTALITY OF HOPELESSNESS

In this message we will cover the vanity of religion shown in the condemnation on the religious (2:17--3:8) and the totality of hopelessness shown in the condemnation of all the world (3:9-20). As we have pointed out, Paul deals with condemnation in four aspects: on mankind in general, on the self-righteous in particular, on the religious specifically, and on all the world totally. This is very meaningful. From these aspects of God's condemnation we can see four things: the source of wickedness, the way of restriction, the vanity of religion, and the totality of hopelessness.

I. THE CONDEMNATION ON THE RELIGIOUS

Let us first consider the vanity of religion. Human culture is the best human invention, and within this culture the foremost item is religion. Religion is the apex of man's culture. Human culture needs religion, for without it culture is wild. If religion were eliminated from human culture, culture would remain crude. Therefore, most people respect religion.

Among the human race the two best religions are Judaism and Christianity. These are the typical religions. They are genuine, sound, and fundamental religions. Both proceeded out of the same source, the divine revelation in the Bible. Along with these two religions, we have Islam, a counterfeit of Judaism. Judaism was the source of Islam. The Koran, the sacred book of the Moslems, is actually an imitation of the Old Testament, although its contents have been changed in order to propagate lies. The Koran even

speaks about Christ saying that He is greater than Mohammed. According to the Koran Christ was never crucified. As the people attempted to nail Him to the cross, angels descended and took Him away into heaven. The Koran even tells us that this Jesus will return. It is evident, therefore, that Islam and its sacred book, the Koran, are counterfeits.

Strictly speaking, besides Judaism, Christianity, and the counterfeit religion of Islam, there are no other religions. Buddhism is not a religion; it is nonsense. A religion teaches people to worship God, but in Buddhism there is no God at all. You may ask about Confucianism. The teachings of Confucius are nonreligious; they are altogether ethical teachings, having nothing to do with God. In his classical writings, Confucius probably mentioned God only once or twice, calling Him "the Heavens." We should not consider Confucianism as a religion. On this earth there are just three religions--the genuine religions of Judaism and Christianity and the counterfeit religion of Islam.

Even with the two genuine religions there is still nothing but vanity. We do not need religion. We need a living Person. We do not need something related to God; we need God Himself. We do not need a way to worship God; we need the living Person of God to come into us. When God gave us the Bible, He had no intention of giving us a religion. God's intention was to reveal Himself into us through the Holy Word, not to have a religious form. However, the ancient Jews formed a religion out of the Old Testament. Then Christianity made a stronger religion because it has 27 books more than the Jews. The Jews had only 39 books to use in establishing a religion; Christianity has 66. Thus, Christianity has formed an even stronger religion. Nevertheless, the stronger a religion is, the more vanity it contains.

I realize that I may offend some people in speaking this way. The word Christianity is sweet and precious to the ears of many Christians, and it is offensive to them for

a man to say that Christianity is vanity. If you are offended by this, it proves that you are exceedingly religious. I do not say that Christ is vanity and I do not say that Christians are vanity, but I assert strongly that Christianity is vanity. Any "anity" is vanity, including "churchanity." The church is precious, but if you add "anity" to the church it becomes vanity. We want Christ, Christians, and the church, but we do not want any "anity." This is not my teaching. If we return to the pure Word in the New Testament, we find the term Christ and the term Christians (Acts 11:26). However, the terms Christianity or Christmas are not in the Bible. A kind of "anity" or "mas" has been added to Christ. Christmas is vanity. When people hang lamps on a little tree, that is "anity" and "mas." That is vanity. We must beware of religion: religion is vanity.

1. Having an Outward Name

Now we need to consider a few matters about the vanity of religion. First, religion has an outward name (2:17). Recently, I went to the barber shop for a haircut. The barber talked about attending Christmas Mass. I used the opportunity to ask him how many people would be there. He said, "You know, this is just a religious duty. Some people attend Mass only once a year at Christmas time." Here we see an example of the vanity of religion: attending Mass once a year as a religious duty in order to keep the name of being a Catholic. What kind of believer is this? A believer with a mere outward name. If you are real in the spirit, meaning you are a genuine believer, that is wonderful. However, if you lack the reality and simply keep the outward name, it means nothing. It is vanity.

2. Knowing God in Outward Knowledge

The second aspect of the vanity of religion is knowing God in outward knowledge (2:17-18). It is vain to know God merely in external knowledge, in outward letters. We need the inward knowledge of God, the knowledge in our

spirit, the knowledge that spreads into our whole being. We need such an inward and subjective knowledge of God.

3. Having the Scriptures Outwardly

The third item of the vanity of religion is having the Scriptures outwardly (3:2). Both Jews and Christians have the Bible, but the Bible, for many of them, has become a superstitious book. They hold the Bible in a superstitious way. Some Christians have told me that they are afraid to sleep at night without having a Bible nearby. If they do not place the Bible beside their pillow or on their table, they have no peace to sleep at night, thinking the Holy Bible will keep the demons away from them. This is superstition. Other Christians use the Bible to find guidance in an extraordinary way. They open the Bible, point their finger to a certain place, and follow the leading given in whatever verse they locate. I once heard of a superstitious person who opened the Bible and placed his finger on the verse which said that Judas went out to hang himself (Matt. 27:5). I wonder what he did. It is terrible and absolutely superstitious to handle the Scriptures in this way. All of these vain practices must be torn down.

Of course, most orthodox Jews and genuine Christians do not handle the Bible in such a superstitious way, but they do not take the Scriptures in a real and living way. They care for the teachings in letters; they do not care for Christ, the living Person. In John 5:39-40 the Lord Jesus told the Jewish religionists that they search the Scriptures for knowledge, yet will not come to Him for life. Today many Christians are in the same category. Thus, the Bible does not mean much to them in life and reality.

4. Keeping the Outward Form in Letter

Some religious people keep the outward form in letter (2:27-28). Take the example of baptism. Many dear Christians cling to their concepts about baptism by immersion in water. I myself am strongly in favor of

baptism by immersion according to the Scriptures and I would never baptize people by sprinkling them. However, this matter of baptism has almost entirely become a mere outward form. We must avoid all outward forms. Paul told the Jews that if their circumcision is merely outward, it is unreal. The genuine circumcision is inward, in the heart and in the spirit. We may apply the same word to baptism, for, in a sense, baptism replaces circumcision. In the Old Testament was circumcision, and in the New Testament circumcision has been replaced by baptism. Since circumcision is unreal as long as it is practiced as a bare outward form, so baptism can never be real if it is simply outward. I am sorry to say that nearly all baptisms have degraded into an outward form.

I can illustrate from my own experience. First, I was sprinkled with a few drops of water by a pastor. Later I realized that this was wrong, that it was unscriptural. Then I was immersed in the sea by a Brethren teacher. After this, someone told me that it is wrong to be baptized in salt water instead of fresh water. According to them, people should follow the example of Jesus and be immersed in a river. Then, perhaps, a pastor will argue that it is still wrong because it is not in the river Jordan. Eventually I realized that even if people had been baptized in the river Jordan, someone else would tell them that it was still wrong because they had not been immersed in the precise spot where Jesus Himself had been baptized. The arguments are endless, and the criticisms are unfair and unreasonable.

People have argued and disputed about baptism for centuries because they cling to an outward form. Some, like the Quakers and Mrs. Penn-Lewis, have repudiated the outward, physical baptism. Although I do not agree with this, I caution you not to pay attention to a form which is correct according to your sight. You are not the Lord, neither am I. Whether you are baptized in hot water or cold water, salt water or plain water, in the river or in the ocean, one time or several times, the mere outward

form means nothing. We need the inward reality. I do not encourage you to practice anything as a form. We should not be attached to any form, but pay our full attention to the reality.

5. Lacking Inward Reality in Spirit

Religion is vanity because it lacks inward reality in spirit (2:29). Romans 2:29 says that whatever we are, whatever we do, and whatever we have must all be in spirit. If you are a Jew and are circumcised, your circumcision must be in spirit. If you are a Christian and are baptized, your baptism must be in spirit. Everything must be in spirit. The spirit here, of course, is the human spirit. Why must everything be done in our spirit? Because our spirit is the very place within us where God can dwell. The spirit is the site, the ground where God can act on our behalf. If you are a Christian in your spirit, this means you are a Christian with God. If you act in your spirit, this means you act with God. Without God, everything is vain; with Him, everything is reality. Therefore, we must return to our spirit. If we love other people, we must love them in our spirit. Otherwise, our love is not genuine. It is a political love. However, if we love in our spirit, our love is with God. When you husbands tell your wives that you love them, you need to say this with your spirit. If your love is not in the spirit, it is a fraud, a political love. Many wives have been cheated by their husband's political love. If I say a word to you, I must say it in my spirit. Then that word will be a word with God. Otherwise, it will be political talk. Our spirit is the organ through which God can touch us and through which we can touch God. Everything we are and everything we do must be in our spirit. This is not religion; this is reality.

6. Doing Evils as the Unreligious

Eventually, the religious people practice the same evils as the unreligious (2:21-22). It seems that there is no difference between the unreligious people and the religious people. All are the same. Although the Jews were religious, they behaved even worse than the Gentiles.

In this portion on the condemnation of the religious, we see that religion means nothing, that it is vanity. Therefore, we must stay away from religion and have nothing to do with it. We need the living Person of the Triune God.

II. THE CONDEMNATION ON ALL THE WORLD-- THE TOTALITY OF HOPELESSNESS

Now we come to the condemnation on all the world, a condemnation that unfolds the totality of hopelessness (3:9-20). The world situation is hopeless. Do not try to cure it, correct it, or improve it. Give up your hope. The world condition is incurable.

In this section of Romans, Paul portrays man as totally evil and gives several proofs that the condition of the world is hopeless. Not one person seeks God and no one understands God (3:11). All have turned away from God and have become useless (3:12). No one is righteous (3:10) and no one practices good (3:12). In other words, there is not one righteous man and not one good man. Do you know the difference between a righteous man and a good man? If I work for you for one month at a salary of five hundred dollars per month and you refuse to pay me, you are unrighteous. However, if you pay me, you are a righteous man. If I did not work for you at all and you gave me five hundred dollars as a gift when I needed it, that would be an act of grace. If you did this, you would be a good man. However, Paul says that among all the human beings in the world not one is righteous and not one is good. Do you believe this? I do. We should not think of ourselves as exceptions. No one is righteous; no one is good. Therefore, everyone has become subject to the judgment of God (3:19). The condition of the world is totally hopeless.

Where were we before we were saved? We were all under the righteous judgment of God. Everyone of us was wrong. Not one of us sought God or understood God. Everyone of us had turned aside and had become useless. Not one of us was righteous or good. We were all under the

righteous judgment of God. By this we can see the hopeless condition of the world.

I appreciate Paul's writings. In the section on condemnation we see the source of wickedness, the way of restriction, the vanity of religion, and the hopeless condition of the world. Here is the conclusion of Paul's writings on condemnation: the whole world is subject to the righteous judgment of God. Where would we be and what would we be if we were not yet saved? We would be a hopeless case under God's judgment. Regardless of what we did, what we had, and what we were, we were under God's righteous judgment. We all realized our need for God's salvation. This section on condemnation paves the way for God's salvation and opens up the door for people to enter into God's salvation. Regardless of who we are, we need Christ. We need Christ with His redemption.

Paul's intention in the section on condemnation was to prepare the way for him to minister Christ into us. The ultimate goal of Paul's gospel is to minister Christ into us. When we come to Romans 8, we will find a verse that says, "Christ is in you" (8:10). This is Paul's goal. Whether we are one of mankind, one of the self-righteous, one of the religious people, or a person in the world, we need Jesus. Our need is in our spirit. We should not pay attention to outward things or outward doings, but turn ourselves to the spirit. There in the spirit we will meet Christ. In the spirit we will enjoy Christ. Paul's writing on condemnation paves the way for us to receive Christ. It opens the way for Christ to come into us.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIVE

JUSTIFICATION IN GOD'S WAY

Now we come to the section on justification, a most significant doctrine (3:21-5:11). Martin Luther was raised up by God to wage a fierce battle over justification because it is such a great doctrine in the Bible. Although Luther contended for the truth of justification, we have to understand how justification relates to propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. In this message, we shall cover all these terms and seek to make them clear. However, we first need to consider the righteousness of God.

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

1. God in Justice and Rightness

What is the righteousness of God? We may say that the righteousness of God is what God is with respect to justice and rightness (Rom. 3:21-22; 1:17; 10:3; Phil. 3:9). God is just and right. Whatever God is in His justice and rightness constitutes His righteousness. Furthermore, all that God is in His justice and rightness is actually Himself. Therefore, the righteousness of God is God Himself. The righteousness of God is a Person, not merely a divine attribute.

2. Christ as the Righteousness of God to the Believers

Many Christians say incorrectly that they have the righteousness of Christ. We should not say this. Our righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ; it is Christ Himself. Christ Himself as a Person, not His

attribute of righteousness, has been made the righteousness of God to us (1 Cor. 1:30). Do not say that the righteousness of Christ has become your righteousness. Instead you should say, "Christ is my righteousness. My righteousness before God is the living Person of Christ, not an attribute. The righteous Christ is mine." God has made Christ, who is the very embodiment of God Himself, our righteousness.

3. The Believers Made the Righteousness of God in Christ

Second Corinthians 5:21 says that the believers are made the righteousness of God in Christ. Paul does not say that the believers are made righteous; he says that they are made righteousness. We have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. This is a deep matter. How can we become the righteousness of God? By having Christ wrought into us. We have seen that Christ is the embodiment of God, and that God, as a living Person, is righteousness. Therefore, righteousness, God, and Christ are one. The righteousness of God is God Himself. Since this God is embodied in Christ, Christ is the righteousness of God. Christ has been wrought into us, and we have been put into Christ. We have been mingled together with Christ as one. Thus, we become the righteousness of God. Paul declares, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). As Christ has been wrought into us, we can say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ." Suppose we have a glass of water. Once tea has been blended with it, it no longer is plain water; it is tea. Likewise, once Christ has been wrought into us, we become one with Him.

The righteousness of God is not only God Himself in His justice and rightness, and it is not only the living Person of Christ; it is also we who have been made one with Christ. The living Person of Christ as God's righteousness has been wrought into us, and we have been put into Him. Therefore, we have been made the righteousness of God. We must proclaim, "I am the

righteousness of God. I have been justified. God is righteousness, and I am too. I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I am what God is. I'm fully justified. God and I have been identified. I approve God, and He approves me. We mutually approve each other." This is justification by faith.

Some may think we should not say that we approve God. Nevertheless, we all must approve Him. God likes to be judged and approved by us (Rom. 3:4). Thus, we can say to God, "You approve us, and we approve You."

4. Justification--Being Approved According to the Standard of God's Righteousness

What is justification? Justification is God's action in approving people according to His standard of righteousness. His righteousness is the standard, not ours. Although we think we are righteous, our righteousness is only a quarter inch high. Regardless of how righteous we are or how righteous we think we are, our righteousness is just a fraction of an inch high. How high is God's righteousness? It is unlimited! Can you be approved by God according to your own righteousness? This is impossible. Although you may be right with everyone--with your parents, your children, and your friends--your righteousness will never justify you before God. You may justify yourself according to your standard of righteousness, but that does not enable you to be justified by God according to His standard. We need justification by faith. Justification by faith before God means we are approved by God according to the standard of His righteousness.

How can God do this? He can do it because our justification is based upon the redemption of Christ. When the redemption of Christ is applied to us, we are justified. If there were no such redemption, it would be impossible for us to be justified by God. Redemption is the basis of justification.

II. THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

1. The Atonement in the Old Testament

As we come to the subject of the redemption of Christ, we need to consider the atonement in the Old Testament (Lev. 16:34; 25:9).

A. The Expiation

The atonement in the Old Testament was an expiation (Lev. 25:9; Num. 5:8). Expiation means to appease God for us, to conciliate God by satisfying His righteous requirements.

B. The Expiatory Cover of the Ark

The expiatory cover (rendered "mercy seat" by the King James Version) was the lid of the ark (Exo. 25:17-22; Lev. 16:14; Heb. 9:5). Under this cover was the law which was called the testimony of God (Exo. 25:21). Why was it called the testimony of God? Because the law testifies of what God is. God is fully testified and expressed by His law. Above the expiatory cover were the cherubim of glory, signifying the expression of God (Exo. 25:19-20; Heb. 9:5; Rom. 3:23). Therefore, under the cover was the testimony of God, showing what kind of God He is, and above the cover were the cherubim of glory, expressing the glory of God.

The expiatory cover was sprinkled with the expiatory blood (Lev. 16:14, cf. 18). On the day of atonement, or, as is better to say, the day of expiation, the blood of the expiatory sacrifice was shed, brought into the holiest of holy, and sprinkled upon the expiatory cover. That blood was a speaking blood. At that time, some problems existed between God and the people. Everyone had sinned against God and was short of God's glory. Thus, two problems--the problem of sins and the problem of falling short of God's glory--existed between God and the people, creating a separation between them. There was no way for them to come together. Although the people needed God's grace,

and although God had grace to dispense to them, there was no way for the two parties to approach one another. Expiation was the way. That was the way of atonement, of at-one-ment. In the Old Testament times, the way of atonement, that is of expiation, required a sacrifice in which blood was shed. This blood was brought into the holiest of holy and sprinkled upon the cover of the ark. As we have seen, under this cover was the law exposing and condemning the people as they approached God, and above the cover were the cherubim of glory observing everything. As the blood of atonement was sprinkled upon the cover of the ark, it satisfied the righteous requirements of God's law and it fulfilled the demands of God's glory. Therefore, upon the expiatory cover of the ark God could meet with man, speak to man, and fellowship with man in a lawful way without contradicting His righteousness or glory. It was in this place that God and man were made one. That was the atonement, the expiation.

2. The Redemption in the New Testament

A. The Propitiation

The expiation in the Old Testament was a type of the propitiation in the New Testament. Propitiation is mentioned at least five times in the New Testament. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 we are told that Christ, the Son of God, is Himself the propitiation for our sins. In both places the word propitiation actually means a sacrifice and should be rendered "propitiatory sacrifice." The Greek word in these verses is hilasmos, which means "that which propitiates," that is, a propitiatory sacrifice. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 the Lord Jesus is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Another Greek word regarding propitiation, hilasterion, is found in Hebrews 9:5 and Romans 3:25. Hilasterion means the place where propitiation was made. The proper reference books indicate that the word hilasterion in these two verses means the place of propitiation, and the King James Version renders it as "mercy seat." In the

Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, hilasterion is the word for the term "mercy seat" in Exodus 25 and Leviticus 16. Thus, hilasterion is the place of propitiation. Furthermore, in Hebrews 2:17 is the word hilaskomai, the verbal form of the noun hilasmos. The King James Version translates hilaskomai as "make reconciliation for"; however, it should be translated "propitiate." Christ propitiates for our sins. The matter of propitiation is mentioned five times in the New Testament in relation to Christ: twice it refers to Christ Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice, twice it refers to the place where propitiation was accomplished, and once it refers to the action of propitiation.

In addition to these five references to propitiation in the New Testament, we find the same root used by the publican in his prayer in the temple (Luke 18:13). According to the King James Version, the publican prayed, "God, be merciful to me." However, the Greek means, "Propitiate for me." The publican actually was saying, "O God, propitiate for me. I am sinful in Your eyes. I need propitiation. "

What is the meaning of propitiation? How shall we distinguish it from redemption on the one hand and reconciliation on the other? If we read the New Testament carefully, we will discover that reconciliation includes propitiation. Nevertheless, there is a difference between them. Propitiation means that you have a problem with another person. You have either offended him or else you owe him something. For instance, if I wrong you or am otherwise in debt to you, a problem exists between us. Because of this problem or debt, you have a demand upon me, and unless your demand is satisfied the problem between us cannot be resolved. Thus, there is the need for propitiation.

The Greek word hilasmos implies that I have wronged you and that now I am indebted to you. There is a problem between us that hinders our relationship. Propitiation, therefore, involves two parties, one of which has wronged

the other, has become indebted to the other, and must act to satisfy the demands of the other. If the offending party is to appease the offended party, he must fulfill his demands. The Septuagint uses the word hilasmos for the word atonement in Leviticus 25:9 and Numbers 5:8 because this Greek word means to conciliate two parties and make them one. This is a matter of atonement.

The word atone is composed of two words, "at" and "one." We may write the word atonement this way: at-one-ment. Atonement is at-one-ment. The meaning of atonement is to bring two parties into one. When two parties have been separated and seek to be in oneness, there is the need for propitiation. This is atonement. The action of propitiation is atonement. Propitiation means to make us one with God because there had been a separation between us and God. What was the problem that kept us from God, that made it impossible to have direct fellowship with Him? The problem was our sins. Our sins kept us away from God's presence and hindered God from coming to us. Therefore, we needed propitiation to appease God's demands. Christ accomplished this on the cross when He offered Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice. On the cross He propitiated for us and brought us back to God, making us one with God.

B. The Redemption

What is the difference between propitiation and redemption? The word redeem means to purchase back something which originally was yours but which had become lost. This hymnal belongs to me. If the hymnal becomes lost and I pay the price of buying it back, I would be redeeming the hymnal. Thus, redemption means to repossess at a cost.

We originally belonged to God. We were His possession. However, we were lost. Nevertheless, God did not give us up. He paid the price to have us back, repossessing us at a great cost. This is redemption. Even after we had become lost, He desired to regain us. However, this was not easy for God to do because our being lost involved us in sins and in many other things that were against His righteousness,

holiness, and glory. Because we were lost we had many problems with God in respect to His righteousness, holiness, and glory. We were under a threefold demand, the demand of righteousness, holiness, and glory. Many requirements were laid upon us, and it was impossible for us to fulfill them. The price was too great. God paid the price for us, repossessing us at a tremendous cost. Christ died on the cross to accomplish eternal redemption for us (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:12; 9:28). His blood has obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

C. The Reconciliation

The problem of being an enemy is even more serious than the problem that necessitates propitiation. If I am your enemy, propitiation is inadequate. I need reconciliation. Sinners need propitiation; enemies need reconciliation. Enmity is the greatest problem between man and God. When we were enemies of God, we not only needed propitiation, but also reconciliation. Propitiation mainly deals with sins; reconciliation deals with enmity as well as sins. Therefore, reconciliation includes propitiation. Romans 5 tells us that before we were saved we were both sinners and enemies. As sinners we needed propitiation and as enemies we needed reconciliation. Herein lies the difference between propitiation and reconciliation: propitiation is for sins; reconciliation is both for sins and enmity.

Reconciliation is based upon Christ's redemption (Rom. 5:10, 11) and was accomplished through God's justification (2 Cor. 5:18-19; Rom. 5:1, 11). Hence, reconciliation is the issue of redemption with justification.

In the previous points we mainly covered the definition of various terms--the righteousness of God, justification, propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. Once we have the proper definition of these terms, we can understand

what it means to be justified. Now we shall deal directly with justification.

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD HAVING BEEN MANIFESTED

What is justification? Justification means that the righteousness of God has been manifested. Although the righteousness of God has existed for ages, it was not manifested to us until we believed in the Lord and called on His name. Then the righteousness of God was revealed to us. When God's righteousness is revealed, it is manifested. It is manifested to us when we believe in the Lord Jesus. The manifestation of God's righteousness is mentioned twice in the book of Romans. Romans 1:17 says that the righteousness of God is revealed out of faith to faith. The righteousness of God is manifested in the gospel out of our faith and to our faith. Then Romans 3:21 says that the righteousness of God has been manifested without law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

1. Without Law

That the righteousness of God has been manifested without law means it has nothing to do with the law. Never mix the righteousness of God with the law. They must be kept separate. God's righteousness has nothing to do with the law. We can never obtain God's righteousness by going to the law. As far as God's righteousness is concerned, the law is over. The law was the old dispensation. Now without law, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested through faith of Jesus Christ.

2. Through Faith of Jesus Christ

Bible students have great difficulty with the phrase "faith of Jesus Christ" (3:22). Some say that it means our act of believing in Jesus Christ. Others argue that it refers to the faith of Jesus, that the faith of Jesus becomes ours. I would put it this way: genuine believing is to believe in

the Lord Jesus by His faith. We believe in Jesus Christ by His faith, for we have no faith of our own. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). The more we look at ourselves and examine ourselves, the faster our faith disappears. Faith is not our invention; it can never be initiated by us. It is impossible for us to generate faith. Faith is an aspect of Christ Himself. In fact, faith is Christ. Galatians 2:20 says that we live by the faith of the Son of God. I do not live by my faith--I have no faith of my own--but by the faith of the Son of the living God who has faith and who Himself is faith to me. If you look at yourself, you will never find faith, but if you forget about yourself and say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You," faith will immediately rise up within you. This faith is the faith of Jesus, or we may say it is Jesus believing within us. Thus, the phrase "through faith of Jesus Christ" means believing in Jesus Christ by His faith.

The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law by our believing in Jesus Christ by His faith. We believe in Christ by His faith, not by our own. Christ is our faith. Never say that you cannot believe, for you can believe if you want to. Do not try to believe by yourself, because the more you try the less faith you have. Simply say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You. Lord Jesus, You are so good." If you do this, you will have faith immediately. We believe in Jesus Christ by His faith, and out of this faith and to this faith the righteousness of God is revealed to all who believe.

3. Meeting the Requirements of God's Righteous Law and God's Glory

The righteousness of God has been manifested to meet the requirements of His righteous law and His glory (3:23). When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we receive the righteousness of God which meets all the requirements of God. In Romans 3 we find that the requirements of God are of two categories: the requirements of His righteousness and His glory. Paul clearly mentions God's

law and God's glory. We have all broken the law and we have all come short of the glory. Therefore, Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and come short of God's glory.

Why does Paul suddenly mention the glory of God? The answer involves the propitiation cover mentioned in verse 25. As Paul was writing this part of Romans, he probably had in his mind the picture of the ark of the testimony, especially the propitiation cover. Upon this cover were the cherubim of glory. As we have already pointed out, underneath the cover was the law exposing the sinfulness of people and condemning them, and above the cover were the two cherubim representing God's glory and observing every action of the people. Underneath the cover was the exposing law; above the cover were the watching and observing cherubim. The exposing and condemning law signified the requirements of God's righteousness according to the law, and the observing cherubim signified the requirements of God's glory according to the expression of God. Unless these requirements were fulfilled and God was satisfied, there was no way for sinners to contact God and for God to communicate with them. Hallelujah for the expiating blood! The expiating blood was sprinkled upon the propitiation cover. meeting the requirements of the righteous law and of God's glory.

Propitiation is not only an action; it is a place. Propitiation is a place where God can meet with man. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul was bold to say that this propitiation place is Jesus Christ. God has set forth Christ Jesus as a propitiation cover (3:25), and this propitiation cover is the propitiation place where God can meet with man. This place is the Person of Jesus Christ the Lord. Although many Christians love the Lord Jesus and realize that He is so much to them, they may not know that Christ is a propitiation place where God can meet with us and where we can contact God. Before we knew of this place, we were frightened by the thought of approaching God, but now we are no longer afraid of Him. Upon Christ as the propitiation cover we can meet with

God. This is the meaning of Paul's writing in Romans 3. He used the type of the ark with its cover to show the meaning of justification.

In this universe the Lord Jesus has been set forth as the propitiation place, and all sinners may come to meet God upon Him. Where are we today? We are on the propitiation place. We do have a position, a ground to meet with God, and God has the same ground to communicate with us. Where is the law? The law is under the propitiation cover; it is covered by the propitiating Christ. Where is God's glory? It is above us, yet it has no claim against us because we are upon Christ as the propitiation place. Here we are justified. On this propitiation cover we are the same as God in His righteousness. We and God correspond to one another and are mutually approved. We approve God, and God approves us; God justifies us, and we justify Him.

Do you think it is too bold to say that we can justify God? Romans 3:4 gives us the ground to say it. This verse says that God should be justified in His sayings and overcome when He is judged. We can justify God. I have done this a number of times. Although I recognized that I was a sinner, I did not follow God blindly. I tried my best to verify His words. Eventually, I fully approved God as being right. Do not be afraid to study about God and investigate Him a little to see whether He is right. If you investigate Him, you will find that He is one thousand percent, even one million percent right. You will justify God. On Christ as the propitiation cover, God and we mutually approve one another.

According to our experience, it was not God who firstly approved us, but we who approved God. We do not know how much time God spent to convince us of His righteousness. We were rebellious and said, "I don't like God. God is not right." We all thought this way before we were saved. Many people speak against God saying, "If God is right, why are there so many poor people on the earth? If God is right, why is there no justice among the nations?" They admit that there is God, but claim that He is not righteous. Many of us can testify the same thing,

confessing that we thought God was wrong, that He was not righteous. However, God has been patient with us, doing many things for us until He finally convinced us of His righteousness. Who justified whom first? We firstly justified God. When we were convinced by God of His righteousness, we justified Him and wept in repentance, saying, "God, forgive me. I'm so sinful and unclean. I need Your forgiveness." When we called on the name of the Lord Jesus, we not only were put into Christ but upon Christ. Now we are upon Christ as our propitiation place where God and we can justify one another. We declare, "God, You are righteous. I have no problem with You." Then God replies, "Dear child, I have no problem with you either." Firstly, we approved God; then God approved us. We justified God; then God justified us. All this happened upon Christ as the propitiation place. Under Him the law is covered and upon Him the cherubim are joyous when they see the mutual justification that occurs upon Him as the propitiation cover.

Where are we now? We are on Jesus Christ as the propitiation place. We are on the propitiation cover. The law is under our feet, and the glory of God is over our head satisfied. The law has been silenced; it can no longer speak against us, but the glory of God can rejoice over us with satisfaction. Here upon the propitiation cover we enjoy God's full justification.

IV. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD HAVING BEEN SHOWN

1. To the Old Testament Saints

The righteousness of God was shown to the Old Testament saints in God's passing by their sins. Paul uses this term "passing by" in Romans 3:25. During Old Testament times, the sins of the people had not been taken away, but only covered by the expiating blood. Their sins were not carried away until Jesus Christ died on the cross. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Before the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the sins of the Old Testament saints still remained, although they were covered with the blood of the type of

Christ. God had to pass by their sins because He is righteous. The blood of the type of Christ was shed in the presence of God, and the righteous God was compelled to pass by all the sins covered by that blood. In passing by those covered sins God showed forth His righteousness.

Let me illustrate. Suppose I owe a certain person a billion dollars. Although it is impossible for me to pay this amount, I am bound by that person to pay him. However, I have a friend who is a billionaire. My friend proceeds to tell both parties that there is no problem, that he himself will pay the full debt, and he writes a promissory note as evidence. Once the promissory note has been delivered and accepted, I must be released because of righteousness. Likewise, the Old Testament saints owed God a tremendous amount, but there was a promissory note--the blood of the expiatory sacrifice sprinkled on the propitiation cover--which guaranteed that Christ would come to take away sins. This promissory note covered all the sins of the Old Testament saints. Christ redeemed the promissory note when He died on the cross and paid the full price. Therefore, because of His righteousness God had to pass by their sins. In so doing, He has shown His righteousness to the Old Testament saints. This is the meaning of Romans 3:25.

2. To the New Testament Saints

God's righteousness has been shown to the New Testament saints in God's justifying them. God has justified us freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ and through the faith of Jesus (3:24, 26). Since Christ has paid the price for our sins and has accomplished the full redemption to meet all of God's requirements, God, in order for Him to be just, must justify us. On God's side justification is by His righteousness; on our side justification is by His free grace as compared with justification by the work of the law. To be justified by the work of the law we need to work, but to be justified by the redemption in Christ there is no need of our work; it is freely given by His grace. We do not deserve it. But God is bound by His righteousness to justify us

because of the redemption of Christ which meets all His requirements. Thus, God has shown His righteousness to the Old Testament saints in passing by their sins and to the New Testament saints in justifying them. God's dealing with us today is not simply to pass by our sins, but to justify us. God has justified us.

V. BOASTING BEING EXCLUDED

Because of this, boasting is excluded. None of us has anything of which to boast. We have not been justified by the law of works, but by the law of faith (3:27). This faith does not originate with us; it is of the living Christ.

VI. ONE GOD JUSTIFYING TWO PEOPLES

God is one. This one God justifies both the Jews and the Gentiles (3:30). He is the God both of Jews and Gentiles (3:29). In saying this Paul paves the way for the Body of Christ. If God's dealing with people differed from one group to another, it would be difficult to have the Body life. However, God has one way of dealing with all people, and this one God with His one way brings the different peoples together as one. Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, it is the one God who justifies us all. Among us we have a number of Jewish brothers and sisters, and God has justified them in the same way as He has justified us, the Gentiles. The one God has justified all of us that we may be one as the Body of Christ.

God justifies the circumcision out of faith and the uncircumcision through faith. Notice the prepositions: the Jews, the circumcision, are justified out of faith; the Gentiles, the uncircumcision, are justified through faith. What does this mean? The Jews have a position before God as His people. In spite of their unbelief and apparent uncleanness, the Jews still have the position as God's people. We must recognize this and be careful how we refer to the Jews, for God will say of them, "They are My

people." Having the standing as God's people makes a great difference, and we need to respect it. In Genesis 12:3 God promised to Abraham, the forefather of the Jews, that whoever blessed him would be blessed by God and that whoever cursed him would be cursed by God. God continues to fulfill Genesis 12:3. Whoever touches the Jews in the way of cursing will be cursed. Throughout the past 25 centuries there has been no exception: every individual and nation that has cursed the Jews has been cursed and everyone who has blessed the Jews has been blessed.

Although the Jews are conditionally not right with God today, they are still the people of God positionally. Elsewhere in Romans Paul says that God's selection is irrevocable (11:28-29). The Jewish people are God's selection, and God's selection is eternal. Regardless of how unbelieving the Jews are at present, they still are the people of God positionally. Therefore, when God justifies the Jews, He justifies them out of faith, not through faith. Why is it not through faith? Because the Jews have the position already. However, when God justifies the Gentiles, He must justify them through faith because they are far away from God. There is a great distance between the Gentiles and God. Since the Jews, the circumcision, already have the position, they are justified out of faith; since the Gentiles are a great distance from God, they are justified through faith. It is through faith that the Gentiles reach the right position. In both cases it is a matter of faith.

One God justifies us all. Both Jews and Gentiles are under one God and in one way. Paul's word in Romans 3:29-30 prepares the way for the Body of Christ in chapter 12. Whether we are Jewish believers or Gentile believers, we are one Body in Christ under the one economy of the one God.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIX

THE EXAMPLE OF JUSTIFICATION

I love the book of Romans because it was written in a solid and substantial way. Although this book covers many doctrines, it was actually written according to facts and experiences. The book of Romans is based on experience. Justification may appear to be a doctrinal matter, but the Apostle Paul, along with the doctrine of justification, gives us a living example of it--the person of Abraham (4:1-25). In this message we will consider Abraham, the example of justification. He is our model, our pattern. The name Abraham means "father of a multitude." According to the Scriptures, Abraham was the father of both the Jews and the believing Gentiles (Rom. 4:11-12, 16-17; Gal. 3:7-9, 29). Whoever is of faith, whether Jew or Gentile, is a descendant of Abraham.

I. THE CALLED ONE

Abraham was the called one. Adam was created, but Abraham was called. There is a great difference between being created and being called. The book of Genesis is divided into two main sections: the first section covers the first ten and a half chapters and relates the history of the created race, with Adam as the father and head; the second section covers from the middle of chapter eleven through the end of the book and relates the history of the called race, with Abraham as the father and head. The history of the created race as recorded in Genesis culminates in the building of the tower and city of Babel (Babylon in Greek). Names of idols were written on this tower, meaning that the whole created race had turned to

idolatry. Thus, Paul says the human race had exchanged God for idols (1:23, 25).

Paul wrote Romans 1 according to the history narrated in Genesis. Beginning with the time of Cain, man disapproved of holding God in his full knowledge and gave Him up. Mankind forsook God and built the city of Enoch, the first human culture as recorded in Genesis 4. With that culture the human race descended into corruption and remained in a state of corruption until the flood came as God's judgment upon them. By God's mercy, eight persons were saved through the ark, which typified Christ. The number eight is the number of resurrection, indicating that these people were saved and preserved in resurrection. In a sense, Noah was the head of a new race. However, not long afterward the descendants of Noah also gave up God at Babel in Genesis 11. When they exchanged God for idols, the forsaking of God was complete. The giving up of God was not completed before the flood; it was completed afterward by the descendants of Noah, who fell into idolatry.

Fornication followed idolatry. After Babel, Sodom emerged. Sodom was a city of fornication. In the English language we have the words sodomy and sodomites, which signify the most shameful acts of fornication. The inhabitants of Sodom violated their own nature and caused great confusion. At the time of Genesis 19, the human race, which had exchanged God for idols, had fallen into sodomy. As a result, every kind of wickedness burst forth.

This was the background of Romans 1. Romans 1 was written according to the history of the human fall: disapproving of holding God, exchanging God for idols, falling into fornication, and producing every kind of wickedness.

During the terrible process of the fall, mankind exchanged God for idols and completely abandoned Him. In return, God also forsook mankind. God seemed to say, "Since you have given Me up, I will let you go." The created race gave up God, and God gave up the created race.

However, God called out of this race one man with his wife. God had no intention of calling a third person. His intention was to call one complete person, which includes a man and wife. If you are an unmarried man, you are incomplete. Without your wife, you are an incomplete person; you need her to complement you. Together you are a complete entity. Therefore, God called Abraham with his wife as one complete person.

We may think of ourselves as not being very absolute for God. However, Abraham, our believing father and model, was not absolute himself. When he was called by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, he not only brought his wife, but other relatives as well.

God called Abraham by appearing to him as the God of glory (Acts 7:2-3). God did not call him by mere words: He called him by His glory. Abraham saw the glory of God and was attracted.

Our experience is the same. In a sense, we also have seen the glory of God. When we heard the gospel and it penetrated us, we saw the glory of God. Did you not see the glory of God at the time you were saved? I saw it when I was an ambitious young man. I had no intention of receiving God, but as the gospel penetrated into me I could not help saying, "God, I want You." I could not deny that the glory of God had appeared to me. Such an experience is indefinable. No human words can adequately describe what we saw when the gospel penetrated our being. We can only say that the God of glory appeared to us, attracting us and calling us. We, like Abraham, were called by the God of glory.

Abraham was the same as we are. We should not think that we are different from him. We should not appreciate Abraham and depreciate ourselves, for we are all on the same level. We are all Abraham. Abraham was not outstanding. When I heard the story of Abraham as a child, I thought he was extraordinary. However, as I read the Word in later years, I realized that there is little difference between Abraham and me, that we are nearly

the same. Although Abraham had been called by God, he did not have the boldness to leave the land of idolatry, forcing God to use Abraham's father to bring him out of Ur. Abraham was the called one, but his father initiated the actual departure. They left Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in Haran. However, when Abraham still was not bold enough to follow God absolutely, God was forced to take his father. His father died in Haran, and God called Abraham the second time.

Abraham's first call is recorded in Acts 7:2-4; the second call is found in Genesis 12:1. We should note the difference between these two calls. According to Acts 7:2, God called Abraham out of two things--his country and his kindred. According to Genesis 12:1, another item is added--his father's house. The first call asked Abraham to leave his country and his people; the second call asked him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. Abraham and his wife had to go out alone. God took away Abraham's father and He did not want him to take any other relative with him.

If we consider what Abraham did, we will realize that we are not the only ones who are not absolute in obeying the Lord's call. Our father Abraham was the first to follow God without being absolute. He felt lonely. He did not want to leave by himself. Thus, he took his nephew Lot with him. This violated God's call. Although Abraham answered the Lord's call, his answer, at least in part, disobeyed that call. Likewise, nearly all of us have answered God's call; yet in our answer we acted contrary to His call. None of us has answered God's call in an absolute way. Nevertheless, God is absolute. Regardless of how unabsolute we are, God will fulfill His call.

Abraham loved Lot. God used him to discipline Abraham. Eventually, Lot separated from Abraham and Abraham followed God's call absolutely. He no longer had his father or his nephew. He was alone with his wife. He had left his country, his kindred, and his father's house.

However, Abraham had to leave one more thing--himself. He held on to himself.

We know Abraham still clung to himself by his reaction to Sarah's suggestion that he have a child by Hagar. Although this proposal was made with a good intention, it was against God's call. Abraham should have exercised discernment and not have listened to his wife. Sarah's suggestion was a test to prove that Abraham remained in his old self, that part of him was still the old creation. God's intention, however, was to call Abraham completely out of every part of the old creation--not only out of his country, kindred, and father's house, but also out of himself. It seemed that God was telling Abraham, "You should not do anything. You must come out of yourself. I will do everything for you. But I cannot do anything while you remain in yourself." Nevertheless, Abraham acted upon Sarah's proposal, and the result was Ishmael. That was a very serious mistake, and the Jews continue to suffer from it. Why did Abraham make such an error? Because he was still in himself. He had forsaken many other things, but he had not forsaken himself.

When did Abraham leave himself? He forsook himself when he was a hundred years old, at which time he considered himself as good as dead. To be sure, every dead person has come out of himself. At the age of a hundred, Abraham looked at himself and said, "I am finished. I am as good as dead." Romans 4:19 says, "he considered his own body already become dead." This indicated that he had finally emerged from himself. He had become a fully called person. Have you been called? Although you are a called person, you have not yet forsaken yourself.

As we have seen, the. created race had degenerated to such an extent that they exchanged God for idols. God was unable to do anything with them. As far as God was concerned, the created race under the headship of Adam was hopeless, and He gave it up completely. However, out of that created and fallen race God called out Abraham to be the father and head of a new race, the called race. To

which race do we belong--the created race or the called race? We belong to the called race. However, we are the same as our father Abraham. We, like him, are reacting to the Lord's call step by step, not absolutely. We are all in the process of responding to God's call. Regardless how weak you are, I am assured that eventually you will be called out. Nevertheless, you should hasten your calling and forsake everything that is not God Himself. The faster you move on, the better. I encourage you to speed up. Come out of everything that is not God.

II. THE BELIEVING ONE

The called race becomes the believing race. Abraham was first a called one, then a believing one. He had abandoned everything and had no way to go on except to trust in God. He trusted in God because he did not know where he was going. God had only told him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He did not tell Abraham where he was going, forcing him to trust in God. Abraham could say, "I simply trust in God. I go wherever He leads me." If we study the history of Abraham, we will learn that his life was a trusting life, a believing life. God did not expect Abraham to do anything. God seemed to tell him, "Abraham, you have been called by Me. Don't do anything. I'll do everything for you. Just stay with Me. When I move, you move. You must go wherever I go. Don't do anything for yourself or by yourself." This is what it means to trust in God.

Many people have the mistaken impression that believing in the Lord Jesus is simply saying, "Lord Jesus, I believe in You. I take You as my Savior." This is right, but the implications are far-reaching. It means that we must terminate ourselves, admitting that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing. Every step and every moment we must trust in Him. I do not know how to do things; I only know how to trust in my Lord. I have been called out of everything that is not God and now I believe into everything that is God. I believe in Him and I believe

in all that He has accomplished for me. I believe in what He can do for me and in what He shall do for me. I put my full trust in Him. This is the testimony of the called and believing race. As children of Abraham, the believing father, we are a believing people (Gal. 3:7-9).

1. God Who Calls Things Not Being as Being

In what kind of God did Abraham believe? Who is the God in whom we believe? The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who calls things not being as being (4:17). The God of Abraham calls things not existing as existing, meaning that He creates things out of nothing. God is the Creator. Abraham believed in such a God and applied this God to his situation. In a sense, Abraham was unable to produce an heir. Nevertheless, God called Isaac into being. Although Isaac had no being, God called him into being. When Isaac did not exist and when there was no possibility for him to exist, God declared, "There shall be an Isaac." Isaac was born: God had called something not being as being. We must believe in the same God, for He is the almighty Creator who calls things not existing as existing.

2. God Who Gives Life to the Dead

The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who gives life to the dead (4:17). This means that God can resurrect the dead. Abraham experienced this when God asked him to offer up Isaac. Abraham obeyed. As Abraham offered Isaac, he believed that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). He believed that God would give life to his son and that he would have his son again in resurrection.

We need to believe in the Lord Jesus in the same way. We believe in God the Creator, who calls things not being as being. We also believe in Him as the life-giver, as the One who can raise the dead. He can create out of nothing and He can give life to the dead.

We may apply this to the church life. You may feel that the situation in your local church is poor. Yes, it is very poor; in fact, it is nothing. You must say to the Lord, "Lord, come in to call things not being as being." Perhaps you may migrate to a certain locality and find that it is a place filled with death. That is the reason God sent you. You must believe in Him as the One who gives life to the dead.

In 1949 I was sent to Taiwan. I thought of that island as a backward region. I had been living and working in Shanghai, the largest city in the Far East, where the Lord's work was strong. A thousand saints were meeting together. We had seventeen homes for meetings and four publications. Suddenly I was removed from mainland China and sent to the little island of Taiwan. When I surveyed the situation, I was deeply disappointed. I could not do anything and I did not want to do anything. I had no appetite to work in such a backward country with its poor people. I laid on the bed and looked at the ceiling, saying to myself, "What are you doing here? Why did you come here?" Then I turned to my wife and asked, "Why did we come? What can we do?" I was very troubled, and my wife had no word to help me. One day, the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead touched my heart, telling me not to be disappointed. After that, I was burdened for the work on Taiwan. In less than five years we grew in numbers from three hundred and fifty people to twenty thousand. During the first year we increased almost thirty-fold. Many who were saved during that time are now co-workers.

We must believe in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead. Do not be disappointed by the situation in your locality. Do not say that everything is poor and dead. Such a place is the right place for you and the right place for God. Is it poor? You have a rich God who calls things not being as being. Is it dead? You have a living God who gives life to the dead. Your situation gives an opportunity for God to come in

and impart life to the dead. Do not complain. Call on Him and believe in Him. Do not be disappointed with your family situation. Do not say that your wife is poor or that your husband is dead. The more you say that your wife is poor, the worse she is. The more you say that your husband is dead, the worse he is. You must declare, "My wife is poor, but my God is not poor. My husband is dead, but my God is not dead. The God in whom I believe is the God who creates things out of nothing and who gives life to the dead. My God does not give life to the living--He gives life to the dead. My situation is an excellent opportunity for God."

III. HIS FAITH RECKONED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS

This kind of faith is reckoned by God as righteousness (4:3, 22). The more we thus believe in God, the greater is the sensation that God is pleased with us. This is the righteousness of God reckoned to us as the issue of our faith. As we saw in the last message, faith is the living Christ Himself. When Christ comes into us as the believing One, He is our faith. Then God reckons our faith as righteousness. Thus, we have both faith and righteousness. This means that we are gaining more of Christ. We have Him as our faith and our righteousness. He is the faith by which we believe in Him and the righteousness which God reckons to us. He is our everything. The more we believe in Him, the more we gain of Him. The more we believe in Him, the more God gives Him to us.

IV. CIRCUMCISION RECEIVED AS A SEAL

The faith reckoned to Abraham as righteousness did not depend on the outward form of circumcision, because circumcision came later. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision (4:11). Circumcision, as an outward form, was a seal of the inward reality. If we do not have the reality, we should forget the outward form. If we have the reality, we may

occasionally need an outward form as the seal. Circumcision was such a seal to Abraham. Moreover, it was a seal to the believing Gentiles, the uncircumcision, of whom Abraham was also the father.

V. MADE THE FATHER OF FAITH

Therefore, Abraham became the father of faith (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7-9, 29). He was the father of the uncircumcision who have the same faith (4:11) and of the circumcision who walk in the steps of the same faith (4:12). Abraham was the father of two groups of people--the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. If you believe in the Lord, Abraham is your father. All the believers in Christ are his descendants.

VI. THE PROMISE GIVEN FOR HIM AND HIS SEED TO BE THE HEIRS OF THE WORLD

The promise was given to Abraham and his seed that they should be heirs of the world (4:13). This is a great matter. Abraham and his descendants have inherited God and they will also inherit the world. Let other people fight for the control of the world. The world will be ours. After the wars are over, God will say, "Let My people have the world." This promise was not given through the works of the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Who will inherit the earth? Those who have been called and believe in the Lord Jesus, those who have Christ as their faith and as their righteousness. Be assured that the world will be ours. We do not need to fight or strive. We simply need to believe in the mighty acts of God. Every day I read the international news to see what God is doing, especially in the Middle East. It is wonderful to be living in this age, an age of God's activity. God is not only acting on behalf of the Jews, but also on our behalf. One day the world will belong to all the believing heirs of Abraham.

Do you believe this? I have the complete confidence that one day we shall inherit the earth. We should expect to inherit the world. The Bible does assure us that we

shall inherit the world. Christ Himself is eager to come back and recover the earth. He is far more interested in the earth than in the heavens. The Lord will return to take the earth not only for Himself, but also for us. We are the heirs of the promise and we shall inherit the world.

VII. THE PROOF OF GOD'S JUSTIFICATION

The proof of God's justification is the resurrected Christ (4:22-25). I like the hymn which says,

Father God, Thou hast accepted
Jesus as our Substitute;
Judged the Just One for the unjust,
Couldst Thou change Thy attitude?
As a proof of perfect justice,
At Thine own right hand He sits;
He, as Thy full satisfaction,
Righteously Thy need befits.

Thus, the resurrected Christ who sits at the right hand of God is the evidence that we have been justified. The redeeming death of Christ as the ground for God to justify us has been fully accepted by God, and Christ has been resurrected from the dead as a proof of this. This is the proof of the justification God has given us.

The death of Christ has fully fulfilled and satisfied God's righteous requirements, so that we are justified by God through His death (3:24). His resurrection is a proof that God is satisfied with His death for us and that we are justified by God because of His death and in Him, the resurrected One, we are accepted before God. Not only so, but, as the resurrected One, He is also in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and is always acceptable to God. Therefore, Romans 4:25 says that He was raised because of our justification.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SEVEN

THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION

(1)

THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN JUSTIFICATION

Romans 4 is a deep chapter. We should not understand it just in a superficial way. If we enter into the depths of this chapter, we will see it reveals that adequate, living justification is God's deeper work in calling fallen people out of everything other than God and bringing them back to Himself. God created man for Himself and to Himself. However, man fell. The meaning of the fall of man is to be kept from God by anything that is not God. The man who had been created to God fell away from God to other things. It does not matter whether a thing is good or bad. As long as it is not God and it keeps man from God, it constitutes a fall. In God's justification, God calls the fallen man out of everything back to Himself. Therefore, when God called Abraham, He did not tell him where he should go, because His intention was to bring Abraham back to Himself. Moment after moment and step after step, Abraham's heart had to cleave to God. He had to trust in God for every move, not leaving His presence for a moment. In other words, Abraham had to be one with God.

After God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, God trained Abraham to believe in Him. As we have seen, believing in God means to believe into God and to make ourselves one with God. In this kind of believing, a man admits that he is nothing, that he has nothing, and that he can do nothing. He agrees that he must be terminated.

Thus, believing in God means to terminate ourselves and to let God be our very being, to let God be all that we should be. From the time we first believe in Him, we should not be anything. We should be completely terminated and allow God to be everything in us. This is the accurate meaning of circumcision. It is inadequate even to ask the Lord to circumcise our heart, for the deep and adequate circumcision is to terminate yourself and allow God to be everything.

When a person has been called by God in this way, the living God transfuses Himself into him. This word, transfuse, is important in describing what transpires at God's calling. The living God spontaneously transfuses Himself into the called one. As a result, he is attracted by God and to God. Unconsciously, some element, some essence of the living God is transfused into him, and he reacts to God by believing in Him. This reaction is faith.

When you heard the gospel of glory regarding the Lord Jesus, you repented. This means that God called you out of everything other than Himself. At that moment, without your even knowing it, the living Christ in His gospel of glory transfused Himself into you (2 Cor. 4:4). Some element of Christ penetrated your being, and you were attracted to Him. You reacted to Him, and your spontaneous reaction was your believing, your faith. The Christ who transfused Himself into you became your faith. Therefore, faith does not originate with us; it comes from God. Faith is not separate from Christ, for it is actually Christ Himself transfusing Himself into us and producing a reaction within us.

Our believing is an echo. How can there be an echo without a sound? It is impossible. Christ is the sound. When this sound reaches our heart and spirit it causes a reaction, an echo. This reaction is our appreciation of and faith in the Lord Jesus. This faith is actually Christ Himself within us responding to the gospel. Therefore, this faith is reckoned to us by God as righteousness. When Christ transfused Himself into you, there was a reaction

within you--believing. After you believed in the Lord, God reacted to you, reckoning your faith, which is Christ, as righteousness. We do not find this experience in the Bible if we read superficially, but if we probe into the depths of the Scriptures, we find it there. It is as if God said to us, "Poor sinner, you don't have righteousness. As I, the living God, am speaking with you, My essence is being transfused into you. This will cause you to react to Me in faith, and I will reckon this faith to you as righteousness." When God does this to us, we have an appreciative and loving reaction toward Him. This reaction is our faith, a faith that does not originate with us, but which is the essence of the living Christ within us. This faith returns to God, causing a reaction in God toward us: the righteousness of God is reckoned as ours, and we have something that we never had before. This is our experience of God in justification.

Thus, we have the righteousness of God, which is Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ. Abraham, our believing father, received the righteousness of God and Isaac. Likewise, we have received both the righteousness of God and Christ, the present Isaac. This is an experience of God calling things not being as being. When we came to God on the day we were saved, we had nothing. Nevertheless, God appeared to us and called things not being as being. Formerly, we did not have the righteousness of God; after a few minutes we had it. Before that time, we did not have Christ; after a few minutes we had Him.

Once we have an experience of the righteousness of God and Christ, we will guard it as a priceless treasure. We will proclaim, "I have the righteousness of God. I have Christ." However, one day God will intervene and say, "Offer this on the altar." Will you do it? Not one out of a hundred Christians is willing. Instead they say, "O Lord, don't ask me to do this. I would do anything else, but not this." Nevertheless, we must remember the reactions which go back and forth between man and God. The righteousness of God and Christ are ours--these came as God's reaction to our faith. Now we must return this

reaction to God by offering it to Him. After we react in this way, God will react again. God's first reaction was to call things not being as being. His second reaction is to give life to the dead. This is profound.

According to Romans 4, the ultimate issue of this series of reactions is the resurrected Christ. This resurrected Christ is now in the heavens as a strong proof that God has been satisfied and that we have been justified. The resurrected Christ is in the third heavens at the right hand of God as conclusive evidence that all of God's requirements have been satisfied and that we have been thoroughly and adequately justified. However, this resurrected Christ is not only in the heavens, but also within us to impart life that we may have a life of justification. Therefore, justification is not merely a positional matter; it becomes a dispositional matter. The death of Christ gave us a positional justification, and the resurrected Christ in the heavens is a proof of this. Now the resurrected Christ also lives inside us, reacting within us and living out a life of dispositional justification. Eventually, we are justified both in position and in disposition. We not only have an objective justification, but a subjective justification as well. We may now live such a subjective, dispositional justification.

This justification is the real, living circumcision. What is circumcision? Circumcision means to terminate ourselves and to come into God: it terminates us and it germinates God into us. The Jews do not care for the inward reality of circumcision; they only care for the outward form, the practice of cutting off a piece of flesh. This is not circumcision in the eyes of God. In God's eyes, circumcision means to cut off yourself, terminate yourself, and allow God to germinate Himself within you to be your life that you may have a new beginning. This circumcision is the outward seal of the real, inward justification

Abraham experienced God as the One who calls things not being as being. By the birth of Isaac Abraham experienced God in this way. Furthermore, by the

resurrection of Isaac, Abraham experienced God as the One who gives life to the dead. There are two kinds of Isaac: the first is Isaac born; the second is Isaac resurrected. The God in whom Abraham believed had these two aspects. He believed in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead.

Regardless of who we are or of what situation in which we find ourselves, the general human condition is one of not being. This means that nothing exists. The second general condition of everyone and everything is deadness. Thus, the overall situation of man has two aspects--nothingness and deadness. The actual condition of us all is nothingness and deadness. But the God in whom our father Abraham believed and in whom we also believe is the God who calls things into existence out of nothing. When we say, "Nothing," He says, "Something." When we say, "Not being," He says, "Being." Do not say that the church in a certain place is poor. It may be poor in your eyes, but not in the eyes of the God in whom Abraham believed. God may tell you, "You say nothing exists. After one minute, I will call something into existence." Suppose the person of James Barber did not exist. If God wanted a James Barber, He would simply call, "James Barber," and James Barber would come into being. This means that God calls things not being as being. When God told Abraham, "Your seed shall be as the stars of heaven," nothing existed at that time as far as the descendants of Abraham were concerned. There was not even one descendant. Nevertheless, God made such a declaration regarding Abraham's seed, and Abraham believed. Approximately a year later, Abraham's first descendant came into being: Isaac was born. By the birth of Isaac Abraham experienced God as the One who calls things not being as being.

However, this is only half of the experience of God, for Abraham also experienced God as the One who gives life to the dead. When Abraham received Isaac back after offering him to God on the altar, he experienced God giving life to the dead. A church may exist in a certain

locality, but be quite dead. Do not be quick to make a judgment, because God gives life to the dead. When a church is dead, it provides an excellent opportunity for the God in whom Abraham believed to enter in and impart life to that dead church.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN JUSTIFICATION

The common understanding of justification among most Christians is this: we are sinful, God is righteous and holy, and there is no way for us to contact Him or for Him to contact us. Thus, Christ died on the cross and accomplished redemption by shedding His blood. Under His blood we are redeemed, and God has a righteous position to justify us. All of this is absolutely correct. However, the Apostle Paul did not conclude the section on justification at this point, which is reached at the end of chapter 3. When I studied the book of Romans as a young Christian, I thought that chapter 4 was unnecessary. It seemed to me that justification had been completely covered at the end of chapter 3, that chapter 5 should have been connected to chapter 3, and that chapter 4 should have been eliminated. Later I realized that the Apostle Paul was not that superficial. His concern was deeper than redemption--he cared about God's purpose. Redemption is not God's purpose; it is a process to reach God's purpose. In Romans 3 we see redemption bringing forth God's justification, but we do not see God's purpose. What was God's purpose in justification? In answering this question, Paul used Abraham's history as an example, as a picture to explain what no human words can explain. If we study the picture in chapter 4, we will realize that it is deeper, more profound, and more far-reaching than chapter 3.

We thought that justification was merely a matter related to sins. However, when we read Genesis 15 where Abraham's faith was reckoned by God as righteousness, we find no mention of sin. Sin was not involved. The concern was over a seed which would become a kingdom for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Abraham was not called out by God simply because God had mercy on his sinful

condition. God did not say, "Abraham, you are so pitiful. I do not want you to go to hell. In My mercy I come to call you out of your fallen state." That was not the issue at all. In Genesis 1 we are told that God made man in His own image to express Himself and that this man was a corporate man, not an individual man. God created a corporate man that included both male and female. According to Genesis 5:2, both Adam and Eve are called Adam, signifying that God created a corporate man to express Him and exercise His dominion. In other words, God wanted to have a kingdom as a sphere in which to express His glory. Although this was God's purpose, man fell away from it. Once man had turned away from God, had been distracted from God's purpose, and had been occupied with other things, he fell deeply into sin. Nevertheless, the involvement in Genesis 15 is not sin, but how God's purpose can be fulfilled. It is not a question of being saved, but of accomplishing God's purpose. As long as you are involved in the fulfillment of God's purpose, you will be saved.

Christianity is superficial, concerning itself with the salvation of man, not with the purpose of God. God's justification is not primarily for man's salvation; it is for the fulfillment of His purpose. Why has God chosen you? He did not choose you primarily for salvation, He chose you for His purpose. Why has God called you? He has not called you for heaven. He has called you for the fulfillment of His purpose. As long as you are involved with God's purpose, your salvation is secure. However, if you only care for your salvation, you may miss the mark of God's purpose. Salvation is not an end in itself; it is for God's purpose. Thus, God's justification is for the fulfillment of His purpose.

There is no mention of sin in Genesis 15. God told Abraham, "Look at the heavens and count the stars. Your seed will be like the stars in the sky." Abraham believed, and his faith was counted by God as righteousness. God's justification of Abraham was unrelated to sin. It was

totally involved with God's purpose, with having a seed to produce a kingdom for the fulfillment of God's purpose. This is why the Apostle Paul in Romans 4, after referring to Genesis 15 where Abraham's faith was reckoned as righteousness, mentions the promise given to Abraham and his seed of inheriting the world (4:13). What does inheriting the world have to do with justification? Why does Paul mention this in chapter 4? Abraham and his heirs must inherit the world for the sake of God's kingdom, and God's kingdom is for His purpose. Romans 4 tells us that God's justification is not for going to heaven or merely for our salvation. Justification enables Abraham and all his believing heirs to inherit the world and to exercise the dominion of God on this earth as mentioned in Genesis 1. If we only had Romans 3, we would say that God's justification, based upon Christ's redemption, is for our salvation. Chapter 4, however, clearly unveils that God's justification of His chosen ones is not merely for their salvation; it is purposely for them to inherit the world that they may exercise God's dominion on the earth.

THE ISSUE OF THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION

According to Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed God's word about his seed being as the stars of heaven, and God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness. Although Abraham received God's righteousness at that time, he did not realize very much about it. That righteousness was abstract, not solid or concrete. It might have been little more than a term to Abraham.

In Genesis 16 we find the birth of Ishmael. Although God had reckoned righteousness to Abraham, Abraham had nothing concrete. Thus, Sarah proposed that he have a child by Hagar, and Abraham used his own strength to produce Ishmael. Positionally speaking, Abraham had the righteousness of God; dispositionally speaking, he did not have it. He only had an Ishmael. Therefore, God intervened and seemed to say, "Abraham, you must be

complete. I am a complete God. You must believe My word and trust in Me. I reckoned your faith as righteousness to you. You should not act by yourself to produce an Ishmael to fulfill My purpose. This is not what I have reckoned to you. Ishmael is not the righteousness that I have reckoned to you. You must stop your doing. As a reminder to you, I want you to be circumcised." Circumcision came in simply because Abraham acted on his own to fulfill God's righteousness. Galatians 4 tells us that Hagar typifies the law. Producing an Ishmael by Hagar means to have the works of the law, works that are not the righteousness of God. Abraham had to learn to terminate himself, to cease from his own energy, and to be circumcised.

In Genesis 17 God speaks about Isaac, promising to make His covenant with him. In typology, Isaac typifies Christ as the righteousness of God reckoned to the believing ones by faith. In Genesis 15 Abraham had the righteousness of God positionally. When Isaac was born, he had the righteousness of God dispositionally. He had a real experience of God's righteousness.

The understanding of many Christians is quite superficial. They say, "We are sinful. Christ died for us. If we believe in Him, under His blood God will give us His righteousness and justify us." According to this concept, righteousness is merely positional and objective. However, from our experiences we can realize that the very righteousness that was reckoned to us at the time we believed was Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ. Since Isaac typifies Christ, we may say that Isaac was our righteousness. Eventually, the righteousness of God is not an abstract term, but a person, the resurrected Christ. This resurrected Christ becomes our present Isaac. Although we received the righteousness of God on the day we believed, we did not realize that this righteousness was actually Christ, the Son of God.

Immediately after receiving Christ, we determined to do good deeds for God. This means that we married Hagar and produced an Ishmael. Remember that Ishmael

typifies the work of the law. Although we did a good work, God would say, "Cast Ishmael out. I don't want that. You must be dealt with and put on the cross. You must be terminated. You must be cut. You must be circumcised. You need My Son as the living righteousness of God to be born in you and to come forth out of you." In this way, we have a genuine experience of the righteousness of God and are justified dispositionally as well as positionally.

After Abraham received his Isaac, he was completely satisfied with him. Likewise, when we have an experience of Christ individually, we are very satisfied with Him saying, "A few years ago I only knew the righteousness of God. I never experienced that the righteousness of God is Christ Himself. Now I experience and enjoy Christ as the righteousness of God." However, as you are enjoying your individual Christ, God appears, as He did to Abraham, saying, "Offer your Isaac to Me." Perhaps the Lord will tell you to go to the church. This troubles you. You reply, "I don't care for the church. As long as I have my experience of Christ, isn't that enough?" This kind of response proves that you are unwilling to present your Isaac on the altar. However, if you offer your individual Isaac to God, God will react to you once again, and thousands of Isaacs will return to you. Abraham offered one Isaac, but he received thousands of descendants in return. These descendants formed the kingdom, the nation of Israel, for the purpose of exercising God's dominion. This is why Paul said that Abraham and his heirs will inherit the earth.

The Body life is implied here. In chapter 12 we find the Body: "We who are many are one body in Christ." In chapter 14 Paul interprets the Body as being the kingdom of God, telling us that we must receive all the brothers for the sake of God's kingdom. Romans 14:17 says that the kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Body life is the kingdom of God for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

One day the God of glory came to us through the preaching of the gospel. We were attracted, convinced, and

began to appreciate Him. During that time, the God of glory transfused some element of His divine being into us, and we believed in Him spontaneously. Then we said, "O God, I am a sinner. I thank You that Your Son Jesus Christ died on the cross for me." We were able to say this because the living Christ had worked within us to be our believing ability. After that, if someone would have advised us against believing in Christ, we would have found it impossible not to believe in Him. Nothing can take this belief out of us because it is actually the living Christ working in us and reacting to God. Immediately after we reacted to God in this way, He reacted to us, justifying us. Then we had the sense that we were forgiven and justified by God. We had peace and joy. Following this, we all determined to do good--to behave ourselves, to love our wives, and to submit to our husbands. All we produced was Ishmael. Then we realized that we needed to be terminated, to be circumcised that God might work in us to produce the present Isaac, who is Christ, the reality of the righteousness of God. Once we have this Christ, we must offer Him to God that we may receive Him back in resurrection. The result of this is the kingdom, the church life. This is the Body of Christ.

Paul wrote Romans 4 because he wanted to show that God's justification is for the fulfillment of His purpose. God's purpose is to have the one Body, which is the kingdom, to express Him and to exercise His dominion on the earth. Therefore, Romans 4 lays the foundation for Romans 12-16, where we see the practical Body life, church life, and kingdom life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION

(2)

When Paul wrote the book of Romans, he must have had the Old Testament in view. In Romans 1 we find a clear reference to the book of Genesis. The phrase, "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, being apprehended by the things made, are clearly seen," refers to Genesis 1. The "invisible things," meaning God's divine attributes, may be apprehended from creation. Thus, Paul began the book of Romans with an allusion to the first chapter of Genesis. Furthermore, Paul's account of the condemnation on mankind follows the stages of the fall of man recorded in Genesis. In Genesis 4, Cain gave up God, disapproving of holding Him in his understanding. By the time of Genesis 11, the entire fallen race had exchanged God for idols. They exchanged the God of glory for idols of vanity and degenerated into fornication and confusion, which were manifested in the extreme at Sodom. This resulted in the practice of every imaginable evil. Paul used this history of the corrupted race as the background for the section on the condemnation of mankind. In Romans 3 Paul alludes to the picture of the ark with its cover as he portrays Christ as the propitiation place. Therefore, Romans 3 was also written with the Old Testament in view. Moreover, when Paul came to the conclusion of justification, he employed the history of Abraham as a full example. Abraham's history affords a complete pattern of the genuine and subjective justification of God. If we only had Paul's teaching in Romans 3, we could never appreciate the

depths of God's justification. We would only have the seed of justification without the kernel.

THE TRANSFUSION OF GOD

I feel the need to share more about the subjective experience of justification. In my spirit I am burdened that Romans 4 be fully opened to the Lord's people. As I have said already, Romans 4 is a deep chapter, far deeper than we realize. It presents Abraham's experience with God. Abraham is an example of the experience of God's called ones with God. We do not have the adequate human language to describe such an experience. After considering this matter very seriously, I have selected the word transfuse to help us understand the interaction between God and man.

The application of electricity depends on the fuse, and we may say that the power of electricity is applied through the fuse. This is transfusion. The heavenly electricity is far away in the heavens, but the place where this electricity must be applied is here on earth. If this divine electricity is to come to us, we need a transfusion. Thus, God transfuses Himself into us. Once we have this transfusion, we will experience a spiritual infusion as God's essence infiltrates our being. This infusion of God's element will saturate and permeate us. Transfusion brings in infusion, and this infusion permeates us with God's element.

FAITH AS A REACTION

This permeation causes a reaction. The spiritual virtues and divine attributes that have been transmitted into us will react within us. The first reaction is believing. This is our faith. This is the highest definition of faith. Faith is not our natural ability or virtue. Faith is our reaction toward God, which results from God's transfusing Himself into us and infusing His divine elements into our being. When God's elements permeate our being, we react to Him, and this reaction is faith. Faith is not a human virtue; it is absolutely a reaction caused by a divine infusion, which saturates and permeates our being. Once

we have such a faith, we can never lose it. It is deeper than our blood, for it has been infused into us and constituted into our being. Although we may try not to believe, we can never succeed. This is what the Bible means by believing in God.

If my memory is accurate, Paul never uses the term "by faith in Jesus." However, at least two or three times he mentions "the faith of Jesus," a phrase that troubles most translators. Some, finding it difficult to define such a phrase, have changed the preposition from "of" to "in." If we change the preposition, the phrase will read "faith in Jesus" and mean that we believe in Jesus by ourselves. This is not Paul's meaning. Paul means that we believe in the Lord Jesus by means of the Lord Jesus Himself as our faith. Since we do not have the ability to believe, we must take Christ as our believing ability. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus by His faith. I have tried to understand this for nearly forty years. In the past I explained faith as Christ working Himself into us. That was the best definition I had at the time. However, in the last few days the Lord has given me a better term: faith is our reaction to God produced by His transfusion, infusion, and saturation.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSFUSION

How is this transfusion accomplished? God, as the heavenly electricity, comes to His chosen ones. For example, God came to Abraham by appearing to him. If we study Genesis 11 through 24, including the record in Acts 7, we find that God appeared to Abraham several times. Acts 7:2 says that the God of glory appeared to Abraham. It is sure that Abraham was attracted by the appearing of the God of glory. To be attracted simply means that God transfused Himself into Abraham without his realizing it or being conscious of it. This is similar to the radium treatment practiced in modern medicine. The patient is placed under the X-ray, unconscious of the beams that are penetrating him. God is the strongest radium. If we sit under Him for an hour, He will transfuse Himself into us.

This transfusion will cause infusion, saturation, and permeation.

THE TRANSFUSION IN THE GOSPEL

In any proper gospel preaching there should be such a transfusion, the transfusion of Christ into people. How can Christ be transfused into us? It is by the preaching of the gospel. Whenever we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a normal way, there will be an appearing of the living Christ, and this appearing will transfuse Christ into people.

I can confirm this by my own experience. Although I was born in China and learned the teachings of Confucius, Confucius had no attraction for me. Christianity as a religion did not appeal to me either. When I was nineteen years old, the Lord sent a young sister to my town to preach the gospel. I was curious to see her. As I sat in the meeting place and heard her singing and speaking, the glory of God appeared, and I was attracted. No one had to convince me to believe. As I listened to her, God transfused Himself into me, and this transfusion overwhelmed and conquered me, causing a very positive reaction. Coming out of the meeting hall and walking along the road, I lifted up my eyes to the heavens and said, "God, You know I am an ambitious young man. But, even if the people promise me the whole world to be my empire, I would refuse it. I want to take You. From this day onward I want to serve You. I would like to be a poor preacher going from village to village, telling people how good Jesus is." In this way the living Jesus was transfused into my being. Immediately I reacted to God, and God reacted back to me. My reaction to God was my believing in Him. That was my faith. God's reaction back to me was to justify me, to give His righteousness with peace and joy to me. The righteousness of God reacted to me, and from that time on I had that righteousness. Christ was made the righteousness of God to me. Thus I had peace and joy, and I was filled with hope. I had been justified by God. God had called me out of everything other than Himself.

Once Christ has transfused Himself into you, you can never escape; you must believe in Him. I am familiar with many cases that occurred under my own gospel preaching. Some people said, "I simply don't know what happened to me. After I listened to that preacher the first time and came home, I said that I didn't want anything to do with Christ, that I did not like Jesus. But something got into me. I tried to cast it away, but I couldn't do it. Although I don't want to go back, something within me urges me to go hear him again and again." What is this? This is the effect of the transfusing of Christ into people. Out of this transfusion a reaction comes--believing in Jesus by the faith of Jesus.

GOD'S APPEARING TO ABRAHAM

God appeared to Abraham again and again. Many of us have held the wrong concept about Abraham, the concept that he was a giant in faith. When I heard this as a young Christian, I was frightened, thinking to myself, "Forget about that. I can never be a giant of faith." Later, as I considered the history of Abraham, I realized that he was not the giant of faith. The only giant of faith is God Himself. God, as the giant of faith, transfused Himself into him. After Abraham had spent time in God's presence, He could not help believing in Him, because he had been transfused with God. Thus, Abraham was attracted to God and reacted to Him in believing. His reaction was his believing. Suppose a poor man visited Abraham and said, "Abraham, I know you don't have a child. Next year I will enable you to have a child born of your wife." Abraham would have driven such a man away from him, telling him not to talk nonsense. Who actually appeared to Abraham? The God of glory. The incident in Genesis 15 was not God's first appearing to him. Several other appearings preceded it.

The first appearing was that recorded in Acts 7. Two more appearings are found in Genesis 12: in the first of these (vv. 1-3) God told Abraham to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house; in the second one (vv. 7-8) God promised Abraham to give the land to his seed. After this, Abraham, who had little experience in believing, fell into Egypt. God's fourth appearing to Abraham was in Genesis 13:14-17, when He told Abraham to lift up his eyes and look in every direction at the land. Therefore, the appearing of God in Genesis 15:1-7 was the fifth; it was nothing new to Abraham. God had appeared to Abraham repeatedly, and Abraham had experienced the riches of God's appearing, coming to have confidence in them. During the first four appearings, God's element had been transfused and infused into Abraham's being. When God appeared to Abraham, He did not leave suddenly. He stayed with Abraham for a length of time. How long did God remain with Abraham in Genesis 18? He stayed with him for about half a day, conversing with him for hours as with an intimate friend. Throughout that whole visitation Abraham was infused with God. During the fifth appearing (Gen. 15) God told Abraham that the number of his seed would be like the stars of heaven. As a result of the fifth appearing, Abraham had experienced such a rich infusion of God that he believed. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3; Gen. 15:6).

Abraham's faith did not come from his natural ability and it did not originate with himself. His believing in God was a reaction to the heavenly radium, a response to the divine infusion. Figuratively speaking, Abraham's believing was simply God working like radium within him. What is the proper faith? Genuine faith is the working of God within us. This is why God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. It seemed that God was saying, "This faith is something of Me. It corresponds to Me. This is Abraham's righteousness before Me." What was that righteousness? It was the righteousness of God.

ABRAHAM'S FURTHER EXPERIENCE

This divine word in the Bible is deep, and we are unable to understand it if we only read superficially. Abraham received God's element by a process of divine infusion. Although righteousness had been reckoned to Abraham, he had not yet experienced that righteousness in a solid, concrete way. Likewise, we may have Christ as our righteousness without actually experiencing Him in a substantial way. At the moment we called on Him, we received Christ, and Christ was made our righteousness. However, Christ must still become our experience. Thus, we need a Sarah.

Sarah typifies grace. Hagar, Abraham's concubine, typifies the law (Gal. 4:22-26). We have Christ within us, but we lack the experience of this Christ. Who can help us with the experience? Sarah. Remember that Sarah typifies God's grace. Do not work with the law by going to Hagar, but cooperate with grace by going to Sarah. If you join yourself to Sarah, you will experience Christ as your righteousness. Do not go to the law and do not make up your mind to do good. We need to recall Paul's own experience as recounted in Romans 7: "To will is present with me, but to do is not." If you will to do good, it means that you are turning to the law. If you determine to honor your parents, love your wife, or submit to your husband, you are turning to the law and marrying Hagar. The result of this union is always an Ishmael. However, if you join yourself to grace, this union will bring forth Christ, the real Isaac.

Isaac signifies the solid experience of the righteousness which God had reckoned to Abraham. On the day you believed in the Lord Jesus, Christ was given to you and infused into you. You responded in faith, and your faith was reckoned by God as your righteousness. In this way, God made Christ your justification, your righteousness. However, at that moment you did not have the actual experience. After you were saved, you went to Hagar, to the law, making up your mind to do good. To a certain

extent you were successful, but the result was Ishmael. Now you must join yourself to God's grace, to Sarah. With Sarah you will have a genuine experience of the Christ you have already received.

In typology, the righteousness which God reckoned to Abraham was Isaac. According to Genesis 17:21, God came to Abraham and said, "Next year at this time Sarah will bring forth a son." In Genesis 18:10 God reiterated this word in a slightly different way: "Next year at this time I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." If we put these verses together, we will realize that the birth of Isaac was actually the coming of God. Unfortunately, the King James translation obscures these two verses, using the phrase "time of life." The correct rendering of this phrase is found in the New American Standard Version, which says, "Next year at this time." The Lord told Abraham that the birth of Isaac next year would be the coming of God. Therefore, the birth of Isaac was extraordinary: it was the coming of God.

THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE

We may apply all this to our experience. In the gospel preaching, through the appearing and transfusion of Christ, we reacted to God in believing with Christ as faith. Then God reckoned this faith back to us as our righteousness, which was a real experience of Christ at the time of our salvation. That was a return of Christ, a further coming of Christ to us after we reacted to God in believing with Him as our faith. As a result of Christ's appearing and His divine transfusion, He became our faith, reacting to God. This faith was reckoned back to us by God as righteousness, and Christ further became the righteousness of God to us. By a further coming of Christ through God's grace, we had Christ as our righteousness before God. We may summarize the process this way: in His appearing and transfusion Christ became our faith to God, and in return Christ became God's righteousness to us. Then Christ became our experience.

Furthermore, we not only have Christ as the righteousness of God reckoned to us, but we have also the

experience of Christ as our Isaac. We treasure this experience, holding it as dear and precious and cherishing it as our only begotten.

THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE FOR GOD'S SATISFACTION

Then God may appear again and ask, "Are you willing to go on with Me? Do you want to enjoy My further appearing? If you do, you must give up Isaac. Give up what I have given to you. Do not cast Isaac away, but offer him up to Me. Bring the very Christ whom you have experienced, lay Him on My altar, and offer Him to Me that I may be satisfied. Your experience of Christ has become your portion and it satisfies you. Now I ask you to offer this portion to Me that I may be completely satisfied." Will you do this? Out of a hundred Christians who have had this kind of experience, not one will do it. Everyone will reply, "How can I give up my dear and precious experience of Christ? It is wrong to ask me to give this up. I will never go along with this." However, everyone who has been asked to offer up to God his experience of Christ as Isaac and was unwilling to do it was deadened in his spiritual life. To such people God seems to say, "Since you treasure your Isaac-experience and will not give it to Me, I will leave it with you. I cannot go further with you. You have your enjoyment and satisfaction, but I don't have Mine. I cannot do anything with you for the fulfillment of My purpose." Abraham offered up Isaac for the satisfaction of God. That was a genuine burnt offering. On Mount Moriah God received His complete satisfaction. In Genesis 22 we see that God is not only the God who calls things not being as being--He was revealed as this God in Genesis 15 and 17--but the God who gives life to the dead. In the eyes of God, Isaac died when Abraham laid him on the altar and raised the knife to slay him. God stopped Abraham, forbidding him to kill Isaac. In typology, this means that God imparted life to the dead Isaac. According to Hebrews 11:17-19, Isaac was resurrected, and Abraham received Isaac back from God in resurrection. This resulted in a

further and richer transfusion, infusion, and permeation of God into Abraham.

On Mount Moriah Abraham's spiritual experience reached its peak. As a result, Abraham became so spiritual and so mature in life that in Genesis 24 he typifies God the Father. Where did he become so mature? On Mount Moriah where he received the full portion of God. God the Father was transfused into him. Therefore, Abraham became the father, not only of an individual Isaac, but of the corporate thousands of descendants who are the kingdom of God on this earth for the accomplishment of God's purpose.

Now we can see why Paul, after writing Romans 3, was burdened to use Abraham's history in chapter four as a portrait to show the climax of God's justification. The purpose of God's justification is to have a reproduction of Christ in millions of saints. These saints, as the reproduction of Christ, become the members of His Body (Rom. 12:5). This Body then becomes the kingdom of God on earth (Rom. 14:17) for the fulfillment of God's purpose. The Body as the kingdom of God is expounded in Romans 12-16. All the local churches are expressions of the Body of Christ as the kingdom of God. The church as the kingdom of God is not composed of one Isaac, but of many Isaacs who have proceeded out of God's justification. All of these are the issue of the subjective and deeper experience of justification.

BACK TO THE TREE OF LIFE

Nevertheless, we need to see even more. Let us return to the first chapter of Genesis once again.

According to Genesis 1, man was not only created by God but also for God and to God. Man was created to God that he might express God's image and exercise God's dominion for the building up of His kingdom. Man was

created to God for such a high purpose. In Genesis 2 we see that God was represented by the tree of life, indicating that the man created to God should continually eat of this tree. Man needed to come to God, contact God, and have God transfused and infused into him. However, man failed to do this, going to the wrong source, the tree of knowledge. Thus, the man who was made to God turned away from God. This is the accurate meaning of the fall of man.

God appeared to call Abraham out of this fallen condition, meaning that God wanted to bring man back to Himself. When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, He did not tell him where to go, because God's intention was to bring him back to Himself. Man had to return to God in order that God might transfuse Himself into him.

In calling Abraham out of Ur, God was bringing him back to the tree of life. The principle of the tree of life is dependence; the principle of the tree of knowledge is independence. To come to the tree of life means to depend upon God; to turn to the tree of knowledge means to forsake God. Every day and every hour we need to depend upon God as our life. We can never stay away from God as our life. Therefore, Abraham was brought back to God as the tree of life. When God appeared to him, that was also the appearing of the tree of life. As Abraham spent time in the presence of God, he enjoyed the tree of life. Every time this happened, God's essence was transfused into him. In this way God trained Abraham to be totally transfused, infused, and permeated with God and no longer to act by himself. This was not an easy lesson for Abraham to learn.

We are undergoing the same training today. God has called us out of our fallen condition back to Himself as the tree of life. Now we are under His transfusion, infusion, and saturation. We must not do anything by ourselves. Our self must be terminated. The old man must be cut off and buried that God may be everything to us. Then we can say in reality, "It is no longer I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of

the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). This is the life of Abraham. As Abraham's descendants we are the same as he. We walk in his believing footsteps and are under God's saturating work.

As we experience this process, we have various reactions to God. Our first reaction is to believe in Him with the faith of Christ. This causes another reaction from God's side, which is to reckon Christ to us as our righteousness. After this, we act on our own and produce a failure. We go to the wrong source, Hagar, the law, and give birth to Ishmael. Following this, we need to be circumcised. This brings in a further experience of Christ as our present Isaac. Then we will be required to offer this Isaac to God as a sacrifice for His satisfaction. If we obey this demand, God will react to us once again, giving us an experience of resurrection that produces many Isaacs. Once we offer our individual experience of Christ to God, we find ourselves in the church with many Isaacs surrounding us, and we have the corporate experience of Christ. Then we are no longer individuals; we are a kingdom, the Body of Christ fulfilling God's purpose.

This is the deeper meaning of justification shown by the example of Abraham. We must confess that the source of it all is God's transfusion, infusion, and saturation. This process of transfusion and infusion causes many reactions between God and man. This traffic, this interchange between us and God, makes us one with Him and brings into being a universal man for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. In this process divinity is mingled with humanity. This is the consummation of God's justification.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE NINE

THE RESULT OF JUSTIFICATION-- THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN CHRIST

At the end of Romans 3, Paul gives the definition of justification in God's way and in chapter four he presents Abraham as the example of this justification. Romans 5:1-11 should be regarded as the conclusion of Paul's teaching on justification. This conclusion reveals the result, the issue of justification. These eleven verses enumerate many wonderful items that are the outcome of our being justified by God.

In Romans 5:1-11 Paul mentions six outstanding words: love, grace, peace, hope, life, and glory. The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). We have access into this grace in which we stand (v. 2). Since we have been justified by faith we have peace toward God (v. 1). Following this, we boast, exult, and glory in hope (v. 2). Verse 10 tells us that we shall be saved in His life. Finally, we expect to share the glory of God (v. 2). These six items are part of the result of God's justification. Do you want God's love and grace? Do you desire peace and hope? Do you want to share the divine, eternal life of God and be in His glory? For all of these matters you need justification. All of them are our portion as the issue of God's justification.

Along with these six significant words, we have three wonderful Persons. (Although I do not like the term "Persons" because it has been inaccurately understood in the teachings on the Trinity, yet, there is no term more adequate in our human language to use in relation to the

Godhead.) In Romans 5:1-11 we see the three Persons of the Triune God. Verse 5 speaks of the Holy Spirit, telling us that the Holy Spirit has poured out the love of God into our heart. Then verse 6 tells us that while we were yet weak and ungodly, Christ died for us. Finally, verse 11 says that now we boast in God. The King James Version reads, "joy in God," meaning that God has become our enjoyment. We joy, boast, exult, and glory in God because He is our enjoyment. Thus, Romans 5 unveils six wonderful things and three wonderful Persons. We have love, grace, peace, hope, life, and glory. As a result of God's justification, we have the Holy Spirit, Christ, and God as our enjoyment. Oh, this portion of the Word is so rich! We need a great many messages to cover it adequately.

I. JUSTIFIED AND RECONCILED

Originally, we were not only sinners, but also enemies of God. Through the redeeming death of Christ, God has justified us, the sinners, and has reconciled us, His enemies, to Himself (5:1, 10-11). This transpired when we believed in the Lord Jesus. We have received God's justification and reconciliation by faith. This has opened the way and ushered us into the realm of grace for the enjoyment of God.

II. WITH GOD'S LOVE POURED OUT

In the realm of grace the first thing we enjoy is the love of God. "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us" (5:5). Many times in our Christian life we need encouragement and confirmation. As we pass through periods of suffering, we may have questions and doubts. Perhaps you say, "Why are there so many troubles in my Christian life? Why are there so many trials and tests?" We may have such questions and doubts about our circumstances. Although these doubts arise, we cannot deny that the love of God is within us. From the day we first called on the Lord Jesus, the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. This means that the Spirit

reveals, confirms, and assures us with the love of God. The indwelling Holy Spirit seems to say, "Don't doubt. God loves You. You don't understand why you must suffer now, but one day you will say, 'Father, I thank You for the troubles and trials which I passed through." When you enter the gate of eternity, you will say, "Praise the Lord for the sufferings and tests which fell upon me on my journey. God used them to transform me."

Oh, the love of God has been poured into our hearts! Although we may be afflicted, poor, and depressed, we cannot deny the presence of God's love within us. Can we deny that Christ died for us? Christ died for ungodly sinners such as we. Once we were enemies, but Christ shed His blood on the cross to reconcile us to God. What love is this! If God has given us His own Son, surely He will not do anything to hurt us. God is sovereign. He knows what is best for us. The choice is His, not ours. Regardless of our preference, what God has planned for us will be our portion. Everything related to us has been prepared by our Father. We should simply pray, "Lord, have your way. I simply want what You want. I leave everything entirely in Your hands." This is our response to God when we realize afresh that He loves us so and that His love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

III. STANDING IN THE REALM OF GRACE

Romans 5:2 says, "We have the access by faith into this grace in which we stand." Grace is the realm in which we stand. We must stay where the grace is. Do not ask me where you should stand. You must stand in grace. Whenever you sense that you are out of the realm of grace, return to it immediately. If you are about to quarrel with your wife and sense you are out of the realm of grace, stop what you are doing, return to the realm of grace, and stand there.

We need not do anything sinful to be cut off from grace. We only need to stay in a place too long and we will sense

that we have moved from the realm of grace into another sphere. What should we do in such a case? We should pray, "Lord, forgive me. Bring me back to the realm of grace." We return to the realm of grace by the same way through which we entered it originally. We entered the realm of grace through justification by faith. We simply confessed our sins to God, received the Lord Jesus as our Savior, applied His blood, and we were justified. God's justification brought us into this grace in which we stand. Whenever we act wrongly and sense that we are out of grace, we must repeat the same prayer, "O God, forgive me. Cleanse me with the precious blood." If you do this, you will be brought back to grace instantly.

Since we have been justified by faith and stand in the realm of grace, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1). Paul does not say that we have peace with God, but peace toward God. This means that we are still on the way toward God. We have not finished our journey. In the spiritual world, we first enter the gate and then walk along the way. Justification by faith is the opening of the gate, giving us an access, an entry into a wide field of enjoyment. Once we have passed through the gate of justification, we need to walk the way of peace. Sinners have no peace. Romans 3:17 says that when we were sinners we did not know the way of peace. Today, however, we are walking in the way of peace.

If you are moving in a certain direction and do not sense the peace within, you should stop. Always go along with the peace. According to Luke 7:50, the Lord Jesus told the sinful woman, once she had been saved, to go in peace. Young people, after you are saved you must go your way in peace. Wherever you go, you must take the way of peace. If you have no peace, do not go. Whatever you do, do it in peace. If you have no peace, do not act. Grace is for our stand, and peace is for our walk. If you do not have the grace to stay in a certain place, do not stay there. If you have no peace to take a certain direction, do not walk. Stand in grace and walk in peace.

IV. ENJOYING GOD BY BOASTING, EXULTING, AND GLORYING IN HIM

In the realm of grace we boast in God (5:11). The Greek word translated boast has at least three meanings: boast, exult, meaning to rejoice, and glory. Thus, we boast in God, exult in God, and glory in God. As we stand in the realm of grace, and walk the way of peace, we constantly boast, exult, and glory in our God. This means that we enjoy God. God is our portion for our enjoyment. We have such a God in which to boast, exult, and glory.

A. Boasting in Tribulation

Our natural being needs to be sanctified, transformed, and conformed. Therefore, God brings in certain tribulations and sufferings for our good. This is clearly revealed in Romans 8:28, 29, where we are told that God causes all things to work together for good that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. Hence, tribulation and suffering are for our transformation. We all appreciate peace, grace, and glory, but no one likes tribulation. Recently, I have had two operations on my right eye. Although I do not like such suffering, I must declare that in the past few years nothing has favored me more than these two operations.

Tribulation is actually the incarnation of grace with all the riches of Christ. This is similar to the incarnation of God in Jesus. Apparently He was simply the man Jesus; actually He was God. Apparently our environment is tribulation; actually it is grace. If we read Romans 5 carefully, we will see that tribulation does not stand on the same level as grace; it is under grace. The six items of love, grace, peace, hope, life, and glory, along with the three Persons of the Godhead all supersede tribulation. Nevertheless, tribulation is a visitation of grace.

If we say that we appreciate grace but not tribulation, it is like saying that we love God but not Jesus. However, to reject Jesus is to reject God. Likewise, to reject

tribulation is to reject grace. Why was God incarnated? Because He wanted to come to us. The incarnation of God was His gracious visitation. Surely we all love such a visit from God. If we love His visit, we must love His incarnation. It is the same with grace and tribulation. Tribulation is the incarnation of grace visiting us. Although we love God's grace, we must also kiss the tribulation, which is the incarnation of grace, the sweet visitation of grace.

Madame Guyon said that she kissed the crosses given to her. Many people dislike the cross because it is a suffering, a tribulation. Madame Guyon, on the contrary, kissed each cross, waiting for more to come, because she realized that the cross brought God to her. Madame Guyon said, "God gives me the cross, and the cross brings me God." She welcomed the cross, for when she had the cross she had God. Tribulation is a cross, and grace is God as our portion for our enjoyment. This grace mainly visits us in the form of tribulation.

The experience of tribulation produces endurance (5:3). Endurance is more than patience; it is the product of patience plus suffering. None of us was born with endurance; it is produced by the suffering of tribulation. Therefore, Paul says that tribulation works endurance.

We may experience this endurance in the small things of life. One thing I dislike is hearing a busy signal when I call on the telephone. Why do I dislike that? Because I am short of endurance. Another small thing I hate is when people are late for an appointment. Although such delays are a suffering to me, they help me gain endurance.

Endurance produces approvedness (5:4). Approvedness is an approved quality resulting from the endurance of tribulation and testing. Thus, approvedness is a quality or attribute that can be approved. At times, it is difficult for young brothers to have the approval of others. They need the endurance which produces a quality that is easily approved by others. Tribulation issues in endurance, and endurance brings forth the quality of approvedness. Some versions translate the Greek word here as "experience."

This is correct, for approvedness includes experience. However, it is not primarily the experience itself, but the attribute or virtue which is acquired through the experiences of suffering. The more you suffer, the more you have endurance, and the more the virtue of approvedness will be produced. Approvedness is not an attribute we have by our natural birth.

Consider the example of raw gold. Although it is genuine gold, it is raw and unattractive. It needs the purifying fire. The more the gold suffers the burning of the fire, the more an approved quality will be produced. After burning and trial, the gold acquires a quality that is easily approved by everyone. Perhaps, many of the young people are like raw gold. They do not need polishing or painting; they need burning. Some of the saints who love the Lord have an amount of life and light. Because they have these things, they think they are suitable to work for the Lord. However, they lack approvedness. On the one hand, they can be productive wherever they go; on the other hand, they are raw and lack the virtue which makes people happy, sweet, and comfortable. They have the opposite of approvedness, what we may call disapprovedness. Why was your situation so good at the beginning, but quite poor after a period of time? It was good at the beginning because of your gift and the light you had. It did not continue well because you were so raw, lacking the quality of approvedness. If we have the virtue of approvedness, we will not be a problem to others. We all must pray, "Lord grant me approvedness."

If you pray in this way, the Lord will ask, "Do you really mean business?" If your answer is affirmative, the Lord will raise up the circumstances that will produce approvedness for you. For example, He may give you the most suitable wife, the wife most useful in producing this quality within you. Most wives are excellent helpers, assisting God in producing approvedness for His servants. Most of the Lord's servants need such a wife. The wife

does not help the husband; she helps God. The disposition of the wives helps God to bring forth approvedness in their husbands.

God is sovereign. Many of us realize that we have not only been called, but also caught. We must he a slave of Christ Jesus--we have no other choice. If I could have made another choice, I would have made it. Nevertheless, I must be the Lord's slave. Although we are the slaves of Christ, we lack approvedness. This troubles God and damages us. It also bothers the saints and the household of God. We help them on the one hand and hurt them on the other. By our light and our gift we help them; by our lack of approvedness we hurt them. Thus, we need the approvedness which comes out of endurance.

B. Boasting in Hope of Sharing the Glory of God

Along with this approvedness, we have hope (5:4). What is this hope? It is the hope that one day we shall all be brought into the glory of God (5:2). Although we stand in grace and walk in peace, we are not yet in glory. But the day will come when we shall be brought into glory. What is glory? As we have mentioned several times in the past, glory is God Himself expressed. Whenever God is expressed, that is glory. It is very similar to the expression of electrical current in a light bulb. The expression of electricity is the glory of electricity. We cannot see electricity itself, but the shining of electricity in the lights is the expression, the glory of electricity. Likewise, glory is God expressed.

glory is coming, and nothing can compare with it. Several verses show us that God will bring many sons into glory (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Thes. 2:12, Heb. 2:1(); 1 Pet. 5:10). Here and now we enjoy God in hope of this coming glory. While we are enjoying Him, we hope for the glory to come. We will see more of this when we consider Romans 8.

V. BEING SAVED IN CHRIST'S LIFE

As we enjoy God in this way, we are being saved in His life (5:1()). "Much more, we shall be saved in His life. Daily

we need to be saved from so many negative things. We need to he saved from our temper and our self. As we enjoy God in our sufferings, we need the saving in His life. We need to be saved in His life from the besetting sin. that is, to be freed from the law of sin and death. We need to be saved in His life from being worldly, that is, to be sanctified. We need to be saved in His life from our natural being, that is to be transformed from our natural life. We need to be saved in His life from being self-like, that is, to be conformed to the image of Christ, the firstborn Son of God. And we need to be saved in His life from being individualistic. that is to he built up with others into one Body. These are the savings in the life of Christ, which will be fully defined in the following chapters. This kind of salvation in life is the main enjoyment we have in God.

Justification has brought us into the realm of enjoyment. In this realm we stand in grace. walk in peace suffer in hope, and enjoy God in our tribulations. While we are suffering and enjoying, we are being saved in His life. This is the issue of justification.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TEN

THE GIFT IN CHRIST SURPASSING THE HERITAGE IN ADAM

If we read the book of Romans carefully, we will observe that the section on justification ends with Romans 5:11. This means that in the first part of Romans we mainly have two sections, condemnation and justification. The section on condemnation begins at 1:18 and ends with 3:20. The portion on justification begins with 3:21 and concludes at 5:11.

In the section on justification, Paul is concerned with our outward position before God. Originally, we were full of sin and needed the redemption of Christ as a base upon which God can justify us. God's justification has changed our position. Formerly, our position was under God's condemnation; now our position is under God's justification. As a result of justification, we have love, grace, peace, hope, life, glory, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Although we may enjoy these six significant items and three wonderful Persons, they are mainly outward and objective. Nevertheless, in the section on justification Paul does give some hints to indicate that he will proceed to deal with our inward disposition.

The first hint is found in Romans 4:24-25, where Paul speaks of the resurrected Christ. The crucified Christ can never enter our being, but the resurrected Christ is able to come into us. Our Christ is not only the Christ who was crucified for our redemption; He is also the Christ who was resurrected that He may impart life into us. Therefore, Romans 4:24-25 intimates that Christ will come into the justified ones and live in them a life of justification.

We see another hint in Romans 5:10, which says that we shall be saved in His life. The words "shall be" imply experiences in the future. Prior to Romans 5:10 we were told that we have already been saved, because we have been redeemed, justified, and reconciled. Why does this verse suddenly say that we shall be saved? Although we have been saved by Christ's death for redemption, justification, and reconciliation, we have not yet been saved for sanctification, transformation, and conformation. Redemption, justification, and reconciliation all require the death of Christ in which His blood was shed, while sanctification, transformation, and conformation require the inward working of His life. Christ's death on the cross saved us in an objective way, and His life will save us in a subjective way. The crucified Christ saved us objectively on the cross; the resurrected Christ within us saves us subjectively. His life must enter into us. Eventually, in Romans 8, the conclusion of the section that deals with our disposition, we see that Christ is in us (8:10). Before chapter five Christ was crucified on the cross, but was not yet in us. In chapter eight Christ is no longer on the cross--He is in us. This indwelling Christ is the life that will save us subjectively after we have been saved objectively. We need to be saved more and more. We have been saved from hell and from God's condemnation: this is positional salvation. Now we need to be saved from our disposition, such as our old man, our self, our natural life, etc.: this is dispositional salvation.

Another hint that Romans shifts from a positional aspect to a dispositional aspect after 5:11 is found in the occurrence of the words sin and sins. Before Romans 5:12 the word sin is always found in the plural number. However, in Romans 5:12 this word suddenly appears in the singular. Why is there this change? Sins are outward and concern our position; sin is inward and concerns our disposition. The outward sins in our position, our sinful deeds, have been fully dealt with by the death of Christ, but the sin in our disposition, our sinful nature, has not

yet been dealt with. Starting with Romans 5:12, Paul begins to concentrate upon the dispositional sin within us.

Furthermore, although we are in God and Christ at the time of Romans 5:11, we have not had much experience of God and Christ living within us. Although we are in God, boast and joy in God, and stand in the realm of grace, we have not fully experienced God and Christ dwelling within us. To be in Christ is a positional matter; to have Christ in us, especially living and dwelling in us, is a dispositional and experiential matter. We must be in Christ, and then Christ can be in us and live within us. We find both aspects of this in John 15:4, which says, "Abide in me, and I in you." "Abide in me" means to be in Christ; "I abide in you" means that Christ lives in us. Firstly, we are in Christ, then Christ lives in us. The dispositional matter of Christ living in us is covered in Romans 5:12 through 8:30, the section on sanctification and glorification. Both sanctification and glorification deal with our disposition and nature, not with our outward behavior. Paul treated our outward behavior in the preceding sections. In 5:12--8:30 he is occupied with our nature, our self. If we are not clear about these distinctions, we will be unable to understand Romans 5:12--8:30 adequately.

As we approach the section on sanctification, we must realize that the gift in Christ surpasses the heritage in Adam. Since we were all born of Adam and in Adam, we have inherited all that he is and has. What are the items of our inheritance in Adam? Two dreadful things--sin and death. Regardless of whether we are good or bad, as long as we were born of Adam's race we have sin and death as our heritage. Praise God for the gift in Christ! The gift in Christ surpasses the heritage in Adam. There is no comparison.

I. TWO MEN, TWO ACTS, AND TWO RESULTS

In Romans 5:12-21 we have two men, two acts, and two results. This passage is difficult to remember because

everything in it transcends our understanding. By nature, we do not have the concept that is revealed in this passage of Scripture. If we did, we would easily be impressed with Paul's thought. Have you ever thought that in the whole universe there are only two men? Nevertheless, in the eyes of God there are just two men--Adam and Christ. We ourselves are nobodies. We are all included in either the first man or the second. Everything depends on where you are. If you are in Adam, you are a part of Adam. If you are in Christ, you are a part of Christ. Fifty years ago I was in Adam, but today and forever I am in Christ.

A. Two Men

1. Adam

Adam was the first man (1 Cor. 15:47). He was not only the first man, but also the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). Adam was created by God (Gen. 1:27), and had nothing of the divine nature and life of God. He was merely God's creation, a work of His hand.

2. Christ

Christ is the second man (1 Cor. 15:47) and the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). What does it mean to say that Christ is the second man and the last Adam? It means that Christ is the last man. After Him, there is no third man, for the second man is the last. This excludes the possibility of a third man. Do not consider yourself as the third. Christ is the second man and the last Adam. Following Him, there is no third Adam.

This second man was not created by God. He is a man mingled with God. He is God incarnated to be a man (John 1:14). The first man had nothing of the divine nature and life of God, for he was merely God's creation. The second man is the mingling of God with His creature, full of the divine nature and life of God. He is a man mingled with God, a God-man. The fullness of the Godhead is embodied in Him (Col. 2:9; John 1:16).

B. Two Acts

1. Adam's Transgression in the Garden

Romans 5:14 mentions Adam's transgression, referring to Adam's transgression of eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden. After God created Adam, He placed him in front of the tree of life, indicating that Adam should partake of this tree. This would have enabled him to receive God's life and to live with God. Adam failed. He forsook the tree of life that denoted God as life and turned to the tree of knowledge that signified Satan as the source of death. Thus, Adam's transgression consisted in leaving the tree of life and pursuing the tree of knowledge (Gen. 2:8-9, 17; 3:1-7). The issue of the tree of life is life, but the issue of the tree of knowledge is death. This means that Adam gave up life and chose death.

2. Christ's Obedience on the Cross

The second act was Christ's obedience on the cross (Phil. 2:8). This act of obedience, a righteous act performed by Christ, terminated the man of knowledge (6:6). Adam brought man to knowledge, making him a man of knowledge. Christ, by His obedience on the cross, terminated the man of knowledge and brought man back to life. First Peter 2:24 tells us that Christ's death restored man to life, and John 3:14-15 says that Christ was lifted up on the cross in order to bring man back to life eternal. Therefore, the obedience of Christ on the cross terminated the fallen man of knowledge, the man of death, and recovered man back to life, making him a man of life.

C. Two Results

These two men have two acts, and the two acts have brought forth two results.

1. The Result of Adam's Transgression

a. Sin Entered

Sin entered through Adam's transgression (5:12). It seems that sin is mentioned in Romans 5 through 8 in a

personified way. It is like a person who can reign (5:21), who can lord it over people (6:14), who can deceive and kill people (7:11), who can dwell in people and do things against their will (7:17, 20). Sin is alive and exceedingly active (7:9). Thus, this sin must be the evil nature of Satan, the evil one, dwelling, acting, and working in fallen mankind. Sin is actually an evil person. Through Adam's transgression sin entered.

b. Many Were Constituted Sinners

As a result of Adam's disobedience, the many, including us, were constituted sinners (5:19). We not only were made sinners; we were constituted sinners. We were not created sinners, but constituted sinners. An element not created by God was injected into our being and constituted us sinners. We are not sinners by accident; we are sinners by constitution. Sin has been wrought into us and constituted into our being. Therefore, sin is not just an outward deed, but an inward, subjective element in our constitution. Thus, we are typical sinners by nature.

c. All Men Were Condemned unto Death

Furthermore, all men have been condemned to death (5:18). All men are born of Adam and in Adam. So, through Adam's one offense all men have been condemned to death in him as he was condemned.

d. Death Reigned Over All Men

Thus, death reigns over all men (5:14). Death has become a king ruling over all. "As sin reigned in death" (5:21) so death reigns through sin.

e. In Adam All Die

The final result of Adam's transgression is that in Adam all die (1 Cor. 15:22). Everyone has died in Adam. Sometimes we say of a certain person, "He is dying." When I first heard this phrase, I immediately thought, "Not only is that person dying--everyone is dying." Do not say that you are living, for you, like everyone else, are dying. You are living to die. The more you live, the more you die. In a sense, people are not living but dying. We are all born to die, because we have a powerful king over us named death. He was inaugurated by sin, his forerunner. Sin brought death into power. Thus, all men are under the reign of death. This dreadful person has been inaugurated as king. When we were born in Adam, we began to die. Before people die absolutely, they sin, and sin hastens the hour of death. The more you sin, the faster you die; the less you sin, the slower you die. If you do not want to die quickly, you should not sin. We must stay away from sin.

2. The Result of Christ's Obedience

Praise the Lord that we have the second man, the second act, and the second result! What is the result of Christ's obedience?

a. Grace Came

Grace came (John 1:17) through the obedience of Christ. "The grace of God has abounded to many" (5:15). Paul does not say that life has abounded. This is similar to Adam's transgression, in which sin came first and death followed. Likewise, through the obedience of Christ grace came first and life followed. Death is versus life, and grace is versus sin. Sin came from Adam's transgression, but grace came through Christ's obedience. Sin is Satan personified, come to poison us, damage us, and bring death into us. Grace is God personified, come to give us life and enjoyment. Through Adam's transgression, sin entered the human race as poison for man's destruction,

but through Christ's righteous, obedient act God came as grace for our enjoyment.

b. Many Were Constituted Righteous

Romans 5:19 tells us, "through the obedience of the One shall the many be constituted righteous." We are not only righteous; we are constituted righteous. If you paint my skin green, that will not affect my inward constitution. However, if you inject green paint into my blood, my whole being eventually will be constituted with green paint. This would not be outward painting, but inward constituting. When the living God comes into our being as grace, we are constituted righteous.

c. Many Were Justified unto Life

A further result of Christ's obedience is that we have been justified unto life (5:18). Since we have been constituted righteous, we have come up to the standard of God's righteousness and now correspond to it. Thus, we are justified unto life spontaneously. In Adam, through his one offense, we were condemned unto death; in Christ, through His one righteous act, we are justified unto life. Justification is for life. First we have justification, then we have life. Justification changes our outward position, and life changes our inward disposition. Now we have both justification outwardly for our position and life inwardly for our disposition.

d. Grace Reigned Through Righteousness unto Life Eternal

Romans 5:21 says, "grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Grace reigns. We have another king because now we are in another kingdom. Once we were in the kingdom of death, and sin was our king through death. Now we are in the kingdom of life, and grace is our king. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto life eternal." This thought is very deep. Why must grace reign through righteousness?

Because we were sinners. If we had not been constituted sinners, we would have been clean and righteous, with nothing in our being contradicting God's character. If such had been the case, we would not have needed righteousness. However, we were constituted sinners. How can grace, which is God Himself, reign over such unrighteous people? Grace needs an instrument, a means to reign. This instrument, this means, is God's righteousness. Thus, grace reigns through God's righteousness unto life eternal. Because Christ has died on the cross to accomplish redemption for us and because God's righteousness has been revealed to us, we have a position to enjoy God as grace. We even have the position to claim God as our grace. Therefore, grace can reign through righteousness unto life eternal.

Let us apply this to our experience. Suppose I am a sinful, dying man. I am condemned to death, and death reigns over me. One day I realize that Christ died for me on the cross to accomplish God's redemption, and God's righteousness is revealed to me. As a sinner, I come to God under the redeeming blood of Christ. Immediately, the righteousness of God binds Him to justify me, and He becomes my portion. I can claim Him as my portion because the redemption of Christ has fulfilled all the requirements of His righteousness. I now have the position to claim Him as my portion. He has no choice. Because of His righteousness, He has to come to me as grace for my enjoyment. Grace means that I receive a gift which I do not deserve. If I work for you, you owe me my wages as a debt, not as a grace. However, if you present me five hundred dollars as a gift, that is grace, for I do not deserve it. Through God's righteousness I receive grace, which I do not deserve.

God has given Himself to us as a grace that we do not deserve. We never worked for it and we cannot pay for it. The price is too high. God simply gives Himself to us as grace through righteousness. This grace becomes our portion for our enjoyment and reigns through righteousness, resulting in life eternal. This does not refer

to eternal blessing, but to eternal life, which we may enjoy today. It is not the human life or the created life; it is the divine, eternal and uncreated life.

Under the blood of Christ, we claim God as our portion, and we receive from God a measure which we do not deserve. This measure is grace as our enjoyment. The issue of this enjoyment is life eternal, a life which will transform our whole being. It will sanctify us completely and deal thoroughly with our disposition. Thus, we will become sanctified, transformed, conformed and glorified persons.

e. In Christ All Shall Be Made Alive

In Adam all die, but in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). Adam's transgression caused and still causes all his descendants to die, but Christ's obedience causes all men to live. In Adam all are dying; in Christ all are living. The result of Adam's transgression is death unto all. The result of Christ's obedience is life unto all.

II. FOUR REIGNING THINGS

We have seen two men, two acts, and two results. These two men with their two acts and two results have brought in four reigning things. We have to know these men, acts, and results, and we also have to know the four reigning things in order to be clear about Romans 5:12-21.

A. Sin

1. Having Entered Through the First Man

As we have seen, sin entered through the first man (5:12). Through the disobedience of Adam, the evil one, as sin, entered into the world. The world here refers to mankind in general, for, in a sense, the word world in the New Testament means mankind. For instance, John 3:16 says that God loved the world, meaning that God loved mankind. Thus, sin has entered into mankind, into human nature, through the first man Adam.

2. Dwelling in Man's Fallen Body

After entering into the human race, sin made its dwelling place in the fallen body of man (7:17, 18, 21, 23). Sin does not dwell in our mind, soul, or spirit. Sin's lodging is our body. Paul said that sin dwelt within him, that the law of sin was in the members of his body, and that in his flesh was nothing good, only sin (7:17, 18, 23). Sin dwells in our body. Although our body was created by God as good, it became flesh once sin had been injected into it and had made its home there. Although God created our body, He did not create the flesh. The flesh is a mixture of God's creation with sin, the evil one. Thus, the body has become the flesh, and sin dwells in this flesh. Every kind of lust has its source in the flesh.

3. Having the Law as Its Power

Sin has the law as its power (1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 7:11). Without law, sin is powerless. According to Romans 7:11, sin kills us through the law because the law gives sin its power. Sin uses the law as a knife to kill us. First Corinthians 15:56 says, "The strength of sin is the law." Do not touch the law, for if you do, you will touch the killing knife of sin. We are absolutely unable to keep the law, and it is foolish for us even to try. If we attempt to keep the law, sin will use the law to kill us.

4. Reigning in Death

Sin reigns in death (5:21; 6:12). Sin, like every other king, needs an authority in order to reign. The authority of sin is death. Sin has authority to reign as a king in death. Romans 5:21 and 6:12 show sin reigning as a king.

Sin is in our flesh, our fallen body. This sin is not an act of wrongdoing; it is the personification of the evil one. In Romans 7:21 Paul said that "the evil" was present with him. The Greek word translated "the evil" in this verse is *kakos,* a word denoting that which is evil in character. This must refer to the evil character of Satan himself. I

have no doubt that the sin which has entered into our body is the incarnation of Satan. When man ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, that fruit entered his being. In fact, everything we eat comes into our body. As we have already seen, the tree of life in the garden denoted God, and the tree of knowledge signified Satan. Therefore, when man partook of the tree of knowledge, man took Satan, the evil one, into him. The body created by God originally had no evil in it. The Bible says that the man created by God was very good and upright (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 7:29). However, after the fall another element was injected into man's body. That element was sin, the very nature of the evil one. This sin reigns in us. Its power is the law and it reigns in death.

B. Death

1. Having Come Through Sin

The second reigning thing is death. Death came through sin (5:12), for sin opened the way for death to enter mankind. The sting of death is sin (1 Cor. 15:56). A sting, such as the sting of a scorpion, contains poison. Sin likewise has the element of poison. Once sin poisons us, we experience death.

2. Reigning Through One Man Over All Men

Through Adam's offense death reigns over all men (5:17, 14). According to Hebrews 2:14, Satan has the power of death. Hence, Satan is intimately related to death. Sin ushers in death, and death reigns with power in the hands of Satan. Thus, Satan is related to death, death is related to sin, and the power of sin is the law. We all must stay away from the law, sin, death, and Satan.

C. Grace

1. Having Come Through the Second Man

John 1:14 tells us that when Christ was incarnated as a man, He was full of grace. John 1:17 says that the law

was given by Moses, but that grace came through Jesus Christ. Grace came with Christ. This means that when Christ is present grace also is present. As sin is the personification of Satan, grace is the personification of Christ. Therefore, grace is Christ, the embodiment of God. What is grace? Grace is God incarnated to be our enjoyment. God has given Himself to us for our enjoyment. If we compare 1 Corinthians 15:10 with Galatians 2:20, we see that the grace of God is Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul says that he labored more abundantly than the other apostles, although it was not he himself, but the grace of God that was with him. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says that it was no longer he, but Christ living in him. Therefore, grace is the living Person of Christ. Second Corinthians 13:14 also mentions the grace of Christ. Therefore, Christ is the grace of God. When Christ comes to us as God embodied for our enjoyment, that is grace. This grace has come through the second man.

2. Abounding and Reigning Through Righteousness unto Eternal Life

This grace abounds, multiplies, and reigns through righteousness unto eternal life (5:15, 20, 21). We have seen that through the redemption of Christ we have the righteousness of God and that this righteousness gives us the ground to claim Christ as our grace. This grace is constantly abounding and multiplying. The abounding of grace results in reigning unto life eternal. The result is not something that is material and temporal, but something in the reign of grace that is eternal and divine--God's divine life. The more grace we enjoy, the more life we have. This life is a sanctifying life, a transforming life, a conforming life and a glorifying life. This life comes from grace.

D. The Believers

The believers also reign, for believers are kings.

1. Having Received the Abundance of Grace and of the Gift of Righteousness

Romans 5:17 says, "those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." How can we reign in life? We reign in life by receiving the abundance of grace. We need to consider the practical significance of the abundance of grace. Suppose you have a certain problem. If you find it easy to care for this problem, it means that you have an adequate supply of grace. If you find your situation unbearable, it proves that you lack the abundance of grace. Although you have grace, you have only a small portion. You do not have the abundance of grace. Many times a brother is offended when we speak a frank word to him. Why is he offended? Because he is short of grace. If he has the abundance of grace, that grace will sustain him and enable him to bear a hard word. The most difficult thing for us to bear is a hard word. We all like to hear soft words, sweet words, sugar-coated words. The smooth talkers know how to sugar-coat their words. However, if you like sugar-coated words, you will be cheated. It is much better to speak salty words. In Colossians 4:6 Paul tells us that our speech should always be seasoned with salt. This means that we must be restricted in our speech. Helpful words are salted words, not sugar-coated words. Learn to accept salty words. If you are filled with grace and have the abundance of grace, you will be happy with any kind of words.

Paul had a certain trouble, a thorn in the flesh, and he asked the Lord three times to remove it (2 Cor. 12:7-9). The Lord seemed to answer him, "I will not remove the thorn. You must suffer it by My grace. My grace is sufficient for you." What is this grace? It is the incarnation of Christ. It is nothing less than Christ Himself as our enjoyment. When you enjoy this grace, the issue will be life. You will be rich in life. The more you endure hardships by grace, the more you will be filled with life.

Thus, Paul said that grace not only "abounded to the many," but also that "grace might reign through righteousness unto life eternal." Life continually issues out of the multiplication of grace. Grace must abound. Romans 5:20 says, "where sin abounded grace has more abounded." Grace always exceeds sin. Although sin is powerful, grace is more powerful. Grace is stronger than sin. We need to open ourselves to the grace and enlarge our capacity to receive grace upon grace. John 1:16 says, "of his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." Christ is the source of grace and Christ is grace itself. If we open ourselves to Christ and receive "the abundance of grace," we shall be filled with life.

This life becomes the growing life found in Romans 6. It is also the sanctifying life, the liberating life, the transforming life and the conforming life. Eventually, this life will be the glorifying life. This is the issue of enjoying Christ as grace.

2. Reigning in Life Through the Man Christ

As grace reigns unto life, so we who "receive the abundance of grace shall reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (5:17). From the beginning of Romans through 5:11, there is little mention of life. Romans 5:10 says that we shall be saved in His life, and Romans 1:17 tells us that the just shall have life and live by faith. However, as we enter the section on sanctification, we find a strong word in Romans 5:17, telling us that we "shall reign in life." Hence, we can "walk in newness of life" (6:4). We reign in life and walk in newness of life because we have received the abundance of grace in Christ. Today through the man Jesus Christ, by the abundance of His grace, we not only have eternal life, but we can reign over all things and all situations in this life and walk in its newness.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Romans 5:12 marks a major turn in Paul's writing in the book of Romans. As we have already pointed out, this turn is a turn from sins to sin, from position to disposition, and from justification to sanctification, or we may say from salvation to life. After making such a turn, Paul begins to deal with our person instead of our behavior. In the first four and a half chapters of Romans Paul was concerned with man's deeds, not with man himself, and the sinful acts of fallen man were covered comprehensively. We have been brought out of that fallen state into the realm of grace, where we may enjoy God. However, this was merely a change of state, realm, and position. As yet, there has been no change in man himself, in his nature or disposition. Although man's deeds have been dealt with and his condition changed, man himself has not yet been touched.

Beginning with Romans 5:12, Paul deals with man himself. We must go beyond man's condition, situation, environment, and estate, for all these things have been completely settled in the foregoing chapters. These problems have been solved, and man has been cleansed, forgiven, justified, and reconciled. The problem now in view is man himself. In no other portion of the Divine Word is man exposed as thoroughly as in Romans 5 through 8. In these four chapters man is acutely diagnosed by Paul. Paul seems to use every available spiritual instrument to diagnose the sickness of man.

What kind of man is exposed in this section of Romans? He is a man with sin in him, a man under the reign of death and, therefore, a man under God's righteous judgment and condemnation. Man has been poisoned with

the evil nature of Satan, stung by the poison of sin. Man himself is absolutely sinful, not only in his dreadful deeds, but also in his disposition and nature. As far as man's being is concerned, man is thoroughly sinful. Sin is in man's fallen body, and man is under the reign of death, judged and condemned by God. This is the diagnosis given in Romans 5 through 8.

Before I continue with Romans 6, I want to review the material we covered in the last part of Chapter 5--the two men, two acts and two results with the four reigning things. Although these matters were covered succinctly in message ten, it will perhaps benefit the reader if we approach them from another perspective.

I want now to make a clear and definite contrast between all that belongs to Adam and all that belongs to Christ. In order to do this we may use the terminology of debit and credit found in accounting. In accounting we have a debit column and a credit column. Based upon these columns, we may reckon or make an account. I am not the first to use the word account in regard to spiritual things, for the Apostle Paul, who was a good, heavenly accountant, used this term himself. Several times in the book of Romans Paul employs the word "reckon" which also means "put to account." First, God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness (4:3, 9, 22). When Abraham reacted to God by believing in Him, God, as the heavenly chief accountant, looked at the figures and seemed to say, "This faith of Abraham's should be accounted as righteousness. I credit Abraham with righteousness." Thus, God put righteousness in the credit column of Abraham's account. Furthermore, Paul says that sin is not reckoned where there is no law (5:13). A better translation of this word is that sin is not put to account without law. To say that sin is not reckoned actually means that sin is not put to account. Without law sin existed, but was not entered into God's accounting book. When we come to Romans 6, we must use our spiritual mathematics to do some accounting work (v. 11). Since we have been crucified with Christ and resurrected with Him, we must make an entry of this fact into our

accounting book, that is, we must reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

Let us proceed to draw two columns, a debit column and a credit column, for Adam and Christ. The first item on the debit side of the ledger is Adam himself. Adam constitutes a great debit for us all. Under Adam, the second item is transgression, or, to use synonymous terms, offense or disobedience. As used in Romans 5, the words transgression, offense, and disobedience all refer to the same thing. They are used interchangeably to designate the fall of Adam. This fall caused a tremendous debit which, when put in monetary terms, is an amount that runs into the billions. The third item in the debit column is sin, which came in through Adam's transgression. According to Romans 5, judgment, the fourth debit item, follows the entrance of sin. God is a sober God. He is not only righteous, but also sober, always on the alert. God never sleeps. Immediately after Adam transgressed, God intervened and exercised judgment. Thus, judgment always follows sin. Do not think that you must wait until your death to be judged, for we all were judged in Adam six thousand years ago. We were judged before we were born. Thus, judgment is the fourth item in the debit column. The fifth item is condemnation. God's condemnation follows His judgment. Therefore, Adam, with everyone included in him, is under God's condemnation. Since we came out of Adam, we were there when Adam was condemned.

What is the total of the debit column? The total is death. We may list death as item number six, although actually it is the total of the first five items. The sum total of Adam, transgression, sin, judgment, and condemnation is death. This is the total of the universal debit column in the accounting record of the human race.

Hallelujah for the credit column! In the universal account we also have a credit column. The first item in this column is Christ Who is versus Adam. Although Christ is versus Adam, there is no comparison between them. Paul says, "Not as the offense, so also is the free gift" (5:15).

Adam is not as Christ, for Adam cannot compare with Christ. Christ far surpasses Adam. When Christ's record is placed on the credit column, it is followed by billions of zeros. I am so glad that all of this is now our credit. I do not care about Adam's debit. I have Christ.

Under Christ we have the second item in the credit column, obedience. Christ's obedience to the death of the cross is called His righteous act. The two terms obedience and righteous act are synonymous. The act of Adam is called transgression, offense, and disobedience; the act of Christ is called obedience or a righteous act. What is the worth of Christ's obedience? There is no computer in existence that can calculate it.

As Christ's obedience and righteousness are versus Adam's disobedience and transgression, so also grace is versus sin. Hence, grace is the third item on the credit column. Which is more prevailing, sin or grace? Paul tells us clearly that there is no comparison, for "where sin abounded grace has more abounded" (5:20). To what degree does grace exceed sin? I do not know, and even Paul himself simply said that it was "much more." Do not worry about the debit of sin, because the credit of grace is much more (5:17).

We have seen that judgment is the fourth item on the debit column. What item on the credit column corresponds to this? The item that is versus judgment is the gift of righteousness (5:17). Perhaps you have never understood this. What does the word gift mean in Romans 5? Some will say that it means speaking in tongues or other miraculous gifts. However, if you read Romans 5, you will see that the gift mentioned there is the righteousness of God. Romans 5:17 speaks of the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. God's grace has been unveiled, coming to us and giving us a free gift--the righteousness of God. If you read Romans 5 again and again, you will see that this is so, that the gift in Romans 5 is the very righteousness given to us by God's grace. As we have seen, grace is God Himself as our enjoyment. Out of this

enjoyment, this grace, the righteousness of God is given to us as our gift. Out of sin came judgment, and out of grace comes righteousness. Thus, righteousness is versus judgment. As long as you have the righteousness of God, you are not under judgment. Righteousness erases judgment. If I have the righteousness of God, how can you judge me? I am as righteous as God is. As long as we have the gift of righteousness, judgment is impossible.

Following the gift of righteousness, we have justification, which is versus condemnation. Therefore, we have five items in the credit column. The total of these items is life, which can also be considered as the sixth item.

Let us balance our account. We have death as the total on the debit side and life as the total on the credit side. Which is greater? Certainly the answer is life. However, this life is not our physical life (bios, Luke 8:14) or our soulish life (psuche, Matt. 16:25, 26; John 12:25); it refers to the divine, eternal, uncreated, and unlimited life of God that swallows up death (zoe, John 11:25; 14:6; Col. 3:4). This life is Christ Himself as our resurrection life. Thus, the total on the credit side far outweighs the total on the debit side.

With all of this as a foundation, we may now proceed to Romans 6. If we do not have Romans 5 as a foundation, we can never be clear about Romans 6. It is no longer a question of two situations or two states; it is a question of two persons, two men. The first man is Adam with all the debits, and the second man is Christ with all the credits. To which person do you belong?

I. IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Since we all were born in Adam, how can we say that we are now in Christ?

A. Baptized into Christ

In Romans 6:3 Paul says, "Are you ignorant that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ Jesus have

been baptized into His death?" Although we were born in the first person, Adam, we have been baptized into the second person, Christ. How pitiful it is for Christians to argue about the outward form of baptism! Some dispute about the kind of water used, and some argue about the method of baptism. Baptism means to be put into Christ and into His death. Whether we were good or bad, we were born in Adam. Now we see another man, Christ. How can we get into Him and be a part of Him? The way is to be baptized into Christ. The meaning of baptism is to put people into Christ. It is not a ritual or a form; it is an extremely significant experience. A spiritual transfer must happen in the act of baptism, and if we do not have a realization of this, we should not touch the matter of baptism. Never baptize people in a ritualistic way. We must have the assurance and the realization that as we baptize people we are putting them into Christ. Once we realize the significance of baptism we will not allow it to degenerate into an outward form or ritual. Baptism is an act in which we put the members of Adam into death, thereby transferring them out of Adam and into Christ. People are baptized into Christ. Even the King James Version uses the word "into" in Romans 6:3. How people have missed the mark regarding baptism in their divisive arguments about forms and methods! Whenever we baptize people, we only care that we put them into Christ. It is awful to perpetuate a ritual, but it is wonderful to baptize people into Christ.

Praise the Lord that we have been baptized into Christ! Although we were born in Adam, by baptism we have been identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. Through death and resurrection Christ was transfigured from the flesh into the Spirit. Even Christ Himself needed death and resurrection to transform Him from the flesh to the Spirit. Likewise, through identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, we have been transferred out of Adam and into Christ. When we were baptized into Christ, we were transferred from being a part of Adam into being a part of Christ. Now we are no longer in Adam. We are absolutely in Christ. This is the fact of

identification. Now we must see and understand clearly two further points related to this.

B. Baptized into His Death--Grown Together with Him in the Likeness of His Death

Romans 6:5 says that "we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death." What does this mean? The phrase "likeness of His death" in Romans 6:5 refers to baptism. Baptism is the likeness of the death of Christ. In baptism, we have grown up together with Christ. This phrase "grown together" affords the translators a difficult problem. However, if we stay very close to the meaning of the Greek word, there will be no difficulty. The same Greek word is used in Luke 8:7 to speak of the thorns which grew up together with the wheat. Likewise, we have grown together with Christ. When we were baptized into Christ, in one sense we were put to death; in another sense we began to grow. This very much resembles the sowing of seed into the earth. Apparently the seed is sown; actually it begins to grow. By being baptized into Christ we have all grown together with Christ in the likeness of His death. Since we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, we are now growing together with Him. We have grown, yet we are growing.

C. Walking in Newness of Life

We also are growing together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection (6:4-5). What is the likeness of His resurrection? It is the newness of life. We all should walk in this newness of life. We all must see these two points. We must see that we have grown together with Christ in baptism and that we grow together with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, that is, in the newness of His resurrected life. If we see this, it means that we see that we have died with Him and that now we are growing with Him. We were buried with Him in baptism and now we are growing with Him in His resurrection, in His

divine life. We must walk according to what we see, that is, walk in the newness of life.

II. KNOWING AND RECKONING

A. Knowing by Seeing

In Romans 5 we were born in Adam and were constituted sinners. In Romans 6 we have been baptized into Christ and we have been identified with His death and resurrection. Now we are in Christ. Since we are in Him, whatever He has passed through is our history. He has been crucified and resurrected. Thus, His crucifixion and resurrection are ours. This is a glorious fact. We need to see this, not just to understand it. We need to pray that the Lord will give us a clear vision of the glorious fact that we are in Him, and that we have been crucified and resurrected with Him. To know this we need to see such a vision. Such a vision is basic to our knowing. After we see a certain thing. we can never say that we do not know it. God has accomplished the glorious fact of putting us into Christ; we have been crucified and resurrected with Him.

Our knowing is based upon our seeing, and our seeing comes from the vision. We need a vision to see our co-crucifixion with Christ in Romans 6:6-7, and our co-resurrection with Christ in Romans 6:8-10. If we have seen these two aspects of the fact of our identification with Christ, we know that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

Here it is not a matter based upon our believing, but a matter absolutely based upon our seeing. When, by a vision, we see this glorious fact we cannot help but believe it and realize that we have died with Christ and also have been raised with Him. By this kind of seeing we know with full assurance that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

I must emphasize once again that we need a vision to see the glorious fact revealed in Romans 6. Many Christians have the doctrinal knowledge of Romans 6 but have never seen a vision of the fact unveiled in this chapter. To understand a thing doctrinally is altogether different from seeing that very thing in a vision. This

problem regarding Romans 6 is prevalent among Christians. Many think that they understand the doctrine of Romans 6, but have not seen the fact by way of a vision. Many stress the matter of believing. But if you do not see the fact, it will be difficult for you to believe by your doctrinal understanding. Once you see it in a vision, you will have faith in it spontaneously. Hence, what Paul means by "Knowing this" is actually the seeing of a fact in a spiritual vision. Thus, we all must pray that the Lord will deliver us from contentment with a mere doctrinal understanding of Romans 6 and grant us a clear vision in our spirit that we may see the glorious fact revealed in this chapter. Then we will know it in its reality.

B. Reckoning by Believing

Based upon our seeing of the fact revealed in Romans 6, we must do our accounting work. We must reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (6:11). On the one hand, we must reckon ourselves dead to sin; on the other hand, we must reckon ourselves alive to God. This reckoning is based upon our seeing. I have seen that I have died with Christ and that I am growing with Christ in His resurrection. Therefore, automatically and continually, I reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God. This is a matter of accounting. Under our account we have a great credit item--dead to sin and alive to God.

Reckoning is a matter of believing produced by seeing. Having seen the facts, we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God by believing that we have been crucified and resurrected with Christ. Once we have seen the fact, we believe that we are such. Then we reckon by believing what we have seen.

Many Christians have been taught the technique of reckoning themselves dead, and many have practiced this technique. Eventually, as all can prove, the technique does not work. It is not a matter of technique; it is a matter of seeing the fact that results in reckoning with a spontaneous faith. Simply using the technique of reckoning according to the doctrinal understanding

without seeing the fact will always end in failure. Only after the Apostle Paul mentions the matter of knowing by seeing the fact (vv. 6-10) does he direct us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (v. 11). Reckoning needs the seeing which results in believing. If we have seen the fact, we will believe it and reckon on it accordingly.

III. COOPERATION BY REJECTING AND PRESENTING

As we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, we need to present our members as "weapons of righteousness to God" (6:13). Most versions do not translate this part of the Word this way. Instead of "weapons," the King James Version uses the word "instruments." However, the same Greek word is used in 2 Corinthians 6:7 in the phrase that is translated "the armor of righteousness." It is better to render the word "armor" as "weapons." Paul says that he has the weapons of righteousness. Thus, Paul's concept in Romans 6 is of weapons of righteousness, not of instruments of righteousness, due to the war between righteousness and unrighteousness. Romans 7:23 proves that a battle is raging within man. Romans 13:12 says, "let us put on the weapons of light." This also proves that a war is raging. In such a fight we do not need instruments; we need weapons. Every member of our body is a weapon. We should be on the alert for the next battle, for we are warring constantly. Once we realize that we are dead to sin and alive to God, and reckon ourselves to be such, we must present our members as weapons of righteousness to fight the battle.

Furthermore, we need to present ourselves and our members as slaves to God (6:16, 19, 22). If we present ourselves to God as slaves and our members as weapons of righteousness, we will be sanctified spontaneously. This means that we take sides with the resurrected Christ Who dwells within us as life. We stand with this eternal life. In this way we give the eternal life the opportunity to work within us, to separate us from everything common, and to sanctify us. The result of this presentation is

sanctification. This is the order of our experience: we see, we reckon, we present ourselves to God, we reject sin, and we cooperate with God.

We must reject sin, for it still dwells in our fallen body (6:12). Do not cooperate with sin any longer. Reject sin and cooperate with God. Do not be so spiritual that you become passive and cease to do anything at all. Passivity is dreadful. If you are passive, you will be cheated and deceived. We should be neither passive nor too active, since neither our passivity nor our activity is of any value. What then should we do? We must see the facts, reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, present our members and ourselves to God, reject sin, and cooperate with our God. We should not do anything on our own. Do not try to love your wife or submit to your husband. Do not try to be humble or kind. However, you need to reject sin. When sin comes to you with a proposal, you must say, "Sin, depart from me. I have nothing to do with you." Do not let sin continue to lord it over you (6:14). This means that you reject sin and turn to God and say, "Lord, I am Your slave. I want to cooperate with You. Whether or not I love my wife, it is up to You. In the matter of loving I want to cooperate with You. I want to be Your slave. Whatever You do, I will follow You and cooperate with You." Do not be passive or active. Simply reject sin and cooperate with God. If you do this, you will not only be righteous, but also sanctified. You will undergo an inward, dispositional change.

The issue of sanctification is life eternal (6:22). Thus, Romans 8 follows Romans 6. Romans 6 concludes with sanctification unto eternal life; Romans 8 begins with the Spirit of life. Do not ask me where to put Romans 7. Although this chapter is in the Bible and cannot be deleted, it can be eradicated from our experience. We may leap from the end of Romans 6 to the beginning of Romans 8.

What the Apostle Paul means in Romans 6 is that, on the one hand, we are in the fact of having been crucified

and resurrected with Christ and that, on the other hand, we have the divine life. That fact that we have been crucified and resurrected with Christ has transferred us out of Adam into Christ. The divine life enables us to live a sanctified life. We need to see that we have been transferred. Based upon our seeing, we reckon ourselves as such by believing. Then we need to cooperate with the divine life by rejecting sin and by presenting ourselves and our members to God. We do have a position to reject sin, for now we are "not under law but under grace" (6:14). Sin has no ground, no right, to make any claims upon us, but instead we, standing under grace, have the full right to reject sin and its power. At the same time, by taking sides with Christ, we present ourselves and our members as slaves to God that the divine life may work within us to sanctify us, not only positionally, but also dispositionally, with the holy nature of God.

As a summary, we may say that we have all been baptized into Christ. By being baptized into Him we have been identified with Him in His death and resurrection. We have grown together with Him in His death and are now growing together with Him in His resurrection life. We see that we are dead to sin and alive to God and reckon it so in our heavenly accounting book. Based upon this reckoning, we present ourselves as slaves to God and our members as weapons of righteousness. This affords the opportunity for the divine life within us to do its sanctifying work. Then we learn to reject sin and to cooperate with God. The result of it all is sanctification, which ends with life eternal. Praise the Lord!

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE BONDAGE OF THE LAW IN OUR FLESH

(1)

In Romans 5:12-21 we saw that the gift in Christ surpasses the heritage in Adam. Romans 6 revealed our identification with Christ. In order to have a genuine experience of our identification with Christ, we must pay attention to two negative items found in Romans 7--the law and the flesh. Romans 7 exposes the bondage of the law in our flesh. Although we have been identified with Christ through baptism, and although we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death and are now growing together with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, the law and the flesh continue to exist. We may present ourselves as slaves and our members as weapons of righteousness to God that we may be sanctified and enjoy the riches of the divine life, yet the law of God outside of us and our flesh within us still exist.

Why does Paul in chapter 7 speak in such detail about the law and the flesh? Because Romans 6:14 says, "you are not under law but under grace." In Romans 5 and 6 Paul explained clearly that we are now under grace, not under law. However, he has not yet explained how it can be that we are not under law. Because in 6:14 Paul said, "you are not under law," he must write another chapter to explain how we are not under law. Without Romans 7 we could never be clear about this matter. Although the law continues to exist, we are not under it; we have nothing to do with it any longer. Has God recalled the law? Has He annulled or abolished it? The answer to these questions is no. How then can we say that we are not under the law? How can we be outside of the law and discharged from it?

How can we be freed from the law? The answer to these questions is found in Romans 7, especially in the first six verses. This portion of the Word gives us a full definition and explanation of why we are no longer under the law. If we understand Romans 7:1-6, we will know how we have been discharged from the law.

I. TWO HUSBANDS

If we are to understand how we have been freed from the law, we must know the two husbands in Romans 7. In Romans 5 we have two men, two acts, and two results with the four reigning things. In Romans 7:1-6 we have two husbands, and in 7:7-25 we have three laws. What are the two husbands in Romans 7?

As a young Christian I was eager to know the Bible. I found it especially difficult to learn who was the first husband in Romans 7. I tried to accumulate the best expositions of the Scriptures. However, I still could not determine who was the first husband in Romans 7. Was he the law or the flesh? I inquired of those who were knowledgeable in the Scriptures, but none of them were clear about this. Some said that the first husband was the law, while others said that he was the flesh. I read Romans 7 again and again, trying my best to understand it. I continued to study this matter for years. Twenty-two years ago I conducted a thorough study of the book of Romans, but even at that time I was not absolutely certain about the first husband. Now, after many years of study and experience, this matter is clear.

Who is the first husband in Romans 7? We must approach this question with the entire Bible in view, for we should understand one verse of the Bible according to the Bible as a whole. Let us now adopt such a view regarding the first husband in Romans 7.

A. Man's Original Position-- a Wife's Position

In God's creation man's original position was that of a wife. Isaiah 54:5 says that God our Maker is our husband. Thus, according to God's creation, man had the position of a wife. As a wife to God, we must depend upon Him and take Him as our head. This was our original position.

B. The Self-assuming Position of Fallen Man

When man fell, he took another position, the self-assuming position of the old man. The fallen man assumed the position of a husband. The man created by God was a wife; the fallen man became a husband. Assuming the position of the husband, the fallen man became independent of God and made himself the head as the husband. Before you were saved, you never considered yourself as a wife. If you were a female, you might have thought of yourself as stronger than a man. Among fallen people both males and females think of themselves as husbands. Many wives have said, "Why must I be under my husband? He should be under me. Why should he be the head? I want to be the head." Hence, fallen man became a strong, ugly husband.

C. The Law of the Old Man

Since fallen man wanted to be the husband, God gave him the law. The law is not intended for the wife, but for the fallen husband. Thus, this law becomes the law of the old man, the law of the husband (7:2). However, God did not intend that the old man keep the law, because the old man cannot keep it. The law was given that the old man might be exposed. People make a great mistake when they think that God gave man the law that he might keep it.

On the contrary, God gave the law to man that he might break it and that, by breaking it, he might be completely exposed. If you try to keep the law, you are wrong; if you break the law, you are correct. The law was not given for man to keep; it was given for man to break.

This thought is scriptural. Romans 3:20 says, "by law is knowledge of sin." The law gives us the knowledge of sin. If man had no law, he would continue to commit sins, but would not recognize them as such. Man would excuse his sinful deeds, using favorable terms to describe them. However, the law identifies sin as sin. Moreover, Romans 4:15 says, "where no law is, neither is there transgression." You may think that the law prevents transgression, but this verse says that the law exposes transgression. Furthermore, Romans 5:20 says, "But the law entered that the offense might abound." The law did not enter that the offense might be reduced or restricted. This is our natural concept and thought. Paul says that the law entered that the offense might abound, meaning that it might increase plentifully. Thus, the Bible indicates that the law was not given for us to keep, but for us to violate.

You may say, "I will not try to break the law." Whether you want to break the law or not means nothing, for you will break the law. You cannot help but break the law. The law says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Although you may try to love your neighbor, you cannot do it. Even the children in school cannot love their classmates as themselves. Everyone reading this message has broken and continues to break at least one of the ten commandments. Who can keep the law? No one. The law entered that the offense might abound.

According to Romans 7:7, we would not have known sin except through the law. In this verse Paul says that he would not have known coveting except the law had said, "You shall not covet." As a summary we may say that the law works that the offense might abound. Once the offense abounds, the law exposes it as sin. In this way the law leads us to the knowledge of sin.

D. The Position of the Regenerated Man-- a Genuine Wife's Position

The position of the regenerated new man is a genuine wife's position. Regeneration restores us to our original position.

1. Having the Old Man Crucified

The first husband of Romans 7:2-3 is not the flesh or the law, but the old man of Romans 6:6, which has been crucified with Christ. If we read Romans 7:1-6 carefully, we can see a correspondence between it and Romans 6:6.

Many Christians have had difficulty understanding the first husband mentioned in Romans 7 because most of them neglected the fact that we, the believers, after being saved, have two statuses--the old and the new. Due to the fall we have the old status; due to regeneration we have a new one. Because of the fall we are the old man, and because of regeneration we are the new man. As the old man we were the husband; as the new man we are the wife. Hence, we have two statuses.

Let us explore this further by considering Romans 7:1-6 in relation to Romans 6:6 and Galatians 2:19-20. Romans 7:1 says, "The law lords it over the man as long as he lives." This verse presents no difficulty. In 7:2 we are told that the "married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband." Please notice that it does not say "she lives," but "he lives." If the husband dies, the wife is discharged from the law of the husband. Romans 7:3 tells us that if, while the husband lives, the wife marries another husband she will be called an adulteress. However, if the husband dies, she is freed from the law and may be married to another.

The next three verses in Romans 7 present some difficulties. The point of crisis is in 7:4. Let us examine this verse carefully. "So that, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ." We were not put to death as a result of suicide, but

through the body of Christ, meaning that we died on the cross of Christ. The phrase "through the body of Christ" modifies death, indicating what sort of death it was. It was not a suicide; it was a co-crucifixion with Christ. When Christ was crucified, we died with Him. We need to compare this with Romans 6:6, which says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him." Do you not believe that this verse which says that our old man has been crucified with Him corresponds with Romans 7:4 which says that we were made dead through the body of Christ? We must admit that these two statements correspond with one another. No doubt, the "you" that "have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ" in 7:4 is the "old man" who "has been crucified with Him" in 6:6. To put it simply, the "you" in 7:4 is the "old man" in 6:6.

Romans 6:6 says that the old man has been crucified with Him that the body of sin might be made of none effect. The old man, not the body, has been crucified. If you say that your body has been crucified, you need a funeral and burial. What then has happened to the body? The body has been made of none effect; it has been rendered useless. The old man has been crucified, but the body remains. Since the old man has been crucified, the body is jobless. Nevertheless, Romans 6:6 continues with the phrase "that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." The old man has been crucified, yet we still live. We should no longer serve sin as slaves.

Now let us turn to Galatians 2:19. This verse says, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Are we dead or living? Are we two persons or one? By this verse we can see that we have two statuses, that there are two I's--an old "I" and a new "I." The old "I" is dead that the new "I" may live. This is not my interpretation; this is my quotation of Galatians 2:19. Galatians 2:19 says that I am dead that I might live. If I am not dead, I can never live. I need to be dead in order to live. I die to live. To what am I dead? According to Galatians 2:19, I am dead to the law.

Galatians 2:20 follows by declaring, I am crucified with Christ," a phrase which undoubtedly corresponds to Romans 6:6 and 7:4. These three verses correspond to one another. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." How can we be crucified persons and continue to live? Are we dead or alive? Both are true. As the old man I am dead; as the new man I live. Although I live, yet it is not I, but Christ who lives in me. I like the three words "nevertheless," "yet," and "but." If we concentrate on these three words, we will be clear about our dual status. I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. This is marvelous. This is the emphatic teaching of the Bible. Then, Galatians 2:20 says, "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." This verse reveals that a believer has two statuses--the status of an old man and the status of the regenerated new man.

We were troubled by the old husband in Romans 7:4 because we did not pay attention to a Christian's dual status. As the old man we were the husband; as the new man we are the wife.

Now we return to Romans 7:4. "So that, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you might marry another, even Him Who has been raised from among the dead, that we might bear fruit to God." In this verse Paul puts together a funeral and a wedding. On the one hand, we were buried; on the other hand, we were married. We have been made dead that we might marry another. In Romans 7:4 we are dead to marry; in Galatians 2:19 we are dead to live. If we did not have two statuses, how could this be possible? We were made dead according to our old status that we might marry another according to our new status. According to our new status, we marry Him who has been raised from among the dead, that we might bear fruit to God.

Now we come to Romans 7:5-6. Verse five says "For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins, which were through the law, operated in our members to bear

fruit to death." This verse speaks of what we were. Verse six says, "But now we are discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, that we should serve as slaves in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter." When we were in the flesh (v. 5), we were the old husband. When we were discharged from the law (v. 6), we became the wife. We have been discharged from the law of the old husband, having died to that in which we were held.

By now it should be very clear who is the old husband. The old husband is our old man. The wife is our regenerated new man. As the old man we are dead, and as the new man we are alive. We were dead as the old husband, but now are alive as the wife. As we shall see, the wife does two things--bears fruit to God and serves in newness of spirit.

2. Freed from the Law of the Old Man

The regenerated man, having the old man crucified, is now free from the law of the old man (Rom. 7:3, 4, 6; Gal. 2:19). The law was given to the old man, but the old man, the old husband, is dead. Since my old husband is dead, I, as his wife, am discharged from his law. Paul says that the law of the husband governs the wife as long as her husband lives. However, when the husband dies, the wife is free. Our old husband was our old man. Now we are the regenerated new man. Since the law was given to the old husband and since he died on the cross, we are discharged from his law. This is why we are no longer under the law.

3. Married to Christ, the New Husband

Now we are married to Christ, our new husband. We have seen that Romans 7:4 says that we are married to Christ, "even Him Who has been raised from among the dead." In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul also says that he has espoused us to one husband, Christ. Christ is our new husband.

4. Taking Christ as the Head

As regenerated beings, both male and female believers are a part of the wife. Since Christ is our husband we must

depend on Him and take Him as our Head (Eph. 5:23). If we do this, we will bear fruit in resurrection to God (7:4) and serve the Lord in newness of spirit (7:6). We will no longer be in the flesh, but in the newness of the spirit.

The deep thought here corresponds to the depth of God's justification seen in the example of Abraham. In God's justification He called His chosen people out from everything other than God back to Himself. He called them out of their fallen state back to Himself, that His called and chosen people should not depend upon themselves for their living, but depend upon God for everything. This means that as they come back to God they take Him as their husband. To take God as our husband means to terminate all that we are, have, and do and to trust in God for everything. Taking Christ as our husband also means that we believe in Christ. No longer should we live by ourselves but by Christ. We must let Christ live for us. Hence, the deep thought in Romans 7:1-6 corresponds to the deep thought concerning justification in Romans 4: God's intention is to bring us back to Himself and cause us to place our full trust in Him. No longer should we live by ourselves, act by ourselves, or be anything in ourselves. We must be totally terminated, and our head must be completely covered. We are no longer the husband. We, as the old man, have been crucified. Christ is now our husband.

In any wedding ceremony the bride's head is always covered. Thus, at a wedding there are two persons but just one head. The wife's head is covered by the husband, and the husband is the head. What has become of the wife? She is no longer independent. She has been reduced to being nobody in herself. Do you like to hear this? I do. I do not like to hear it because I am a husband, but because I am a part of the wife. I have been completely nullified and I am nobody. Christ is my husband and my head. I have no head of my own. My head has been covered.

Christ is not only my head--He is also my person. The wives must take their husbands as their person, not only as their head. We must even take Christ as our life. Christ is our husband, our head, our person, and our life. We have been terminated and have become nobody. Christ lives in us and for us. I have been fully called out of everything else and called into Him. I believe in Him and put my whole trust in Him. Christ is everything to me. He is my husband, my head, my person, and my life. Therefore, I am fully under grace, no longer under law in any way. The law has nothing to do with me, and I have nothing to do with the law. "Through the law I am dead to the law" (Gal. 2:19). Now in grace I am alive to God.

Are you still loaded with all the old teachings which command you to do so many things? Whenever you try to do anything on your own, it means that you, as the old man once again, are turning to Hagar. All you can produce is Ishmael. Do not join yourself to Hagar, divorce her. Put her aside and tell her that you have nothing to do with her. Then, as the new man, come to Sarah, the grace of God, and in union with her you will produce Isaac, Christ. You will experience Christ and enjoy Him. This is not only correct doctrinally but wonderfully true according to our experience.

Let us consider Galatians 4:21-26 a little further. In this passage Paul allegorizes Hagar and Sarah as two covenants: Hagar as the covenant of the law and Sarah as the covenant of grace. By this we can understand that Hagar typifies the covenant of law and that Sarah typifies the covenant of grace. Thus, Ishmael was produced by the work of the law, and Isaac was brought forth by grace. Galatians 4:31 says, "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." This means that we are not children of the law, but children of grace. Therefore, if we go to Hagar we turn to the law, but if we come to Sarah we turn to grace. We all must come to Sarah and be under grace that we may experience Christ more and more.

5. Bearing Fruit to God

As a wife we bear fruit to God. What does this mean, and why does Paul mention it in Romans 7:4? When we were in the flesh--that is, when we were the old husband--everything related to us was death. All we could produce was death. Everything we brought forth was a fruit of death and to death. Now as a regenerated person--that is, as the wife--we bear fruit to God. This simply means that everything we do now is related to God. Formerly, whatever we were and whatever we did was death. Therefore, in these verses we see a vivid contrast between death and God, between bearing fruit to death and bearing fruit to God. This proves that when we were the old man and the old husband, held under the law, everything we were and did was death. The result was fruit to death. As a new man and the wife, married to a new husband, whatever we are and do is related to God. We bear fruit to God. What does the phrase "bear fruit to God" mean? It means that God comes forth, that God is brought forth as fruit. Thus, all we are and do must be the living God. We must bring forth God as an overflow of God. In this way we have the living God as our fruit and we bear fruit to God.

6. Serving the Lord in Newness of Spirit

As a wife we must also serve the Lord in newness of spirit, not in oldness of the letter. The word spirit in this verse denotes our regenerated human spirit in which the Lord as the Spirit dwells (2 Tim. 4:22). We may serve in newness of spirit because God has renewed our spirit. Our regenerated, renewed, human spirit is a source of newness for our whole being. With our regenerated spirit everything is new, and everything that comes out of it is new. Oldness is not with our regenerated spirit; it is with the old law, the old regulations, and the old letters. Therefore, we do not serve the Lord in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of our regenerated spirit.

We all must learn how to exercise our spirit. When you come to the meetings of the church, do not exercise your memory. Exercise your spirit. If you exercise your spirit,

you will have something new to offer the brothers and sisters. This is also true in giving a message. If I retain a great deal of information in my memory and try to give a message according to this memorized material, that message will be old, filled with the oldness of dead knowledge. However, if I forget my memory and exercise my spirit as I give the message, something new will burst forth. I had this kind of experience during the Erie conference in 1969. In one meeting I stood up to speak, but was not clear concerning the content of the message. I stood by faith, exercising my spirit. Immediately, the matter of the seven Spirits in the book of Revelation came forth. Everyone who heard that message can testify that it was new, fresh, powerful, and living. That was the first day the sevenfold, intensified Spirit came forth. After that, I returned to Los Angeles to hold the 1969 summer conference on that very subject. In the Lord's recovery in this country that summer was crucial and witnessed a major turn.

We need to exercise our spirit continually because our regenerated spirit is a source of newness. The Lord, the divine life, and the Holy Spirit are all in our regenerated spirit. Everything in our regenerated spirit is new. Do not remember the law, for with the law there is nothing but oldness. In our regenerated spirit there is nothing but newness.

As regenerated people who have been married to Christ as the new husband, we must bear fruit to God. Whatever we do, are, and have must be God Himself. God overflows from our being to become our fruit to God Himself. We must also serve the Lord in newness of spirit, not in oldness of letter, not in oldness of the law. We have nothing to do with the law any longer. We have been freed from it. Now we are under grace, living with and by our new husband, who is Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN
THE BONDAGE OF THE LAW IN OUR FLESH
(2)

II. THREE LAWS

In the previous message we saw the two husbands revealed in Romans 7:1-6. In this message we shall consider the three laws revealed in 7:7-25. I would like to read each verse and, when necessary, make some comments on it.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! But I had not known sin except through the law; for I had not known coveting except the law had said, You shall not covet" (v. 7). This verse makes it quite clear that the law gives us the knowledge of sin, for the law exposes sin and identifies it as sin.

"But sin, taking occasion through the commandment, wrought in me coveting of every kind. For without law sin is dead" (v. 8). Sin utilizes the law, and the law helps sin to work in us. Hence, the law was not given to help us, but to assist sin. Without law, or apart from the law, sin is dead.

"For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died" (v. 9). Surely the law does not help us; it helps sin. The law came to revive sin, to make sin alive. Before the law came, sin was dormant. However, when the law appeared, sin was quickened and revived.

"And the commandment which was unto life, this was found to me to be unto death" (v. 10). Although the law was supposed to be unto life, eventually, as far as we are concerned, it was death.

"For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me" (v. 11). Sin is a killer and the law is the killing instrument. The law is the knife used by sin to kill us. Without a knife or killing instrument it is difficult to kill people. Sin, using the law, firstly deceives us and then kills us. Since the acts of deceiving and killing are certainly the behavior of a

person, we must consider sin as the personification of Satan.

"So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (v. 12). There is no problem regarding the nature of the law. The nature, the essence, of the law is holy, just, and good.

"Did then that which is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, working death to me through that which is good; that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful" (v. 13). This verse is additional proof that the law does not help us. Instead, the law makes sin exceedingly sinful. Are you still attracted by the law? We must stay away from it.

"For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am fleshly, sold under sin" (v. 14). The phrase "sold under sin" means sold to sin. Sin is the buyer, the buying master, and we have been sold to him.

"For what I do, I do not acknowledge; for what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do" (v. 15). The word acknowledge in this verse does not mean that we do not know. How can we say that we do not know what we do? Certainly we know. This verse means that Paul did not acknowledge what he did. It means that although we may act wrongly we do not acknowledge it or approve it.

"But if what I do not will, this I do, I agree with the law that it is good. So now it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me" (vv. 16-17). Paul says that it is no longer he who does what he does not want to do, but sin that dwells within him. The word dwells is not the same Greek word that is elsewhere translated "abide"; it is a Greek word that actually means "make a home," because the verb has the root meaning of home or house. Therefore, this verse does not mean that sin simply abides or remains within us for awhile, but that sin makes its home in us. Thus it is no longer we who do the evil that we do not want to do, but sin that makes its home within us.

"For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to do the good is not" (v. 18). Paul does not say that there is nothing good in him; he says that there is nothing good in his flesh.

We must pay careful attention to the modifier used by Paul--"in my flesh." Never say that there is nothing good in you, for there is good within you. However, in our flesh, that is, in our fallen body, nothing good dwells. In our fallen body, which the Bible calls "flesh," sin dwells with all its lusts. Thus, nothing good is found in our flesh.

"For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil I do not will, this I practice" (v. 19). This verse proves that there is good within us, for we do have a good will, a will to do the good. However, we are unable to practice the good that we will to do.

"But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me. I find then the law that, at my willing to do the good, the evil is present with me" (vv. 20-21). Verse 21 mentions the law that operates whenever we will to do good. This law is evil, for whenever we attempt to do good, the evil is present with us. The Greek word translated "the evil" in this verse denotes that which is evil in character.

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive in the law of sin which is in my members" (vv. 22-23). Verse 22 mentions the law of God in which Paul delights according to the inner man. We may label this as law number one. In verse 23 Paul refers to the law of the mind, which we may label law number two. Since this law is the law of the mind and the mind is a part of our soul, it means that there is a law in our soul. Verse 23 also mentions what Paul calls "a different law in my members." Since this law is in our members and our members are a part of our flesh, our fallen body, it means that in our flesh is another law. This law, law number three, wars against the law of our minds. In 7:23 we find two laws fighting against one another, warring against one another. Paul says that this "different law" in our members makes us captive to the law of sin. This "law of sin which is in my members" is equivalent to the "different law in my members" mentioned earlier in the verse. This law is the third law. Thus, in this one verse we find two laws: one is

a good law in our mind, and the other is an evil law in our members.

"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Why is our body termed the body of this death? Because in our body is the evil law that wars against the good law in our soul. This evil law makes our body a "body of this death." What is "this death"? It is the death of being defeated, the death of being made captive and carried away by the law of sin in our body.

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve as a slave the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (v. 25). This verse gives the answer to the question raised in the preceding verse. According to verse 25, deliverance from the body of death is through Jesus Christ our Lord. In this verse Paul tells us that with his mind by himself, not in his spirit by the Lord Jesus, he served the law of God as a slave. He also says that with his flesh he served the law of sin.

In 7:7-25 we see three laws, and it is possible for us to locate them.

A. The Law of God

The law of God is just, good, holy, and spiritual (vv. 12, 14, 16). This law is outside of us or we may say that it is above us. This law of God makes many demands and requirements of the fallen man that he might be exposed (vv. 7-11).

B. The Law of Good

While the law of God is above us and outside of us, making demands upon us, the law of good is in the mind of man's soul (vv. 23, 22). We may say that the law of good in our mind corresponds to the law of God and responds to its demands, trying to keep it (vv. 18, 21, 22). Whenever the law of God places a demand upon us, the good law in our soul responds to it. If the law of God says, "Honor your parents," the good law in our mind immediately replies,

"Amen! I will do it. I will honor my parents." This has been our experience throughout life. Each time the law of God made a demand the law of good in our soul responded and promised to fulfill it.

C. The Law of Sin (and Death)

However, in our members is a third law, the law of sin, which wars against the law of good. As we have seen, the law of sin is in the members of our fallen body, the flesh (vv. 17, 18, 20, 23). It constantly wars against the law of good and makes man a captive (v. 23). Whenever the law of good responds to the law of God and attempts to fulfill the requirements of the law of God, the evil law in our flesh is aroused. If the good law should fail to respond, the evil law would perhaps remain dormant, as if it were sleeping. However, when the evil law learns that the good law is responding, the evil law seems to say, "Are you going to practice good according to the law of God? I will not allow this!" The evil law wars against the law of good and invariably captures us. Thus, we become a captive in the law of sin which is in our members. This is not a doctrine; this is our life-history.

The command "Husbands, love your wives" sounds so good and easy to fulfill. When this command is given, the law of good in a man's mind immediately responds, "Yes, I will do it." However, the evil law in his flesh learns of this and answers, "Are you going to fulfill this law? Don't you know that I am here?" The result is defeat. Instead of loving his wife, he may slap her face or throw his knife and fork in anger. Wives have a similar experience when they try in themselves to keep the law which tells them to submit to their own husbands. The good law in the wife's mind is fond of this demand and says, "I will obey. As a good wife, I must surely submit myself to my husband. I will do this." If a woman says this, she will find that another law is waiting for an opportunity to attack. The evil law will say, "Do you believe that you can do this? I am here to show you that you cannot." Once again, the result is failure. Instead of submitting to her husband, she

becomes angry at him instead. A few minutes later, she weeps because of her pitiful situation. This is the experience of Romans 7.

In Romans 7 we see three laws: the first law. the law of God, demands and makes requirements; the second law, the law of good in our mind, is quick to respond; the third law, the law of sin in our members, is always on the alert to war against the law of good in our minds and to defeat us, capture us, and imprison us. Each law has its own aspect. Romans 7 describes the experience of each one of us. Perhaps even today you continue to repeat Romans 7. Do not think that you are different. According to God's economy, however, Romans 7 is not necessary. As we pointed out in a previous message, Romans 8 continues Romans 6. Nevertheless, due to our poor situation we need Romans 7 to expose us and to help us.

Some Christians insist that Romans 7 is necessary, that, experientially speaking, it must come between Romans 6 and Romans 8. Some good Christians hold this concept. Do you still cling to the thought that Romans 7 is necessary between Romans 6 and 8? There is no doubt that Romans 7 describes Paul's personal experience. The argument among the teachers of the Bible concerns the time when this experience occurred--before or after Paul's salvation. Although some believe that Romans 7 is a continuation in experience of Romans 6, if we read Romans 6 through 8 carefully, we will discover that Romans 7 relates Paul's experience before he was saved. In 7:24 Paul said, "Wretched man that I am!" In 8:1 he said, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1 proves that the experience narrated in Romans 7 occurred before Paul was saved. It is not his present experience, because he said that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the experience of Romans 7 occurred before Paul was in Christ; it was his experience before he was saved.

Why then did Paul find it necessary, after Romans 6, to describe his experience before he was saved? He included it to prove that we are no longer under law. I have already mentioned that Romans 7 was written to

explain a short clause in 6:14 which says that we "are not under law but under grace." Romans 7 tells us that when we were under law we were the old man. While our old man was still alive, we were under the law. However, as regenerated, new men we are no longer under the law, because our old husband, the old man under the law, has been crucified. Then Paul continues to relate how pitiful and wretched it is for anyone to be under the law. It seems that Paul was saying, "Dear saints, do you still want to be under the law? If you do, let me tell you about the experience I had. The law does not help you; it deceives you and gives occasion for sin to work on you. The law even kills you. You should not want to be under the law anymore. But, even if you want to be under the law, you can never keep it." Paul then describes the complete story of his experience before he was saved. He says that the law of God made demands upon him, that the good law in his mind responded to the law of God, but that the law of sin in the members of his fallen body warred against the law of his mind, defeating that law and bringing him into captivity. Paul's conclusion was, "Wretched man that I am. My body is the body of this death. I cannot escape." Thus, Romans 7 is a record of Paul's experience before he was saved, a record which proves that we cannot keep the law and that encourages us not to try. Whenever we attempt to keep the law, the third law, the law of sin, captures us. Keeping the law is an impossibility for fallen man.

God did not give us the law with the intention of helping us. Its purpose is to stir up Satan to trouble us. God's intention in giving us the law was to expose the sinful law within us. If we think that we must keep the law, we are absolutely wrong. We are not strong enough to fulfill the requirements of the law. Do you not know that the evil law within you is actually the powerful person of Satan? Can you, as a fallen man, defeat Satan? It is impossible. He is a giant and, compared to him, you are a weakling. You are weak, and the good law within you is impotent. You have a good will and a positive desire, but you cannot fulfill it. You, as the old man, are only good to be crucified and buried with Christ, as you were already in

6:6. You should not pull out the old man who was buried in a tomb and expect him to keep God's commandment. The good law in your mind represents your strength, and the evil law in your flesh represents Satan's power. Since Satan is more powerful than your strength, you can never defeat him, but are always captured by him whenever you attempt to keep the law of God. This is the correct meaning and understanding of Romans 7.

Although Romans 7 describes Paul's experience before he was saved, it depicts the experience of most Christians after they are saved. I doubt that there is a single exception to this. After we were saved, we all made a total response to God's law. Consider as an example a young man who has recently been saved. He has repented and made a thorough confession of his sins to the Lord. On the night he was saved he made a decision, saying to himself, "I should not behave that way any longer. I should not do the evil things that I once did. Tonight I will make up my mind to never do them again." Then this new convert prays to the Lord, "Lord, I am sorry for the way I have lived. From now on I want to be a good Christian. I don't want to do those things anymore." This young man is a typical representative of all genuine Christians. As a young Christian I did this numerous times. We all have done the same thing before the Lord. But we all can testify that we cannot do what we made up our minds to do. We simply are what we are--persons with a good law within us. After we were saved this good law in our mind responded to the law of God outside of us, and we made up our mind to be a better person.

Some Christians have wrongly told people that there is nothing good at all in them. As some preachers were talking this way some professors argued with them saying, "I don't believe this. I can testify that I do have something good within me. I honor my mother and have a real heart to love her. Isn't that something good within me? And I did make up my mind not to treat my students unfairly. Doesn't that mean that I have something good in me? How can you say that there is nothing good in people?" We must be careful about this, as Paul was in composing Romans 7.

Paul said, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." If he did not make this modification, he would contradict himself, for in the following verse he mentions his will to do good. Man has three parts: a spirit, a soul with the mind, and a body with its many members. In the members of our fallen body nothing good dwells. However, we must remember that man was created by God as good and some amount of goodness remains in all men. For example, if you take a piece of metal and cast it into the dirt, it may be defiled, but its nature is still metal. You cannot claim that the metal is no longer metal. Man was created by God, and God never created anything bad. Everything God created was good, including man as God's creature. Regardless of how fallen man has become, the goodness of God's creation remains in him. Even bank robbers still have an element of good in them, an element which was created by God.

Although man was created good, the evil nature of Satan was injected into his body when he partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The tree of knowledge denoted Satan, the evil one, who has the power of death. Thus, when man ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, Satan came into his body. Satan's principle, the factor of every evil thing, is the law of sin. In our mind we have a principle created by God, the law of good. Hence, if we understand Romans 7 adequately, we will know where we are and what we have within us. We have a good law in our mind and an evil law in our flesh, two laws which are incompatible. The good law represents the good principle created by God, and the evil law is Satan's principle in our flesh. Satan in our flesh hates God, deceives man, and tries his best to damage and ruin humanity. Thus, whenever man's mind by the good law thinks to do good, the evil law immediately rises up to fight, defeat, and capture the pitiful, wretched man. This was Paul's experience before he was saved when he was an enthusiastic Judaizer and lover of the law. Day and night he attempted to keep the law of God. Eventually, he realized that the law of God was outside of him, the law of good, corresponding to God's law, was in his mind, and

that whenever he willed to do good another law in his members fought against the law of good in his mind, capturing him and making him wretched. Paul discovered that his body was the body of death. In keeping God's law, in doing good to please God, this body of death is just like a corpse. Paul came to realize that he was a hopeless case due to the powerful element of sin dwelling in his fallen body. This is the clear picture portrayed in Romans 7. Once we see this picture we will praise the Lord that He has no intention for us to keep His law.

Romans 7 reveals that a battle is raging within us. The law of good, responding to God's law, is in our mind, and the law of sin is in our members, fighting against the law of good. The battle is extremely intense. Some teachers of the Bible say that the war in Romans 7 is the same as the conflict in Galatians 5. However, they are different. If we examine Galatians 5, we will see the difference. However, before we turn to Galatians 5 I want to say a word about the flesh.

Some Christians hold the concept that before they were saved they had lusts in their flesh, but that after they were saved the lusts disappeared. There is a school of teaching which instructs people in this way. This teaching says that before we were saved there was lust in our flesh, but that afterward the lust was removed. According to this teaching, the flesh of a saved person becomes good.

As a contrast to this school we have Galatians 5:16 which says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Surely the "ye" refers to genuine Christians. Hence, it is still possible for true believers to fulfill the lust of the flesh, for such lust remains within us. Regardless of how genuine a believer we may be, we must be on the alert and not be cheated by the enemy, who may tell us that we no longer have lusts in our flesh. Such a concept is dreadful and misleading.

Let me relate an incident that occurred in North China many years ago. A particular Pentecostal movement was prevailing in that region, sweeping across all of North

China. They said that since they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit they no longer had any lusts. As result of this teaching, men and women began to stay together, claiming that they were spiritual and without lust. After a short time there were many instances of fornication, and that movement was nearly killed. In fact, it was even difficult to preach the gospel for a period of time because the Chinese people, mainly due to the ethical teaching of Confucius, hate any form of fornication. Thus, that Pentecostal movement gave Christianity a bad name in North China. We must never accept the deceptive teaching which claims that since we are sons of God and have the Holy Spirit we have no lusts in our flesh.

Paul says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." He continues by saying that the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17). This is not the war between the evil law and the good law; it is the war between the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another. This proves that, although we walk in the Spirit, we continue to have the lusts in the flesh and that our flesh remains the enemy of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). Flesh is flesh, and nothing can change its nature. Never accept the thought that after you become spiritual your flesh is improved. This teaching is a great error and is dangerous.

Galatians 5:24 says, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Unlike Romans 6:6, which says that our old man has been crucified, Galatians 5:24 does not say that the flesh, affections and lusts have been crucified. It says that we must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. The thought here is the same as the thought in Romans 8:13, which says that by the Spirit we put to death the practices of our body. We cannot crucify our old man, because our old man is our being. No one can put himself on the cross and, in that way, commit suicide. However, we can crucify our flesh through the Spirit, meaning that we continually put our flesh to death. Our old man *has been* crucified with

Christ once for all, but we have *to* crucify our flesh continually day by day. Then Galatians 5:25 says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Thus, Galatians 5 unveils the war between our flesh and the Spirit. Although most translators find it difficult to decide whether the spirit in Galatians 5:25 denotes our human spirit or the Holy Spirit, I am confident that it denotes the mingled spirit, the mingling of the Holy Spirit with our regenerated spirit. We must walk in such a Spirit. Thus, the warfare in Galatians 5 is the warfare between our flesh and the Spirit, a conflict utterly different from the war described in Romans 7.

The war mentioned in Romans 7 is a war between two laws, the good law and the evil law. It has nothing to do with the Spirit. It is even discussed in some of the old Chinese writings, where it is called the war between the principle and the lust. The principle to which these writings refer is no doubt the law of good. They also mention the lust which fights against the principle is in man's body. When, as a young man, I compared this war between the principle and the lust with Romans 7, I was surprised to find that they were identical. Thus, when I heard that some Christian teachers claim that Romans 7 describes Paul's experience after he was saved, I was quite bothered. Since even the old Chinese writings mentioned the war between the principle and the lust, and since this is identical with Paul's experience in Romans 7, how can we say that Romans 7 is the experience of a Christian?

Romans 7 describes Paul's experience before he was saved. Before he was saved he was very enthusiastic about God's law, attempting to keep it and to do good in order to please God. Although the Chinese hundreds of years ago did not know the law of God, they did understand the good nature of man mentioned in Romans 2:14-15. According to Romans 2, man by creation has three positive things in his make-up. First is man's good nature, for the Gentiles by nature do the things of the law (2:14), showing that the function of the law is written in their hearts (2:15). Second, man has a conscience (2:15). Third, he has the

reasonings which accuse, excuse, condemn, and justify (2:15). Every human being has these three elements within him. You need not be a believer in Christ in order to possess them. Every person has the good nature, a conscience, and the reasonings. Due to the presence of these three elements in man there is a war between the good law and the evil law or, according to the Chinese writings, between the principle and the lust.

Romans 7 refers to this war. Why do so many Christians experience such a conflict after they are saved? Because they were careless about their conduct before they were saved. Unlike Paul, they were not desirous to do good and to please God. However, many good people, not only among the Chinese but throughout the world, desire to overcome their lusts. Certainly such people experience Romans 7. They experience the antagonism between the good law and the evil law. Thus, Romans 7 does not describe the war between the Spirit and the flesh that is revealed in Galatians 5. The war in Galatians 5 is the typical experience of Christians; the war in Romans 7 is the experience of people who try to do good, regardless of whether they are Christians or not. Many Christians have the experience of Romans 7 after they are saved because it is only after they are saved that they decide to be careful about their behavior and try their best to be good. Therefore, they experienced after they were saved what Paul knew before he was saved. These Christians actually do the same thing that the Chinese tried to do hundreds of years ago. However, the struggle recorded in Romans 7, regardless of whether it is encountered before or after salvation, is not a typical Christian experience. It is an experience of our natural being. People who try to do good before they are saved have this experience prior to their salvation. Many others experience it only after they are saved, after they determine to do good and to please God.

In every human being, whether or not he has been saved, there is a good element in his mind and an evil element in his body, the flesh. Paul uses at least three terms to describe the evil element--sin, evil, and the law of

sin. Paul terms the good element in his mind "the law of my mind." This law of the mind is the law of good. Thus we have two laws, one in our mind and another in our fallen body. We have these two laws because we have at least two lives. With every life there is a law. Why do we have the law of good? Because we have a good life. Why do we have a law of sin? Because we have a sinful life. Every person has these two lives--the God-created life which is good, and the satanic life which came into man's body as a result of the fall.

Some people insist that man's nature is evil; others claim that it is good. One day when I was reading Romans 7 I found the answer to this argument. Both schools are right; however, they are only partially right. Both schools are right because man is not simple. Man is very complicated. For example, in the morning a man may be quite nice, behaving himself as a gentleman. He has a human life and conducts himself as a man according to the law of his human life. However, that evening he attends a gambling casino and acts like a devil. Is he a devil or a man? The correct answer is that he is both.

During their journey in the wilderness, the children of Israel spoke against God and Moses and they were bitten by fiery serpents which caused many of them to die (Num. 21:4-9). When the people prayed to God, God told Moses to lift up a brass serpent on a pole. Were those children of Israel serpents or men? They were men, because they had the actual appearance and life of men. They were also serpents because the serpentine poison entered into them and permeated them. Thus, a brass serpent was lifted up as their representative and substitute. The children of Israel were both men and serpents. Likewise, the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees saying, "You generation of vipers." On one hand, the Pharisees were the generation of men; on the other hand, they were the generation of poisonous serpents. We all have two natures: one nature is good, for it was created by God; the other nature is evil, for it is the nature of Satan injected into our body at the time of the fall. The good nature is in our mind, and the

evil nature is in our flesh, which is our fallen body. With each nature there is a law, and the two laws fight against one another. If you try to do good, whether or not you are saved, you will discover the warfare between these two laws. However, if you are a careless person you may not realize them. But, whenever you try to be good you will discover these two laws within you. Before you were saved you tried your best to be good, but eventually you were defeated. You discovered that within you are two things fighting each other. This is the reason some people try to develop a strong will to control and suppress the lust in their body. Regardless of their attempts, eventually none of them can succeed fully.

Therefore, Romans 7 is not the typical experience of a Christian. As long as you are a person who tries to do good you will have the experience of the conflict described in Romans 7. The experience of Romans 7 is for that kind of person.

D. The Body of This Death

In Romans 6:6 our fallen body is called "the body of sin," but in 7:24 it is called "the body of this death." The "body of sin" means that the body is indwelt, occupied, possessed, and utilized by sin to do sinful things. Thus, in sinning the body is active, capable, and full of strength. The "body of death" means that the body is poisoned, weakened, paralyzed, and deadened, unable to keep the law and to do good to please God. Thus, in keeping the law of God and in doing good to please God the body is weak and impotent; it is like a corpse. We all have experienced that in doing sinful things our body is capable and strong; it can never be tired. But in keeping the law of God or in doing good to please God the body is weak to the uttermost, as if it were dead. Therefore, if we try to keep the law or to please God by ourselves, it will be like dragging a corpse with us. The more we attempt to do good, the more death our body brings us. So, the Apostle Paul calls our body "the body of this death," that is, the death of trying to keep the law and please God.

Regarding the body of sin, which is active and powerful with its lust in sinning, we do not need to try to suppress it by a strong will or by any other means. Romans 6:6 tells us that since our old man has been crucified with Christ, our "body of sin" has been "made of none effect," meaning that it is now jobless. Since the sinning person, the old man, has been crucified, his body has nothing to do and is unemployed.

Regarding the body of death, we do not need to drag it with us any longer. Since we are a regenerated, new man and are freed from the law of the old man, we do not need to strive to keep the law, for such striving only causes more death through the fallen body, which is the flesh. As long as we live by the new man with our new husband, the living Christ, we are freed from the law and delivered from the flesh and from the law of sin within it.

E. The Wretchedness of Man Trying to Fulfill the Law

Man has become fleshly, sold under sin (v. 14). In man's flesh dwells no good thing (v. 18), and man is unable to master sin (vv. 15-20). In such a situation, if man tries to fulfill the law of God as Paul did, man surely will have nothing but failure. Everyone who attempts this is defeated and becomes a wretched man. The fallen man with the law of sin in his flesh is a helpless and hopeless case. After we have been saved, we should make no attempt to fulfill the law of God or to do good in order to please God. If we do, we will certainly experience Romans 7 and become a wretched man. We need to realize that we, as the old man, have been crucified with Christ and that, as the new man, we are freed from the old man's law and have been married to our new husband, the resurrected Christ, that we might bear fruit to God and serve the Lord in newness of spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

THE FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR SPIRIT

(1)

I. THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

In chapter five of Romans we saw that the gift in Christ surpasses the heritage in Adam, in chapter six we were shown our identification with Christ, and in chapter seven we found the bondage of the law in our flesh. Romans 8 is a contrast to Romans 7. In Romans 7 we have bondage; in Romans 8 we have freedom. In Romans 7 we have the law; in Romans 8 we have the Holy Spirit. In Romans 7 we have our flesh; in Romans 8 we have our spirit. Thus, Romans 7 reveals the bondage of the law in our flesh, while Romans 8 unveils the freedom of the Spirit in our spirit.

We need to read Romans 8:1-6 carefully and attentively. "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death" (vv. 1-2). The phrase "the law of the Spirit of life" is very significant. In this phrase we see three elements that compose one entity--the law, the Spirit, and the life. These three items are one.

"For what is impossible to the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (v. 3). God is the subject of this sentence. He condemned sin in the flesh of Christ by "sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin."

"That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit. For those who are according to flesh

mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to spirit, the things of the Spirit" (vv. 4-5). God condemned sin in the flesh that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk according to spirit. Those who are according to spirit mind the things of the Spirit. Please notice that the first mention of spirit in verse 5 refers to our human spirit and that the second mention refers to the Holy Spirit, meaning that those who are according to their human spirit mind the things of the Holy Spirit.

"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace" (v. 6). The mind set on the human spirit is life and peace. Every word in Romans 8:1-6 is precious. We should not pass over even one word in these verses. Due to the limitation of time, I can only present a sketch of Romans 8.

A. The Spirit of Life

Before we deal with Romans 8 itself, we need to consider a glorious and marvelous term found in 8:2--"the Spirit of life." This term is used only once in the entire Bible. In the book of Romans the term "the Spirit of life" is not revealed until 8:2. However, before chapter eight we do have several references to the divine, eternal, uncreated life. The first occurrence of this word life in the book of Romans is in 1:17 which says that the just shall have life and live by faith. The word life in this verse denotes the divine life. The second occurrence of this word in Romans is in 2:7, where we are told that "those who by endurance in good work seek for glory and honor and incorruptibility, life eternal." If we continually seek God, He will give us life eternal. Romans 5:10 says that we shall be saved in His life, and 5:17 tells us that, after receiving the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we shall reign in life. Romans 5:18 mentions justification of life, and 5:21 says that grace might reign unto eternal life. In 6:4 we are told to walk in newness of life. Romans 6:22-23 says that eternal life is

the end of sanctification and that the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus, in the first six chapters of Romans there are many references to the divine life. Life is the goal of God's salvation. God has redeemed us, justified us, and reconciled us that we might share this life. Once we receive it, we should be saved in life, reign in life, walk in newness of life, and be sanctified in life.

Although the foregoing chapters in Romans say that we should be saved, reign, walk, and be sanctified in life, Paul has not yet told us how we can do all these things. How can we be saved in life and reign in life? How can we walk in newness of life? How can we experience the sanctification in life? Paul has not told us. Neither has he told us precisely how the just shall have life. Although he says that this life is out of faith, he has not explained the matter clearly. In Romans 1 through 6 Paul refers to life nine times. Now, in Romans 8:2, he suddenly joins life with the Spirit in the phrase "the Spirit of life."

The way to have life is the Spirit. The way to be saved in His life is the Spirit. The way to reign in life is the Spirit. The way to walk in newness of life is the Spirit. The way to be sanctified in life is the Spirit. The Spirit is the way. Life belongs to the Spirit, and the Spirit is of life. These two are actually one. We can never separate life from the Spirit, nor the Spirit from life. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). In this word the Lord Jesus connects the Spirit and life. If we have the Spirit, we have life; if we do not have the Spirit, we do not have life. If we walk in the Spirit, we walk in life, but if we do not walk in the Spirit, we do not walk in the newness of life. Thus, the way to experience the divine, eternal, uncreated life is the Spirit. By this we may see the relationship between Romans 8 and the previous chapters. The seven foregoing chapters lead us to life and consummate in life. Now in 8:2 we are at the point of life. We must give special attention to the word life in Romans 8.

B. The Fourfold Life

The word life is used four times in chapter eight. Romans 8:2 mentions the law of the Spirit of life. Romans 8:6 says that the mind set on the spirit is life. In Romans 8:9,10 we are told that if Christ is in us our spirit is life because of righteousness. Romans 8:11 says the indwelling Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies. The first time life is mentioned in this chapter it is connected to the Holy Spirit, the second time it is related to our mind, the third time it is associated with our spirit, and the fourth time it is a matter of our body. Romans 8 unveils a fourfold life. Firstly, life is the Spirit. Then the Spirit comes into our spirit to make our spirit life. Then the Spirit spreads from our spirit into our mind to make our mind life. The Spirit even imparts this life into our mortal bodies to make the body of sin a body of life. We have a fourfold life. The focus of it all is the Holy Spirit indwelling our spirit. This life will spread from our spirit into our mind and throughout our whole soul, even reaching all the members of our body. Eventually, our whole being will be filled with life and we will be a man of life. Have you ever seen this? We may call this the fourfold life. The Spirit is life, our spirit is life, our mind is life, and even our body is of life. Thus, the connection between Romans 8 and all the foregoing chapters is life plus the Spirit.

C. The Law of the Spirit of Life

In Romans 8 we not only have the Spirit of life, but the law of the Spirit of life. The word life indicates that Romans 8 is a continuation of Romans 6, because Romans 6 ends with life. The word law indicates that Romans 8 is also a continuation of Romans 7, where the matter of law is discussed. In Romans 8 Paul continues his talk about the law. In Romans 7 he mentions three laws: the law of God, the law of good, and the law of sin. If we only have these three laws we would all have to declare, "Wretched man that I am!" The law of God is just, holy, good, and spiritual.

However, the more just and holy this law is, the more it demands of us. Why is the law of God so demanding? Because it is holy, just, and good. If the law were bad, the demands would be very low. However, the law of God is holy and righteous. This law only makes demands; it does not supply. Galatians 3:21 indicates that the law is unable to give people life. The law was not given by God to be a supply, but to make demands. Because we think that we are good, we need the law to expose us that we are not.

Do you remember the circumstances in which the law was given? By His grace, God had brought His people out of Egypt. The exodus from Egypt was not accomplished because the people kept the law, but because God was gracious to deliver them through His redemption. When God brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai, His intention was to make them a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:3-6). Although the people agreed with this, God knew that they did not realize how bad they were. Therefore, through Moses God made an appointment to meet with the people for the purpose of giving them the law. Immediately, the atmosphere changed and became exceedingly threatening. The people were frightened. In the midst of this threatening situation God gave the Israelites His law. However, while the law was being given on the mount, the people made an idol, a golden calf. Hence, before the law was given the people had already broken it. Thus, when Moses surveyed the situation he broke the two tablets of stone.

We cannot keep the law. We should never think that the law was given to us to keep. Instead, we must bow down before the merciful and gracious God and say, "Lord, I cannot keep Your law or do anything good to please You." In order to bring us to this conclusion, Paul wrote Romans 7 explaining the matter of the law. Paul was an excellent writer. He was very deep. He wrote every chapter of the book of Romans with the Old Testament in view. He wrote the book of Romans in the light and in the knowledge of the Old Testament.

In Romans 7 Paul speaks about the law. Paul shows us

that outside of us is the law of God with its demands, that in our soul is the law of good responding to God's law, and that in the members of our body is another law that wars against the good law in our soul. Paul has told us that the law in our mind is weak and impotent, but that the law in our members is potent and full of strength. I believe Paul was a strong person with a strong will. His character was so strong that only the Lord Jesus could subdue him, as He did as Paul was on the way to Damascus. Regardless of how strong he was before he was saved, he could not overcome the law of sin in his members. He said, "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil I do not will, this I practice" (7:19). Then Paul continued by saying, "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me" (7:20). Who is this sin? It is Satan. The law of sin is actually the spontaneous power of Satan himself. Satan is more powerful than any human being. No one, not even Paul, can defeat him. The strength of your will means nothing to the powerful Satan. Thus, if you attempt to keep God's law, the result will be, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul used the phrase "this death." What is death? Death is the result of Satan's evil power. In Romans 7 we find two terms used synonymously to describe Satan: "the evil" and "the sin that dwells in me." Satan is sin and evil, and his automatic power is the law of sin. He is so powerful that no human being can defeat him. Even all the human beings added together cannot overpower him. Hallelujah, there is One who is more powerful than this evil giant!

Following Romans 7 we have Romans 8, which mentions the law of the Spirit of life. This law is not the law of God nor the law of good in our minds; it is the law of the Spirit of life.

Romans 8:2 reveals that God has become the Spirit of life. We may say that the Spirit of life in this verse denotes the processed God. God in Christ has passed through a long process--the process of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The very God of

Genesis 1 has undergone such a process. Thus, He is no longer the "raw "God". Although He was the "raw" God in Genesis 1, He is the processed God in Romans 8.

The groceries that you bring home from the store are all raw items. They need to undergo a process of cutting, burning, and cooking in order to be suitable for eating. Without passing through such a process the raw food is not suitable for eating. I do not like to eat anything that has not been processed. All the food in the refrigerator is raw foodstuff, but everything on the dining table is processed food.

We praise the Lord that Romans 8 is not a refrigerator; it is our dining table. Whenever you are hungry, come and dine at Romans 8. On the Romans 8 table we have the processed God, for here His title is neither Jehovah nor the Almighty God, but the Spirit of life. Praise the Lord! Quite often my wife makes broth out of beef or chicken. When she sees that I am tired, she frequently serves me a bowl of broth. This broth is sweet, tasteful, and easy to take in. After drinking a cup of broth, my whole being is revived. The Spirit of life is like the broth. Where does the Spirit of life come from? It comes from God who was once like the big chicken or cow that was processed into broth. In Romans 8 He is no longer like a chicken or a cow; He is the Spirit of life, so easy to take in. We only need to say, "O Lord Jesus, the Spirit of life, Amen. Christ is in you and the spirit is life. Amen. To set the mind on the spirit is life. Amen. The indwelling Spirit shall give life to your mortal body. Amen." If we drink the Spirit in Romans 8, we will discover that it is like the broth.

In this Spirit of life there is a law. This law is not the law of the "raw" God with its demands. It is the law of the processed God, the law of the Spirit of life, with its supply. When my wife serves me a bowl of chicken broth, she makes no demands upon me. Sometimes I do not even know what it is that she gives to me, except that it is a broth good for drinking. Praise the Lord that with the processed God there is the law of the Spirit of life! This

law is the principle, power, and strength of the processed God. We all must shout. "Hallelujah," because this law which is the spontaneous, divine power is not outside of us, but is in our spirit. The law of the processed God is in our spirit.

What do we have in this law? What is the essence of this law? What are its elements? The elements of the law of the Spirit of life are the Divine Spirit and the eternal life. The Divine Spirit and the eternal life are the elements of this law. So it is powerful and dynamic, and its power is spontaneous. Such a law is in our spirit.

D. Three Lives with Three Laws

We are complicated people, for we have four laws related to us. Above us is the law of God with its demands. In our mind is the law of good responding to the law of God. In our body is the law of sin which wars against the law of good. All of this is recorded in Romans 7. But Romans 8 tells us that in our spirit is the law of the Spirit of life. Hence we have four laws: one outside demanding, one in the mind responding, one in the body warring, and one in our spirit supplying, empowering, and overcoming.

Why are we so complicated? We are complicated because we have passed through three stations--the creation the fall, and God's salvation. We were created, we were fallen, and we were saved. This is our history, our biography Our biography is simply that we were created, that we fell, and that we were saved by God. In God's creation we received a human life, the life that makes us a human being. In the fall another life was injected into us the evil life of Satan which came into our body. After we were saved, the processed God as the Spirit of life came into our spirit. Hence, three persons are in us: ourselves in our souls, Satan in our body, and the processed God as the Spirit of life in our spirit. We have three parts to our being, and each part has a person: in our body, sin, that is, Satan dwells: in our soul, our self dwells; and in our spirit, the processed God as the Spirit of life dwells.

Each of these persons has a life with a law. Satan has

his satanic life with its evil law, the law of sin. Our natural man has a created life with a good law. The processed God as the life-giving Spirit has the divine life with the law of the Spirit of life. Therefore, we have an evil law, a good law, and the law of the Spirit of life, in brief, the law of life. This law of life is opposed to both good and bad; it has nothing to do with good and bad, for both good and bad belong to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9, 17). The law of life certainly belongs to the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). Within us we have the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. Therefore, each one of us is a miniature garden of Eden. Man is here, Satan as the tree of knowledge is here, and God as the tree of life is also here. These three parties that once were in the garden of Eden are now all in us. The battle that was raging between Satan and God in the garden of Eden now rages within us. This battle involves three persons, three lives, and three laws.

E. God in Our Spirit

As I have pointed out on other occasions, God is revealed progressively in the book of Romans. In Romans 1 He is God in creation, in Romans 3 God in redemption, in Romans 4 God in justification, in Romans 5 God in reconciliation, and in Romans 6 He is God in identification. We can see the process or the progress of God from creation to redemption, from redemption to justification, from justification to reconciliation, and from reconciliation to identification. God has advanced from creation to identification. In His creation God was outside of His creatures; in identification He has made us one with Himself by putting us into Himself. As many of us as have been baptized have been baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). God has put us into Christ, thoroughly identifying us with Himself.

In Romans 8 God becomes the God in our spirit. He is not only the God in identification, but the God in our spirit. He has not only made us one with Him, but He has also made Himself one with us. Now our God is in our

spirit. What kind of God is He? He is the processed God in our spirit. The God in creation has passed through redemption, justification, reconciliation, identification, and He is now in our spirit. The God in our spirit is not merely God; He has been processed into the Spirit of life, for the Spirit of life is the processed God. According to our experience, nothing is more pleasant than this. We may feast upon such a God.

F. The Enjoyment of Christ as the Life-giving Spirit

To come to a dining table to enjoy God as food is not my concept. In the gospels the Lord Jesus said that the gospel was a feast. The Lord Jesus said that all things are ready and that we should come to the feast (Luke 14:16-17). He told us to come and dine. We even find this thought in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). When the son returned home, the father put the best robe on him, a robe signifying Christ as our righteousness for our justification. When the son returned, he was like a poor beggar standing before a rich father. There seemed to be no correspondence between them: the father was rich and the son was poor. Thus the father told the servants to take the best robe and to put it on the son. After this robe had been put on him, the son was justified before the father and corresponded to him. Now the son is like the father, justified and approved. Christ as righteousness covers the returned son. Although this satisfied the father the son might have said, "Father, I do not care as much about the robe as I care about my empty stomach. Father, I am hungry. You are satisfied, but I am not." This was why the father told the servants to prepare the fatted calf, process it, and put it on the table. The father said, "Let us all eat and be merry." Who is that fatted calf? The calf is Christ who was processed on the cross over nineteen hundred years ago. After He was processed on the cross, He became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45).

Where is Christ today? Where did He go after He was processed after His death and resurrection? Undoubtedly, He went into the heavens. However, if He were only in the heavens, it would be impossible for people to eat Him. The heavens are too far away. But Christ is not only in the heavens (8:34), but also in us (8:9), even in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). The dining table is our spirit. After being processed Christ became the life-giving Spirit. The processed Christ is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). He has come into our spirit as life and as the life supply for our enjoyment.

This is not my concept. Although Christ is life, it is difficult for Christ to give you life. Who gives life? It is the Spirit that gives life (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6). Christ is life, but it is the Spirit who gives us Christ as life. Without the Spirit Christ may be life, but Christ as life cannot be given to us. By being the Spirit Christ is imparted into us as life. Today, after being processed, the very Christ is the life-giving Spirit. Now in our spirit we may enjoy this wonderful Spirit. Never forget that Christ is the very God, Jehovah the Savior, God with us. Christ is God. This Christ, after being processed, is now the life-giving Spirit. We have to enjoy Him in His fullness as such a Spirit. Our regenerated spirit is the dining table, and the processed Christ is our food. He is not food in a physical form, but in the form of the Spirit. Our food is the Spirit. What a rich Spirit this is! Divinity, humanity, love, light, life, power, righteousness, holiness, grace--everything we need is in the Spirit. Romans 8 certainly is this dining table.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

THE FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR SPIRIT

(2)

In this message we shall continue our consideration of Romans 8:1-6. As we have seen, Romans 8 is a sharp contrast to Romans 7. In Romans 7 we see the bondage of the law in our flesh, and in Romans 8 we see the freedom of the Spirit in our spirit. As we come to chapter eight, we turn from bondage in the flesh to freedom in the Spirit.

II. THE FREEDOM OF THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

A. Now No Condemnation

At the end of Romans 7 Paul cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Paul opened chapter eight by saying, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). In the book of Romans there are two kinds of condemnation: the outward, objective condemnation and the inward, subjective condemnation. The outward condemnation comes from God, and the inward condemnation comes from ourselves. We see the objective condemnation of God in the early chapters of Romans, for example in 3:19 which says "that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become subject to the judgment of God." Hence, objective condemnation results from being under the righteous judgment of God. This type of condemnation is completely solved by the redeeming blood of Christ. Christ's redeeming blood has saved us from the judgment of God.

1. The Condemnation Outside of Christ

The inward, subjective condemnation is found in chapter seven. When Paul lamented, "Wretched man that I am," he was not experiencing the condemnation of God,

but the condemnation that came from himself, the self-condemnation of one who tries to keep the law. This condemnation comes from the person himself, not from God. The more you attempt to be good and fulfill the law, the more inward condemnation you will have. If you are a careless person, never trying to be good, you will not experience inward condemnation. However, if you say, "I must be right and perfect," you will be condemned by yourself. The more you try to improve yourself, the more self-condemnation you will be under. The condemnation in Romans 7 is that of a person outside of Christ, although it is experienced by many Christians who attempt to fulfill the law after they are saved. This condemnation does not come from God. God would say, "Stupid child, I don't want you to have this kind of condemnation. You have caused this trouble for yourself." Many Christians, having solved the problem of objective condemnation, have created for themselves the problem of inward condemnation. Some have been so condemned that they could not eat or sleep properly. I even know of some people who developed mental problems due to subjective condemnation. Some brothers condemned themselves severely for not loving their wives, and certain sisters judged themselves for not being kind to their husbands. Eventually, the sense of subjective condemnation became so extreme they developed mental problems. Such people are under a tremendous weight of self-condemnation.

2. Now No Condemnation in Christ

Paul, after his cry of wretchedness at the end of chapter seven, declared in a victorious way, "now then no condemnation in Christ Jesus." This means that what he experienced in Romans 7 was not an experience in Christ. Without Christ, or outside of Christ, he struggled

according to the law in his mind to keep the law of God in order that he might please God, but he was totally defeated by the law of sin. That occurred when he was without Christ. Thus Paul condemned himself. He had a deep conviction of this inward, subjective condemnation. But "now" "in Christ Jesus" there is no longer this kind of condemnation. Paul had "no condemnation" because in Christ he did not need to keep the law of God by himself, an effort which produced self-condemnation; "no condemnation" because in Christ he had the law of the Spirit of life which is more powerful than the law of sin and which set him free from the law of sin; "no condemnation" now, not because of the redeeming blood of Christ which removed the objective condemnation of God, but because of the law of the Spirit of life which brought in the freedom of the Spirit in his spirit and which broke through all his subjective condemnation; and "no condemnation" because he was freed from both the law of God and the law of sin.

B. The Freedom of the Law of the Spirit of Life

In Romans 8 Paul does not say, "There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus because the blood of Jesus has cleansed me." This kind of condemnation is not dealt with by the blood. We are freed from subjective condemnation, not because of the blood which cleanses us, but because of the law which liberates us. There is a law which sets us free from inward condemnation. This law that releases us has the greatest potential of any law. Although we have the law of God outside of us demanding, the law of good in our mind agreeing with the law of God, and the law of sin in our body warring against and defeating the law of good, we must nevertheless praise the Lord that in our spirit is the law of the Spirit of life. No law can prevail against this law. Who can defeat the Spirit of life? Nobody and nothing can defeat the Spirit of life. This law of the Spirit of life is the spontaneous power of the Spirit of life. It is the most powerful law in the universe; it is in us and it sets us free.

How does the law of the Spirit of life set us free? It frees us in a "super" way. If, according to the ancient

method of warfare, some soldiers were surrounded by enemy troops, they would have had to fight their way through. However, in modern warfare there is no such need. If we are surrounded by the enemy, we need not fight through--we have a way up. We have an upward way. Thus, we may say to Satan, "Satan, compared to me you are powerful. But don't you know that I have a wonderful God who is both in my spirit and in the heavens? It may be difficult or me to go to the heavens, but it is easy for Him. He is both in me and in the heavens. Satan, I don't need to fight through. I just say, 'Praise the Lord' and I am in the third heaven. Satan, you and your attacking army are under my feet, and I am free."

In case you think this is little more than a good theory, let me apply it and make it very practical. Suppose we have a sister who wants to submit to her husband according to Ephesians 5. She says, "I love this word. It is so sweet and holy. I want to submit myself to my husband." This is simply the exercise of her mind as it attempts to fulfill the commandment given in Ephesians 5. However, when she determines to practice this, something strange happens. It seems that her surroundings change and the very opposite of submission occurs. Her husband, who is always nice and gentle with her, on the very morning that she determines to submit to him, is quite mean. Much to her disappointment, she fails to fulfill the commandment. Satan comes up against her, surrounds her, and attacks her. The more she tries to suppress her irritation with her husband's behavior, the more angry she becomes, until she finally loses control of her temper. Her struggle, her attempt, was vain. The sister was defeated because she used the wrong strategy. Whenever we are surrounded by the enemy we should forget about every attempt of fighting through and say, "Praise the Lord! Amen!" Immediately we will be transcendent. Every enemy, including the people who aggravate us, will be under our feet. If you do not believe this, I ask you to try it. This strategy works; it is the most "modern," most prevailing weapon against the enemy. Instead of condemnation there is praise. Why is there praise and

release instead of condemnation? Because the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and death.

For the two types of condemnation we have two different remedies. The blood of the crucified Christ is the remedy for objective condemnation, and the Spirit of life--Christ processed to be the life-giving Spirit--within our spirit is the remedy for subjective condemnation. When we experience subjective condemnation, all we need to do is praise the Lord and we will be transcendent. Do not pray at such a time, for the more you pray, the more condemnation you will experience. Neither should you say, "Lord, I apply Your blood." This is not the remedy for this kind of situation. It is the wrong medication for the illness. When we are under subjective condemnation we need the Spirit of life. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death."

1. In Christ

This is not an experience outside of Christ, but an experience absolutely in Christ. In Christ, not in Adam nor in ourselves, but in Christ, we have the Spirit of life, who is Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit, in our spirit. In Christ our spirit has been made alive with Christ as life. Because we are in Christ the Spirit of life who is Christ Himself, dwells in our spirit and mingles Himself with our spirit as one spirit. In Christ we have our quickened spirit, the divine life, and the Spirit of life. In Christ these three--our spirit, the divine life, and the Spirit out life--are all mingled as one unit. In Christ, with this unit, there is the spontaneous power, which is the law of the Spirit of life, that continually sets us free from the law of sin and death as we walk according to the mingled spirit.

2. Daily

This experience is not once for all; it must be a continuous daily experience. Day after day, moment after moment, we need to live in the mingled spirit, walk according to this spirit, and have our minds set on this

wonderful spirit, forgetting our attempts of keeping the law of God and of doing good in order to please God. For once we drift back to our old, habitual way of trying to do good, we are insulated immediately from the powerful law of the Spirit of life. We must look to the Lord that we may abide in our spirit always so that we may enjoy the freedom of the law of the Spirit of life.

C. The Impossibility of the Law

Romans 8:3 says, "For what is impossible to the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This verse says that there is an impossibility related to the law, referring not to the law of the Spirit of life, with which there is no impossibility, but to the law of God outside of us. There is an impossibility associated with the law of God because that law is weak through the flesh. The flesh is the factor of weakness, producing the impossibility mentioned in 8:3.

The subject of 8:3 is God. God sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, and condemned sin in the flesh. This verse, the deepest verse in Romans 8, is very difficult to understand.

What is the "flesh of sin"? The flesh of sin is our body. The "flesh of sin" in 8:3 corresponds to the term "the body of sin" in 6:6, where we are told that our old man has been crucified with Christ that "the body of sin" might be made of none effect. Why is our body called "the body of sin" and the "flesh of sin"? Because, as we have seen from Romans 7, sin dwells in our body. Since our body is the dwelling place of sin, it is called "the body of sin." Since our body has become a fallen body, it is also called the "flesh," that is, the "flesh of sin."

Our weakness in keeping the law of God is with our body of sin. Our body is weak to the uttermost in keeping the law of God. Although our mind wants to keep the law of God, our body does not have the strength to do it. It is weakened and paralyzed by sin. Sin is like the polio that paralyzes and cripples children's bodies. Likewise, our

human bodies have been paralyzed by sin. This body of sin is the basic factor of weakness in keeping the law of God. Romans 8:3 says that the law of God was weak through the flesh. Why has the law of God become weak? Because of the flesh. The law of God makes its demands, but the bodies of sinners cannot fulfill them because within the body is sin as the weakening factor.

Although the body of sin or the flesh of sin is exceedingly weak in keeping the law of God, it is powerful in committing sin. Unless you have the Lord's mercy and grace, it is difficult for you to sit through the church meetings. As you consider attending a prayer meeting you may say, "I didn't sleep well last night and I have a headache. I'm too tired to go to the meeting." However, if someone invites you to go to the movie theater, the body of sin is energetic and powerful. Therefore, our body is weak toward the law of God, but very strong toward committing sin. Hence, through our body of sin the law of God is weak.

D. Sin Condemned

Since the law is weak through the body of sin, what did God do about it? What has God done with this situation? The law of God makes its demands, but it has been weakened through the flesh. The problem is not with the law itself; the difficulty is with sin and the flesh of sin. Sin is the transgressor and the flesh of sin is the helper. The two of them work together. If God was to solve the problem, He would have had to deal with both sin and the flesh. Although sin, not the flesh, is the foremost problem, God must deal with them both.

How did He do it? God did it in a marvelous way, in a way that is beyond human words to explain adequately. God solved the problem by sending His own Son "in the likeness of the flesh of sin." God was wise. He knew that He should not send His Son to be the flesh of sin, for, if He did that, His Son would have been involved with sin. Therefore, He sent His Son "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," as typified by the brass serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (Num. 21:9) and mentioned by the Lord

Jesus Himself. In John 3:14 Jesus said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," indicating that the brass serpent was a type of Himself on the cross in our stead. When He was on the cross, Jesus was in the form of the serpent in the eyes of God. When God looked upon Jesus as He was nailed to the cross, He saw Him in the *form* of the serpent. Who is the serpent? Satan. What is the sin that was injected into man's body, transmuting it into the flesh of sin? The nature of Satan. Hence, the flesh of sin actually means the flesh with the nature of Satan. The Bible says that Jesus, the Son of God, became flesh (John 1:14). However, this absolutely does not mean that Jesus became the flesh with the nature of Satan, because 8:3 says that He was sent in "the *likeness* of the flesh of sin," thereby indicating that Jesus assumed only "the *likeness* of the flesh," not the sinful nature of the flesh. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us...." Although this verse says clearly that Christ was made sin, it does not mean that He was sinful in nature. He was made only "in the *likeness* of the flesh of sin." The brass serpent had the serpentine form of the serpent but it did not have the poison of the serpent. It had the serpentine form without the serpentine nature. Christ was made sin in form. Within Him there was "no sin"; (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15); He had nothing to do with the nature of sin. He was only made in the *form* of the serpent, "in the *likeness* of the flesh of sin" for us.

John 12:31 says, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When the Lord Jesus uttered these words He was speaking about His coming death on the cross. The Lord was saying that the time of His crucifixion would be the time of Satan's judgment, for Satan is the prince of this world whose judgment was announced in John 12:31. It was Jesus who hung on the cross, but, in the eyes of God, Satan was judged there. Therefore, Hebrews 2:14 says that through death Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil, Satan. Christ destroyed Satan by His death in

the flesh on the cross. On the cross Christ "in the likeness of the flesh of sin" was not only a substitute for sinners, taking away all their sin; He was also crucified in the form of the serpent, completely destroying Satan, the devil.

Due to the flesh of sin, the law of God was weak. Therefore, God had to deal with both the flesh and sin. He sent His Son "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," that is, in the form of the serpent. Christ brought this flesh to the cross and crucified it there. All of the beings in the spiritual world, the angels and the evil spirits, know the significance of this. When we enter into eternity we will look back and say, "Now I understand how Satan was bruised through the flesh of Christ on the cross." Satan was bruised, destroyed through the very flesh that Christ put on Himself, because that flesh was in the form of the serpent. When that flesh was crucified on the cross, Satan was bruised and destroyed.

Romans 8:3 not only says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin," but also that He sent Him "concerning sin." Some versions render "concerning sin" as "as an offering for sin," taking the word sin here to be a reference to the sin offering. Although this interpretation is not wrong, it does not fully convey the thought. Paul's thought is that God sent His Son, not only "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," but also "concerning sin," that is, for everything related to sin, that He might condemn sin and everything related to it. Everything associated with sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ on the cross. Never forget that sin is the nature of Satan. Satan's nature, that is, sin, was in the flesh, and Christ put on this flesh in which sin, the nature of Satan, dwelt. Then Christ took this flesh to the cross and crucified it. By this both sin and Satan were condemned.

Satan was eager and happy to enter into man's body, which became the flesh after he entered it, being glad to have a lodging place. Regardless of how wise Satan is, he can never surpass God. God is much wiser. God sent His Son in the likeness of this flesh in which Satan was and condemned it on the cross. It was as if Satan had thought,

"Now I can get into man's body." However, Satan did not realize that this was a trap. When Satan took the bait, he was trapped. We may use the illustration of a mouse trap. It is difficult to catch a mouse because the mouse always runs away. However, we may use a mouse trap with some bait. The mouse comes into the trap, intrigued with the prospect of having the bait in his possession. Then he gets trapped and a man can easily crush him. Likewise, Satan has been trapped and bruised in the flesh of Christ on the cross. In doing this God solved two problems at once: He solved the problem of sin and of the flesh of sin. God has solved the problem of sin, the nature and source of which is Satan, and the problem of the flesh. Praise the Lord!

E. The Righteous Requirement of the Law Fulfilled

Romans 8:4 says, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." The fact that 8:3 ends with a comma indicates that what was accomplished in that verse is for the following verse. God condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. There was an impossibility related to the law of God due to the flesh. Therefore, God sent His Son "in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin, solving the dual problem of sin and the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. The "us" refers to those who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." Paul's writing is marvelous. In 8:2 he mentions the Holy Spirit and in 8:4 he refers not only to the Holy Spirit, but even the more to the human spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, and the human spirit indwelt by and mingled with the Holy Spirit is the very spirit according to which we walk. The Holy Spirit of life is in our human spirit. If we walk according to this mingled spirit, all the righteous requirements of the law will be fulfilled spontaneously. There is no need for us to keep the law. The requirements of the law are fulfilled spontaneously by the law of the Spirit of life.

F. The Mind as the Key

The next verse offers some further explanation. "For those who are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to spirit, the things of the Spirit." After mentioning the Spirit of life and the human spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit, Paul comes to the mind. Paul has mentioned the mind previously in 7:25, which says, "With the mind I myself serve as a slave the law of God...." The phrase "with the mind I myself" indicates that the mind in 7:25 was independent. The mind in chapter eight is different; it is a mind set upon the things of the Spirit. In Romans 7 the mind goes out to act independently; in Romans 8 the mind returns to rely upon the spirit, no longer acting on its own.

The mind has the position of a wife. The wisest way for a wife to live is not to act independently, but to come to her husband. If the wife has a difficulty, she should not deal with it on her own. She should refer it to her husband. In Romans 7 the mind was independent, a wife behaving as a husband. In Romans 8 the mind maintains her position as the wife, no longer going out on her own, but always returning to the husband. The mind in chapter eight says, "Dear husband spirit, what should I do?" The husband spirit responds, "Dear wife, you don't need to do anything. I will take care of the situation." Romans 7 and 8 show us that the same mind may have two different actions. In chapter seven the mind acts independently in a wrong, self-assuming position as the husband. In chapter eight the mind becomes the proper wife, maintaining her rightful position and returning to rely upon her husband, the spirit.

We conclude with 8:6. "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." From this verse we can see that even the mind can be life. The independent mind cannot keep the law of God, but the mind set upon the spirit is life and peace. Such a mind is full of enjoyment and rest. Peace is for rest and life is for enjoyment. When the mind is set on the spirit, there is no defeat, condemnation, or negative feelings--only life and

peace, enjoyment and rest. The very mind that, in itself, is unable to keep the law of God can be a mind of life and peace by being set on the spirit.

This is not a theory; it works in practice. If you practice it, you will see for yourself. Paul did not write Romans 8 according to theory, but according to his experience. It is easy for the law to be fulfilled spontaneously. In fact, we do not even need to do it ourselves, for the law will be fulfilled in us spontaneously and subconsciously. Even though we have no intention of fulfilling the law, we find that it is fulfilled. You may have no intention of loving your wife, yet you love her unconsciously. You may have no awareness of submitting to your husband, yet you are entirely submissive without realizing it. This is the spontaneously automatic fulfillment of the requirement of the law by having the mind set upon the spirit.

In both 7:25 and 8:6, the mind, whether it is independent of or dependent upon the spirit, represents the person himself. So, when the mind is independent of the spirit it means that the person acts on his own not relying upon the spirit. But when the mind is dependent on the spirit the person does not act on his own; he relies on the spirit. Hence to have the mind set on the spirit means to have our whole being set on the spirit and to act according to the spirit. As Christ now is the life-giving Spirit indwelling our spirit as our life and our everything, we should no longer act on our own according to our independent mind. We must keep our mind one with our spirit and act, walk and have our being according to the spirit that we might be freed from the law of sin and from the flesh and that we might spontaneously fulfill the righteous requirement of the law of God. This is to be set free from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. This is also to enjoy the indwelling Christ as our life and life-supply.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

THE FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR SPIRIT

(3)

III. THE INDWELLING OF CHRIST THE SPIRIT

Although in Romans 8:1-6 we clearly see the freedom of the law of the Spirit of life, it is difficult to see the central point of the next seven verses. However, if we enter deep into the thought of this portion, we will see that in it Paul is trying to tell us that something other than sin has its lodging within us. In 7:20 Paul said, "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me." Hence, Romans 7 exposes the indwelling sin. As we have seen, Romans 8 is a sharp contrast to Romans 7. Romans 7 has bondage; Romans 8 has freedom. Romans 7 has the law; Romans 8 has the Spirit. Romans 7 has our flesh; Romans 8 has our spirit. Moreover, Romans 7 has the indwelling sin. According to Romans 8 what indwells us? It is Christ, the indwelling Christ. In Romans 7 we have the indwelling sin as the main factor of all wretchedness. In Romans 8 we have the indwelling Christ as the factor of all blessedness.

If Christ were not the Spirit, He could never indwell us. He must be the Spirit in order to indwell us. In verses 9 and 10 we find three synonymous terms used interchangeably: "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," and "Christ." Furthermore. verse 11 refers to the indwelling Spirit. These synonyms indicate and prove that Christ is the indwelling Spirit. Undoubtedly "the Spirit of God" in verse 9 is "the Spirit of life" in verse 2. After Paul mentions "the Spirit of God," he speaks about the "Spirit of Christ" and "Christ" Himself. Then in verse 11 he refers to the indwelling Spirit.

This means that the "Spirit of God" is the "Spirit of Christ" and the "Spirit of Christ" is "Christ" Himself. Hence, Christ in us is the indwelling Spirit. He is "the Spirit of life," He is "the Spirit of God," and He is also "the Spirit of Christ" indwelling us that He may impart Himself as life to us. Christ not only imparts life to our spirit (v. 10), but also to our minds (v. 6) and to our mortal bodies (v. 11). Therefore, Christ is now life in the Holy Spirit (v. 2), life in our spirit (v. 10), life in our mind (v. 6), and life in our mortal body (v. 11). Christ is life with fourfold riches.

Although the book of Romans has been in my hands for years, only recently have I seen that Christ is the fourfold life. Christ is life to us with fourfold, intensified riches. He is not only life in the Divine Spirit and in our human spirit; He is even life in our minds. Furthermore, Christ can be life to our mortal bodies. In other words, He is now the life in God as well as the life in God's people. This is the main point of 8:7-13. The central point is that Christ as the indwelling Spirit is life to us with fourfold riches. He is so rich. He sustains our spirit, supplies our minds and even enlivens our mortal bodies. This life, which is Christ Himself, is the life that we enjoy today. May the Lord fully unveil this to us, not merely in a doctrinal way, but in the way of experience. We all must see that our Christ is the indwelling Spirit as life with fourfold riches.

A. The Flesh

Romans 8:7 says, "Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." This verse says emphatically that our flesh is a hopeless case. If our mind is set on our flesh, it also becomes hopeless. Anything that is one with the flesh is hopeless. Do not think that you can sanctify your flesh. This is impossible. Flesh is flesh, and flesh is absolutely hopeless. Never place any hope in your flesh. It can never be improved. God has made the definite decision that the flesh must be terminated because it is utterly

corrupt. God judged Noah's generation with the flood because that generation had become flesh (Gen. 6:3). When that generation became flesh, God considered it hopeless. God found it impossible to rescue it, recover it, or improve it. God seemed to say, "Let that generation go. I must place it completely under My judgment." The judgment of the flood was a judgment upon the flesh. Only when man had become flesh did God exercise judgment over man as the flesh. Therefore, never say that your flesh can be improved. Never think that your flesh today is better than before you were saved. Whether a person is saved or not, the flesh remains flesh. The flesh is hopeless, and everything related to it also is hopeless.

Paul said that "the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God." The flesh is enmity against God, and the mind set upon it is also enmity against God. The mind set on the flesh is not subject to the law of God. It is impossible for such a mind to be subject to God's law, even if it would want to be. Thus, the verdict on the flesh is final. The flesh is over, and everything related to the flesh is over.

Paul continues this thought in verse 8 which says, "And those who are in the flesh cannot please God." As long as we are in the flesh, we cannot please God. Never say that your flesh is good. In verses 7 and 8 we see four points: that the flesh is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, that it cannot be subject to the law of God, and that the flesh cannot please God. This is the condition of the flesh.

B. The Indwelling of Christ the Spirit

"But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him" (v. 9). Many verses in the epistles begin with the wonderful word "but." Hallelujah for "but"! In our history we need many "buts" such as this. We should be able to say, "Oh, I was down this morning, 'but.' I am so weak in myself, 'but.' I am absolutely hopeless, 'but.' " Paul says, "But you are not in

the flesh.... " Never say that you have a good flesh and that you are in your good flesh. We should not remain in our flesh, for our flesh has been condemned. If a house has been condemned by the government, it is illegal for you to stay there. Likewise, the flesh has been thoroughly condemned by God, and we should not remain there, arguing that our flesh has improved. We should not be in the flesh, but in the spirit. This spirit denotes the human spirit mingled with the Divine Spirit.

1. The Indwelling of the Spirit of God

There is a condition for us to be in the spirit. The condition is that the Spirit of God dwell in us (v. 9). The word "dwells" really means "makes home." We are in the spirit if the Spirit of God dwells, makes His home in us. Although you are saved, perhaps the Spirit of God does not yet make His home in you. This explains why you are still not in the spirit. Although the Spirit of God is in you, He has been unable to make His home in you. He does not dwell in you. I may be invited to your home, but I am unable to make my home in your home. I am there as a guest, unable to settle myself there. Likewise the Spirit of God is in us, yet He may be unable to dwell in us. He is the guest, not the dweller. If the Spirit of God can make His home in us, settling Himself in us with adequate room, then we will be in spirit and not in the flesh. However, if the Spirit of God does not have this room in which to lodge, we will remain in the flesh, not in the spirit.

2. The Indwelling of the Spirit of Christ

Verse 9 says, "But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." Immediately "the Spirit of God" is changed to "the Spirit of Christ." No one can deny that this indicates that "the Spirit of God" is 'the Spirit of Christ" and that "the Spirit of Christ" is "the Spirit of God." Paul says, "if any one has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." If you have realized that the Spirit of God does not yet make His home in you, do not be discouraged.

Do not say, "Since the Spirit of God doesn't have a home in me, I give up." Although the Spirit of God does not

dwell in you, you do have the Spirit of God which is the Spirit of Christ. As long as you have the Spirit of Christ, you are of Christ. Are you not of Christ? We all must declare, "Hallelujah, I am of Christ!" We have the Spirit of Christ in us and we are of Christ. However, it is a conditional matter whether or not the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ, dwells in us. The Spirit of Christ has to make His home in us, has to take possession of our inner being, that we may be in the spirit.

3. The Indwelling of Christ

Verse 10 says, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." Here it says that Christ is in us. In verse 9 it is "the Spirit of God" and then "the Spirit of Christ. "Now in verse 10 it is "Christ" Himself. This surely proves that "Christ" is "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ." We all must admit this. Christ as the Spirit is in us. This is a tremendous matter. Where was Christ in Romans 3? He was on the cross, shedding His blood for redemption. Where was Christ in chapter four? He was in resurrection. But in chapter eight Christ is in us. In chapter six we are in Christ, but in chapter eight Christ is in us. To be in Christ is one aspect; to have Christ in us is another. First, we abide in Christ, then Christ abides in us (John 15:4). Our abiding in Him brings His abiding in us. Being in Christ is the condition for Christ to be in us. Praise the Lord that Christ is in us! Christ has wrought Himself into us; He has been processed into us. This Christ has to dwell and make His home in us.

a. The Indwelling Sin Bringing Death to the Body

Though Christ is in us, our body still remains dead because of sin. After reading the previous message in

which we have pointed out that God has condemned sin in the flesh, some may say, "Since God has condemned sin, sin cannot function anymore. Our body is no longer dead--it is now alive." This is not the right understanding of Paul's word. Although God has condemned sin in the flesh, Sin continues to dwell in our body, and thus our body is still dead. There is much argument about this point. Some say that since God has condemned sin on the cross, sin has been nullified and believers cannot sin. Some even say that after we are saved sin is eradicated or uprooted. The school of eradication teaches that when we were saved the root of sin within us was extracted. All those who follow this school believe that sin has been eradicated from the being of a saved person.

About forty years ago in Shanghai there was a preacher who taught strongly this concept of eradication. He told people that they cannot sin after they are saved. One day, this preacher and several young men who sat under his teaching went to the city park in Shanghai. That park required the purchase of a ticket in order to be admitted. This man bought three or four tickets to he used by a total of five persons. How did he do this? Firstly, some of them entered the park with the tickets. Then one of them came out with the tickets and gave a ticket to one of the others. This continued until all five men had entered the park. In this sinful way that preacher brought his four young disciples through the gate of the park. As a result of this, one of the young men began to doubt the teaching of eradication. He said within himself, "What are you doing"? You say that sin has been eradicated from you. What is this?" Eventually the young man went to the preacher and said, 'Was that not a sin?" The preacher replied, "No, that was not a sin. That was just a little weakness." Regardless of the terms we use, sin is sin. Although you may call it by another name, it remains sin nonetheless. Never accept a teaching which says that we have become so spiritual and holy that it is impossible for us to sin. If we accept such a doctrine, we will be deceived, and the result will be misery.

The Lord Jesus did accomplish everything on the cross, but the effect of what He did can only be realized by us

when we are in the Spirit. In fact, whatever Christ did on the cross includes us. We do have a share, a portion, in all that Christ accomplished on the cross. This is a glorious fact. However, we still need to experience it. Although the sin in our body has been fully dealt with by the cross of Christ, how can we experience this fact? The only way is to be in the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is all-inclusive. Whatever Christ is, did, obtained, and attained is in the all-inclusive Spirit. Thus, if we are going to experience all that we have in Christ, we need to be experimentally and experientially in the Spirit. It is the all-inclusive Spirit that transmits into us all that we have in Christ.

We cannot afford to stay away from the Spirit. Day by day, hour after hour, and even moment by moment, we need to be in the Spirit. Do not say, "Last night I had a wonderful time with the Lord. Now I am holier than the angels and all my problems are over." Although you might have had such an experience for a brief moment last night, if you do not stay in the all-inclusive Spirit you may sink as low as hell. Do not say that since you have received a certain vision or revelation or had a particular spiritual experience that you are holy and have no problems. If you say this you may later find yourself in wretchedness.

A good type of the Spirit is the air. We need to breathe the air constantly. We can never say, "In the morning I breathed deeply, taking in a lot of fresh air. Now I am filled with the air and don't need to breathe any longer." You should never stop breathing and you should never stay away from the air. Never think that since you have been filled once you do not need to breathe any more. If you stop breathing, you will be dead after five minutes. The experience of the Spirit of life is like breathing. We need to breathe every moment. We must remain in the life-giving Spirit, for once we are separated from Him we are dead. Do not say that you are qualified and experienced. You need to be always fresh and new. I do

not care how long I have been saved or how long I have been experiencing the Lord's riches. I only care for one thing--that I am presently in the Spirit. I must be freshly and instantly in the Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is like the breath. We must breathe Him unceasingly.

b. The Indwelling Christ Bringing Life to our Spirit

Although Christ is in us, our body is still dead because of sin. The indwelling sin has brought death to our body. However, we should not be troubled by our dead body since our regenerated spirit is life because of righteousness. The indwelling Christ brings life to our spirit through righteousness. This righteousness is the righteousness of God which is Christ. Christ is firstly righteousness to us and then, because of this, He is life also to us. When the prodigal son returned home to his father, he was not qualified to sit down with him and eat the fatted calf. He was not yet clothed with the proper garment, the best robe, which typifies Christ, the righteousness of God, as the covering that qualifies us to sit with the Father and to enjoy Christ as life. First we must have Christ as our righteousness. Then under this righteousness, under this righteous "robe," we are qualified to enjoy Christ as our life. As long as Christ is in our spirit, our spirit is life because of Christ as our righteousness. Now not only is the Spirit or' God life; even our regenerated spirit is life. The Spirit who is Christ Himself is now life in our spirit. Therefore, our spirit becomes life. The indwelling Christ has brought life to our spirit.

C. The Imparting of Life

Verse 11 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." The Spirit in this verse is the Spirit of resurrection. We have seen that our spirit is life (v. 10) and that our mind

also is life (v. 6). Now we come to the last item of our being, our mortal body. Our body is dying. However, life is given even to our dying mortal body. Our body can participate in this life, be sustained with this life, and be supplied with this life through His Spirit who indwells us. Undoubtedly, the indwelling Spirit is the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). Christ as the indwelling Spirit constantly imparts life to every aspect of our being.

An excellent illustration of this is electricity. Although electricity has been installed into a building, its flow can be frustrated. Christ, the life-giving Spirit, has been installed into our being as the heavenly electricity. However, only a small part of our being gives Him a free course; most of our being is not open to Him, but rather frustrates Him. For example, your emotions may be a frustration to Christ. Therefore, Christ has difficulty imparting Himself as life into your emotions. You need to pray, "Lord, deal with my emotions. Break through my emotions that You may impart Yourself as life into them." We need this kind of experience. Do not take this as a doctrine or teaching. This must be put into practice. If you practice this, you will find that Christ as life is now in your spirit, waiting for an opportunity to spread Himself into every area and avenue of your being. He is waiting to penetrate the hidden parts of your being. If you open yourself to Him, He will even impart Himself as life into your mortal body, making you a person who is filled with all the riches of His life. He will become in you a fourfold life, to make your spirit, mind, and body living.

D. Our Cooperation

Verse 12 says, "So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh." This verse also proves that after we are saved the possibility still remains of living according to flesh. If this were impossible why would Paul remind us that we are not debtors to the flesh? We need to say, "Hallelujah! I am not a debtor to the flesh. I don't owe it anything. I am not obliged to it. I am

discharged from it and freed from it. I have been fully liberated from this hopeless thing called the flesh. I am not a debtor to the flesh to live according to it any longer."

1. By Not Living According to Flesh

Paul continues, "For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live" (8:13). The "you" here certainly denotes saved persons. Hence, this verse is further proof that a saved person may live according to flesh. If we live according to flesh, we are about to die. Of course, this kind of dying is not physical; it is spiritual. If you live according to flesh, you are about to die in your spirit. However, if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body--that is, to mortify or crucify them--you will live. This means that you will live in spirit. This verse corresponds to verse 6 which says that the mind set on the flesh is death and that the mind set on the spirit is life. To live according to flesh primarily means to set our mind upon the flesh, and, likewise, to set our mind upon the flesh mainly means to live according to flesh. In order to put to death the practices of the body we need to set our mind on the spirit and walk according to spirit.

Take the example of a sister going shopping. In the store she sees a certain item which sells for $12.99. The sister reasons with herself, "I make twelve hundred dollars a month. To spend $12.99 for clothes means nothing. The Lord is not poor. He is rich. Last week I gave two hundred and fifty dollars for the church building. What is wrong with spending $12.99? Certainly the Lord is gracious." The more she reasons, the more she dies. While she is thinking this way, her spirit is suppressed. She may try to comfort herself by saying, "I shouldn't be so religious. There's nothing wrong with what I'm doing." However, the more she tries to sustain her spirit, the lower it descends. When she comes to the meeting all she can do is keep the form and strive to maintain the image of being a spiritual sister. Although she shouts, "Hallelujah," it is lifeless and empty, a sign that she is dead in her spirit. Even though she suffers death in her spirit, she does not repent

immediately. The following week she considers whether the article of clothing is still available. Finally, she purchases it and brings it home. At this point she is not only dead, her spirit has been put into a coffin and is ready for burial. As she comes to a meeting now she cannot even produce a formal hallelujah. She attends the meetings, but she sits there like a corpse. One of the elders says to another, "What happened to that sister? Two months ago she was so living. What is the matter now? Does she have a problem with her marriage?" It does not take a major problem such as a difficulty in marriage to put her into a box. The small matter of purchasing an article of clothing for $12.99 killed her spirit. She remains in that condition until one day, by the Lord's mercy, she repents.

You need to examine your own experience. If when you think about a certain matter you have no rest in your spirit, stop your thinking. Call back your mind from the thing which gives your spirit unrest. Whenever you try to reason and you feel empty in your spirit, stop and turn your mind back to the spirit. You need to say, "O Lord Jesus, rescue me. Lord, deliver my mind from that consideration which gives me death." If you do this, immediately you will have rest, comfort, satisfaction, and even strengthening in your spirit. As long as you have rest, comfort, and satisfaction within, it is an indication that your mind is set in the right direction. If you have no rest comfort, or satisfaction, but rather feel dark, empty, and restless, it is an indication that your direction is toward death. In such a case you need to turn your mind back to the spirit.

In Romans 8 we find no teachings. We are simply told to walk according to the spirit. How can we walk according to spirit? By taking care of our mind, always setting it in the right direction. The mind should not be turned outward, but inward, not on shopping outwardly, but on the spirit inwardly. If you set your mind on the

spirit, you will walk according to the spirit. In this way we enjoy Christ and we participate fully in the all-inclusive Spirit. Automatically and unconsciously we have the fulfillment of the righteous requirements of God's law (v. 4). Day by day we have the enjoyment of Christ as our fourfold life. All we need to do is to take care of our mind. Where is your mind? In what direction is your mind? We need to say, "Lord, have mercy on me and grant me Your grace that I will always have my mind turned toward You and set upon my spirit."

2. By Putting to Death the Practices of the Body

When we have our mind set upon our spirit, our flesh will be put to death. By setting our mind on our spirit we put to death all the practices of the body. This is to "crucify the flesh" (Gal. 5:24). When we desire to go shopping, our feet may try to go, but our spirit says, "Stay on the cross." This is mortifying, putting to death, or crucifying the deeds of our body. As a result, we will experience the death of Christ. The genuine experience of the co-crucifixion with Christ is to be had in the putting to death of the practices of the body by the Spirit. This does not happen once for all; it is a constant daily exercise. Every practice of the body must he put to death by turning our mind to the spirit and setting it on the spirit. This is the way to "walk according to spirit" (v. 4).

The word "walk" includes our whole living--what we say, what we do, and where we go. When we set our mind on our spirit continually, our entire walk will be according to spirit. We may call this the holy life, the victorious life, or the glorious life. Whatever we may call it, it is the expression of the indwelling Christ as our fourfold life. This is the experience we need to have in the church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

SANCTIFICATION IN LIFE

Before we come to the section on glorification, I have a burden to give an additional message on the matter of sanctification in life.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, HOLINESS, AND GLORY

Paul was an excellent writer and his thought was very deep. In the book of Romans Paul firstly covers the subject of condemnation and then proceeds to cover justification, sanctification, and glorification. As God deals with us, He always cares for three of His divine attributes--His righteousness, holiness, and glory. God is righteous, God is holy, and God is a God of glory. Righteousness is related to God's acts, to His ways, actions, and activities. Everything God does is righteous. Holiness is God's nature. Holiness is not a matter of action, but of nature. As the nature of a table is wood and the nature of a book is paper, so the nature of God is holiness. God's acts are righteous and His nature is holiness. What is glory? Glory is God Himself expressed. When God is expressed, that is glory. Therefore, in righteousness we see God's ways, in holiness we see God's nature, and in glory we see God expressed. Three of the sections in Romans--justification, sanctification, and glorification--were composed according to these three attributes of God: justification according to God's righteousness, sanctification according to God's holiness, and glorification according to God's glory.

In the first stage of God's salvation we participate in the righteousness of God. This is justification in which we

gain God's righteousness. In the second stage we are in the process of sanctification, a process in which God works His divine nature into us. God's righteousness is reckoned to us in justification but it is not wrought into us. However, in God's sanctification His holiness is wrought into our being. Although we have obtained and participated in God's righteousness outwardly, God's holiness needs to be wrought into us inwardly. The second stage of God's salvation is that He works His holy nature into our being.

In order to accomplish this God has been processed into the available Spirit of life (8:2). Before being processed He was not available to perform this subjective work of sanctification. Before He was processed He was able to create the world, but He was unable to enter into His creature. Although He could do many things outside of us, He could not come into us until He had passed through the complete process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Since being processed, He has become and still is the available Spirit of life. Now, like the air for breathing (John 20:22), it is so easy for Him to enter into us. As the available Spirit of life, God has come into our spirit, making it life. Since Christ, the life-giving Spirit, is in us, our spirit is life because of righteousness (8:10). The Lord has made our spirit life by regeneration. Now, as the Spirit of life in our spirit, He is spreading Himself from our spirit into our soul--into our mind, emotion, and will. Eventually, He will even expand into our mortal body. In such a way God saturates us with Himself. This saturation is called sanctification. Through this saturation God works Himself with His holy nature into our entire being, into our spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). Thus, our whole being will be fully permeated, sanctified, with His holy nature. We are presently undergoing this process of sanctification, the second stage of God's salvation.

In the next stage we will be raptured and glorified. That will be the redemption of our body. Glorification means to transfigure our vile body into a glorious body (Phil. 3:21). At that time we will be completely and absolutely brought into God Himself as our glory. Then we will be fully glorified.

The first stage of God's salvation, justification, takes care of our spirit; the second stage, sanctification, mainly deals with our soul, with a slight amount of saturation in our body; and the third stage, glorification, concerns our physical body. In Romans 8:10 Paul says that if Christ is in us, our spirit is life because of righteousness, meaning that in God's justification we have gained righteousness. Through this righteousness our spirit has been made alive and actually becomes life. However, there is not yet the divine life in our soul. Therefore, we need to cooperate with the indwelling Christ by setting our mind upon the spirit, enabling the Spirit of life to saturate our mind with Himself. Then our mind will be life. If we continue to cooperate, this saturating and spreading One will spread Himself from our spirit even into our mortal body. Then we only need wait for the time when our body will be brought into His glory. That will be our glorification.

Now we can understand why Paul wrote Romans in the order that he did, with justification first, followed by sanctification and glorification. These three sections cover the three stages of complete salvation and correspond to the three parts of our being. In justification our spirit is made alive, in sanctification our soul is made life, and in glorification even our body will be full of life. When this process is completed, we will not only be justified and sanctified, but also glorified. Presently we are in the process of sanctification. Thus, I am burdened to give this message on sanctification in life. Although you may never have heard the term sanctification in life, it is nevertheless a fact.

From the beginning of the book of Romans through 8:13 two main things are covered, justification and sanctification. In justification God gives us His righteousness, which is Christ Himself. God has made Christ righteousness to us. However, this is objective, for righteousness is Christ as our covering. Hence,

righteousness is objective, like a roof that covers us. However, in the second stage, sanctification, God is working Christ into us to make Him our sanctification subjectively. Our whole being will be permeated with the holy nature of God. This is sanctification in life.

LIFE AND SANCTIFICATION IN ROMANS

In the first seven and a half chapters of Romans the word life is used many times. This life is mainly for sanctification. It is by this life that Christ permeates us, saturates us, and infuses the holy nature of God into us making us holy dispositionally. In other books of the Bible we find mention of sanctification by the blood and are told that the blood of Christ has sanctified us (Heb. 13:12). However, we do not find this aspect of sanctification in the book of Romans. In Romans we do not have objective sanctification by the blood, but subjective sanctification in life. Therefore, this message is concerned with sanctification in life. Thus, we need to read and consider several verses which mention this matter of life.

In 1:4 Paul speaks of Christ saying that He "was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." The "Spirit of holiness" here is in contrast with the "flesh" in 1:3. As the flesh in 1:3 refers to the human essence of Christ, so the Spirit in this verse refers not to the Person of the Holy Spirit, but to the divine essence of Christ, which is "the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9). This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself (John 4:24), is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy. Christ has two natures: the human and the divine. With each nature there is an essence. The essence of His human nature, His humanity, is flesh; the essence of His divinity is the Spirit of holiness. Thus, the Spirit of holiness here is the divine essence of Christ's Person. This essence is holiness.

The last part of 1:17 declares, "But the just shall live by faith." "Shall live" may be translated as "shall have life

and live." For what purpose shall we have life? For the purpose mainly that we might be sanctified. Although we have been justified, we still need to have life that we might be sanctified, that is, have God's holy nature wrought into our being. This is sanctification.

In 5:10 Paul says that "we shall be saved in His life." This saving in His life is not for justification; that has already been obtained by His death. Although we have received justification by Christ's death, we need to be sanctified in His saving life. Hence, to be saved in life is not for justification, but mainly for sanctification.

Romans 5:17 speaks of reigning in life. Paul says, "Those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." We have received righteousness objectively, but we do not yet have holiness subjectively. We need to reign in life that we may have subjective holiness for our sanctification. Therefore, life in this verse is for a further stage of God's salvation, mainly that of sanctification.

In 5:21 Paul says that "grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Grace reigns through righteousness unto life eternal for what purpose? Since this verse is in the section on sanctification, we must say that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life mainly for sanctification.

Romans 6:4 says that "as Christ was raised from among the dead through the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Walking in newness of life is not for justification, it is for sanctification, as indicated in verses 19 and 22 by the phrase "unto sanctification." Then 6:5 reads, "For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, we should also grow in the likeness of His resurrection." This verse speaks of growing, and growing is a matter of life. We have grown together with Christ in the likeness of His death and now we are growing with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, that is, "in newness of life." This growing with Christ in newness of life is also mainly for sanctification.

When we preach the gospel to people in an adequate and living way, the living Christ will be transfused into them. Not only will people receive the ability to believe, but also through believing the seed of life. As we baptize new converts, in that baptism the seed of life within them grows together with Christ. This is precisely Paul's meaning in 6:5. As we baptize each new convert, the seed of life which has been sown into him grows together with Christ in the likeness of His death, that is, "in baptism." Afterward, the new convert must grow together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection, that is, "in newness of life." Therefore, from the time that Christ is sown into a new convert he must grow in life. This growth is not for justification; it is mainly for sanctification.

Now we need to read 6:11. "So also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." We may render the latter part of this verse as "living to God in Christ Jesus." We must reckon ourselves in Christ as living to God. This means that, after being justified, we, then, are living for sanctification.

Romans 6:19 says to "present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification." As we have presented our members as slaves to uncleanness unto lawlessness, now we are required to present them as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification. Sanctification is not only a matter of position, that is, to be separated from a common, worldly position to a position for God, as illustrated in Matthew 23:17, 19 (where the gold is sanctified by the temple, and the gift by the altar, in changing their position), and in 1 Timothy 4:3-5 (where food is sanctified by the saints' prayer). Sanctification is also a matter of disposition, that is, being transformed from a natural disposition to a spiritual one, as mentioned in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. This is a matter of a long process, beginning with regeneration (1 Pet. 1:2-3; Titus 3:5), passing through the whole Christian life (1 Thes. 4:3; Heb. 12:14; Eph. 5:26), and reaching completion at the time of rapture, at the maturity of life (1 Thes. 5:23).

The Greek words, hagios, hagiosune, hagiazo, and hagiasmos, used in the book of Romans are of the same root, which fundamentally means separated, set apart. Hagios is translated holy in 1:2; 5:5; 7:12; 9:1; 11:16; 12:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16; 16:16, and saints in 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:15. Hagiosune is translated holiness in 1:4. Hagiazo is a verb used as a participle and is translated sanctified in 15:16. Hagiasmos is translated sanctification in 6:19, 22. Hence, holy means separated, set apart (to God). Saints means the separated ones, the ones set apart (to God). Holiness is the nature and quality of being holy. Sanctification is the practical effect produced, the character and activity, and the resultant state of being sanctified (to God).

Now let us read 6:22. "But now, having been freed from sin and having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life." Here it does not say "fruit unto justification and the end the heavens." It says "fruit unto sanctification and the end life eternal," referring to sanctification in life. Sanctification issues in the riches of life. It brings us into the enjoyment of the riches of the divine life.

Then 6:23 says, "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eternal life as the free gift of God is given to us mainly to sanctify us, and sanctification brings us into the participation of the riches of this life.

Now we proceed to chapter eight. Although we have become quite familiar with the verses regarding life in Romans 8, I am burdened that they be so deeply impressed upon you that you will never forget them. Romans 8:2 declares, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." The law of the Spirit of life has freed us not for justification; it has freed us mainly that we might be sanctified.

Romans 8:6 says that "the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." The mind set on the spirit is life mainly for sanctification, for saturation in life with the holy nature of God.

Notice Romans 8:10. "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life

because of righteousness." We need to pay attention to the words "though" and "yet": if Christ is in us, "though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." When Christ comes into us, our body is still dead because of sin. But, because we have obtained God's righteousness, our spirit is life. This verse does not represent a further advance in our spiritual life; it is actually the beginning of our spiritual life. It refers to the time when we were justified and Christ came into us. At the time of our justification we obtained the righteousness of God, and Christ came into us. Although our body remained dead because of sin, our spirit became life because of the righteousness of God. In 8:11 we see a very significant "but." "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. Once He has come into us, He needs to dwell, to make His home in us. If He is allowed to do this, He will give life to our mortal bodies. Our bodies which were dead will be made alive through the indwelling Spirit. When 8:10 says that Christ is in us, it is referring to the first stage of our spiritual experience. When 8:11 speaks of the Spirit dwelling in us, it designates a further stage. As Christ comes into us, He enlivens our spirit and makes it life. But when Christ dwells in us, making His home in us, He enlivens our body, and saturates it with life. Remember that 8:10 refers to the initial stage of Christ's coming into us. The initial stage is that Christ comes into us, our spirit is life, and our body remains dead. However, if from that time we allow Christ to make His home in us, meaning that we allow Him to spread Himself into our mind, emotion, and will, He will impart Himself as life even to our body. At this time our body will be saturated with life mainly for sanctification.

Romans 8:13 continues, "For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." If we put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit, we will live mainly for the purpose of sanctification, to be permeated

thoroughly and fully with Christ. Verse 11 says that if the Spirit makes His home in us, He will impart life to our mortal bodies. Verse 13 says that if we put to death all the practices of our body, we will live. This means that it requires our cooperation. Inwardly, we need to let Christ, the life-giving Spirit, make His home in our heart that He may impart life into our body. Outwardly, we need to put to death all the practices of our body that we may live. This is to apply the cross of Christ in a practical way to all the practices of our body. If we do this, we will live and enjoy Christ as life. We will enter into the riches of Christ as life. This life will then saturate our being with all that God is. It will permeate us with God's holy nature, and we will be sanctified. Paul even says in 15:16 "that the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit." The nations, the Gentiles, including many who were idol worshippers and sodomites, will be dispositionally sanctified with God's nature. This is sanctification in life. As we have seen, the words sanctification and life are used several times in this section on sanctification. We all have to see the relationship between them.

Paul's thought was very deep. Within Paul was the thought of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. These divine attributes must be ours: God's righteousness must be our righteousness; His holiness must be our holiness; and His glory must be our glory. Paul refers to these three things in 1 Corinthians 1:30, where he says that God has made Christ wisdom to us: both righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (Redemption in 1 Corinthians 1:30 means glorification.) Thus, in 1 Corinthians 1:30 Paul covers these three things in one sentence, but in the book of Romans he takes eight chapters to expound them. Romans 1 through 8 is an exposition of 1 Corinthians 1:30.

How can we have God's righteousness? In order to possess His righteousness four items are necessary--

propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. These four words indicate God's work in imparting to us His righteousness. Thus, God did a great deal in order to grant us His righteousness; it was not an easy task. God had to accomplish propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. We must remember the definitions of these four terms and the difference between them which we covered in message five.

After working objectively to give us His righteousness, God is now working subjectively to impart His holiness into us. God is going to transfuse and infuse His holy nature into our being. Thus, within our being we will have His holy, divine essence. We will be completely saturated and permeated with the holy nature of God. This is sanctification in the book of Romans. Although sanctification does have a positional aspect, that is not the aspect we find in Romans. Sanctification in Romans is subjective and dispositional, for God's nature is being wrought into our nature. His nature will even be wrought into our disposition changing our whole being.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN SANCTIFICATION

What is the purpose of this dispositional sanctification? The purpose is that God may produce many sons (Rom. 8:29). John 1:12 tells us that we have become the children of God, that we have been born as children of God. Nevertheless, let me ask you a question: do you believe that you actually look like a son of God? Whose son do you look like? Although some Christians want to argue with me doctrinally, I prefer to inquire into what kind of person they are. Yes, all real Christians have been born as children of God, but they need to grow into sanctification that they may look like the sons of God. So many genuine Christians, after being regenerated to be the children of God, continue to live in a worldly way. They need to be sanctified in the divine life that they may grow into the maturity of the divine sonship.

The Lord has brought us into His recovery, and His recovery is for reality and practicality. May we look to the Lord for His mercy that He may rescue us from vain knowledge. What we need is reality and practicality. In the book of Romans what Paul wrote regards reality and practicality. God has accomplished a great work that we might have His righteousness. Now He is working within us that we may be sanctified, that His holy nature may be fully wrought into our being. We will not only be sanctified outwardly and objectively, but also inwardly and subjectively. Eventually, we will be filled with His holy nature. In these messages I have no intention of giving merely another exposition of the book of Romans. What the Lord is doing among us today is to open our eyes that we may see our need for His sanctifying work. We need His sanctifying life. We need His eternal life to work His holy being into our nature that we might actually and practically be His sons, not in word, but in reality. Although we were born children of God, we do not resemble the sons of God. Thus, we need the subjective sanctification in life.

Sanctification brings in transformation. We need to be transformed from one form into another. However, not only the outward form must be changed, but the inward substance, the inward essence must also be changed. This change of inward substance requires the process of sanctification. Praise the Lord that He is working in us! We have been justified and now we are being sanctified. God is working His holiness into us, and we shall be sanctified in life.

The crucified Christ was for our justification, and the resurrected Christ is for our sanctification. Christ died on the cross primarily for our justification. Christ, as the Redeemer in the flesh, was for our justification, but now, as the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, He lives within us for our sanctification. He was the crucified One; now He is the resurrected One. He was our Redeemer in the flesh; now He is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, He is our life and He is saturating our being with

His holy nature until we are thoroughly, dispositionally sanctified. This is the reason that in Romans, unlike other New Testament books. sanctification is not positional by the blood, but dispositional by life, even by the living Lord Himself. The Lord is working within our spirit, spreading Himself from the center of our being throughout every part of us until He reaches the circumference. Then we will he completely saturated with His holy nature. Thus, our whole being will be sanctified by Christ as the life-giving Spirit and by His fourfold life. We have seen that His life is fourfold: it is life in the Divine Spirit, in our human spirit, in our mind and in our mortal body. Therefore, as the life-giving Spirit. He is sanctifying us with His rich life. He is so rich! He is rich enough to supply even our mortal bodies with life.

Justification is for sanctification, and sanctification is for glorification. In the next message we shall consider the goal of God's glorification.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

HEIRS OF GLORY

(1)

In this message we come to the matter of glorification. What is the goal of glorification? The goal of glorification is the full sonship of the children of God. Condemnation requires justification, justification is for sanctification, sanctification is for glorification, and glorification is for the full sonship of the children of God.

I. THE BLESSINGS OF SONSHIP

Before 8:14 the terms "children of God" and "sons of God" have not been used in the book of Romans. The concept of "children of God" is only brought in at this point, proving that Paul wrote the book of Romans with a deep purpose in view. Starting with 8:14 Paul begins to speak about the sons of God and the children of God. However, the ultimate concept of the section on glorification (8:14-39) does not concern the children or the sons, but the heirs. We may be a child of God without the growth of a son of God, or a son of God without the qualification for an heir. Thus, Paul's ultimate concept in this portion of Romans concerns the heirs of glory.

Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." This verse is a continuation of the foregoing portion in which Paul tells us that we must walk according to spirit (v. 4). In a sense, to walk according to spirit is to be under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Thus, verse 14 continues Paul's thought by saying that as many as are led by the Holy Spirit, or by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God. By means of this

short sentence Paul turns the whole concept from that of the sanctified ones to that of the sons of God. At the end of verse 13 the thought was on the sanctified ones, the ones who were condemned. justified, reconciled, identified, and eventually sanctified. With verse 14 Paul introduces the concept of the sons of God. How are we sanctified? By walking according to spirit. In a sense, walking according to spirit means to be led by the Spirit of God, and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." In this way Paul turns us from sanctification to sonship. Now we have come to the matter of the sons of God.

We need to approach the subject of sonship in the spirit, not in the letter. If we are in the letter, we will have difficulty. Why? Because according to the letter all the sisters are excluded. How can sisters be sons? Paul did not say, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons and daughters of God." However, we all, brothers and sisters alike, are sons of God. We must read the Bible not merely in letter, but in spirit. Although we are males and females, brothers and sisters, in spirit we are all sons of God. In eternity there will be no daughters, only sons.

One day the Sadducees came to the Lord Jesus, arguing with Him about resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33). They thought that they were quite wise. They told Him about the case of a woman who, in succession, married seven brothers. After they all had died the woman also died. Then the Sadducees asked Him whose wife she would be in the resurrection since all seven had been married to her. The Lord said that they were wrong and knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. The Lord said further that in the resurrection we would neither marry nor be given in marriage, but would be as the angels of God. We shall be wonderful persons with no difference between male and female. We shall not only be justified and sanctified, but also glorified. We shall all be glorified persons, the eternal sons of God. If we walk according to spirit, there is no difference between male and female, for we are all sons of God. However, we must

not forget that we are still in the flesh. In the flesh we have male and female, husband and wife. We must not apply something that will be true in resurrection to the situation today. If we do that, we will have trouble. Nevertheless, we all, brothers and sisters alike, are sons of God.

A. The Spirit of Sonship

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery to fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father." How did we receive this spirit of sonship? By the Spirit of the Son of God coming into our spirit. Galatians 4:6, a sister verse to Romans 8:15, says, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Romans says that we "have received a spirit of sonship"; Galatians 4:6 says that "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son" into us. Because the Spirit of the Son of God enters into our spirit our spirit becomes a spirit of sonship. Thus, verse 15 says that we "have received a spirit of sonship." Furthermore, verse 15 mentions "a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father"; but in Galatians 4:6 it says that "the Spirit of His Son" cries "Abba, Father." There is a difference here. Nevertheless, whether we cry or He cries, we both cry together. When we cry, He cries in our crying. When He cries, we cry with Him. According to grammar, the subject of crying in verse 15 is "we," but in Galatians 4:6 the subject of crying is "the Spirit." These two verses prove that we and He, our spirit and the Spirit, are one. When we cry, "Abba, Father," He joins with us in our crying. The Spirit cries in our crying because the Spirit of the Son of God indwells our spirit. Hence, there is no fear, only a sweet crying of, "Abba, Father."

"Abba" is an Aramaic word which also means father. When these two terms "Abba" and "Father" are put together, the result is a deep, sweet sense, a sense that is exquisitely intimate. "Abba, Father" is sweetness intensified. Children of every race address their father in

such a sweet way: in America we say, "Daddy"; in China they say, "Baba"; and in the Philippines they say, "Papa." We do not speak one syllable, such as "Da," "Ba," or "Pa." It is not sweet at all if we speak just one syllable. We need to say, "Daddy," "Baba," or "Papa." We need to call, "Abba, Father." If you do it, you will realize how sweet it is.

Why do we call, "Abba, Father"? Because we have a spirit of sonship. If a certain man is not my father, it will be difficult for me to call him "Daddy." It may be easy for me to call him "mister," but I cannot call him "Daddy." It would be even harder for me to say to him, "Abba, Father." In fact, it would be impossible. If my dear father were still living, I would like to call him, "Daddy." It would be so sweet to address him in this way because I was born of him. Young people, there is no need for you to doubt whether or not you are the sons of God. When you say, "Abba, Father," do you have a sweet, intimate sensation within you? If you do, it proves that you are a son of God and that you have a spirit of sonship. If you find yourself able to call Him God, but not Abba Father, it indicates that you are not a son of God. However, as long as you can call, "Abba, Father" sweetly, you may be assured that you are a son of God.

B. The Witnessing of the Spirit

"The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." In verse 14 we see "the sons of God" and in verse 15 "the spirit of sonship." Why in verse 16 does Paul suddenly mention "the children"? Because the Spirit witnesses to something basic. He witnesses to our primary or initial relationship with God. As I have already mentioned, we may be children without the growth of a son and we may be sons without the qualification of an heir. For the Holy Spirit to witness that we are all heirs of God would be premature. Most of us are not mature enough for such a witness. Thus, the Spirit witnesses to the most basic and elementary relationship--that of being the children of God. He witnesses with our spirit that we are God's children. Therefore, the

witnessing of the Holy Spirit starts with the youngest age, even from our spiritual birth. Regardless of how young or new you may be, if you are a child of God, the Spirit of God witnesses with your spirit. Notice that it does not say "in our spirit." If it said "in our spirit," it would mean that only the Spirit of God witnesses, but that our spirit does not witness. However, it says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, meaning that both witness together. The Spirit of God witnesses, and simultaneously our spirit witnesses together with Him. This is wonderful.

Some may say, "I don't feel that the Spirit of God witnesses. Where is the Spirit of God? I don't feel Him. I don't have any sensation that the Spirit of God is within me. I never saw Him and I cannot feel Him. I simply cannot sense Him." However, do you not feel that your spirit witnesses? You must realize that as long as your spirit is witnessing it means that the Holy Spirit also is witnessing. You cannot deny that your spirit witnesses within you. The Apostle Paul was very wise. He said that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. When our spirit witnesses, that is also the witnessing of the Spirit, because the two spirits have been mingled together as one. It is very difficult for anyone to distinguish these two spirits.

C. The Leading of the Spirit

Many Christians have a mistaken, natural concept regarding the leading of the Spirit. People invariably think that the leading of the Spirit comes suddenly from the third heaven or elsewhere. Some ask the Lord for a sign saying, "O Lord, give me a sign, an indicator, whether or not I should buy this thing. Lord, if there's transportation available, it will be a sign that You want me to buy it, but if there's no transportation, it means that You don't want me to buy it. Lord, keep the stores open, for if they are closed it will indicate that You do not want me to buy anything." This is an example of a mistaken concept regarding the Lord's leading.

Have you noticed the first word in verse 14 regarding the Lord's leading? The first word is, "For," a word which refers us back to what Paul has mentioned previously and which indicates that verse 14 is a continuation of that matter. Thus, the leading in verse 14 is related to the items which have been covered in the foregoing verses. Now the main point of the previous verses is to walk according to the spirit that we might fulfill the righteous requirement of the law of God. How can we have the leading of the Spirit? It is neither by praying nor by looking to signs or indicators. We may have the leading of the Spirit by walking according to the spirit.

The leading of the Spirit does not derive from nor depend upon outward things. The leading of the Spirit is an issue of the inner life. I would say that it comes from the sense of life, from the consciousness of the divine life within us. The word life is mentioned at least five times in Romans 8. Hence, the leading of the Spirit is a matter of life, a matter of the sense and consciousness of life. The mind set upon the spirit is life (v. 6). How can we know this life? Not by outward things, but by the inward sense and consciousness of life. There is an inward sense which comes from setting the mind upon the spirit. If our mind is set upon our spirit, we are immediately strengthened and satisfied inwardly. We also are watered and refreshed. By that sense and consciousness we can know the life within us, and by this sense of life we can know that we are walking rightly. In other words, we know that we are under the leading of the Spirit. Therefore, the leading of the Spirit in verse 14 does not depend on outward things; it absolutely depends upon the sense of life within our spirit.

Sisters, when you are about to go shopping you need not pray, "Lord, should I go shopping or not? If should not go, give me a sign." There is no need for you to pray in this way. You should not say, "O Lord, if You do not want me to go to the department store, prevent me." Never pray or think in this way. Do not think that if the Lord does not stop you from going shopping that you have the leading of

the Lord. Everything might be smooth outwardly, but how about inwardly? Perhaps after you have parked your automobile and while you are walking toward the door of the department store you have no peace within. Instead of being inwardly strengthened you feel frustrated. However, since everything is smooth outwardly you proceed. Inwardly, however, the closer you get to the store, the emptier you feel. You may be able to justify yourself by outward things: by the fact that you have the money; that your husband, who is afraid of you, is agreeable; that the weather is excellent; and that there is little traffic. You say to yourself, "Don't you believe that God is sovereign? All things are working together for good." I do not inquire about the outward things, I ask about your inward sensations. Although everything is positive outwardly, inwardly you are empty and weak. You do not have the anointing, the watering, or the inward peace.

What does this mean? It means that the leading of the Spirit is within you, in your inner life. Unbelievers do not have the divine life that is within us. The divine life within us leads us constantly, not by signs or indicators, but by giving us an inward sense, feeling, or consciousness. Thus, Paul says. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." If you are led by outward things. it does not prove that you are a son of God. However, if you are led by the inward sense of the divine life, it indicates that you are a son of God. We are the sons of God because we have the life of God. Why are worldly people not the sons of God? Because they lack the life of God.

Consider the case of the donkey used by Balaam, the heathen prophet. Undoubtedly, the donkey was led to speak a human language. Nevertheless, that leading was not derived from life, but from a miraculous gift. The leading that comes from such a gift does not indicate that we are sons of God. Yes, the donkey was led to speak in a human tongue, but this did not indicate that it had a human life, much less that it was a son of God.

When you sisters are about to go to a department

store, although everything may be clear outwardly, you need to obey the inner sense of life. As you approach the entrance of the store, something within may tell you. "Go back." You do not hear an audible word, but you have the sense of darkness, weakness, and dryness as you are about to enter the store. Since you are a son of God, you have such an indicator from the inward life. You have something that people in the world do not have. Because you have the life of God, you have the leading which issues from that life. This leading indicates that you are a son of God. This is the reason that in verse 14 Paul says that as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

Where is the leading that Paul mentions in verse 14? It is in verses 4 and 6. The leading of the Spirit comes as you walk according to the spirit and set your mind on the spirit. If you walk according to the spirit and set your mind on the spirit, you will find that you have the leading of the Spirit. You will have the consciousness that you are walking, behaving, and living according to the spirit. You should not violate this inner sense or disobey this inward consciousness, for it is truly the leading of the Spirit. When you have this sense within, it means that you are being led by the Spirit. Therefore, to set your mind upon the spirit is to be placed under the leading of the Spirit. The inward life gives you the sense, even in small things, of whether or not you are under the Lord's leading. Thus, we are led of the Spirit by walking according to spirit and by setting our mind upon the spirit. Therefore, the leading of the Spirit mentioned in verse 14 is not derived from the outward environment, but from the inward sense and consciousness of the divine life. This leading proves that we are sons of God, for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

I would like to say a word especially to the teenagers who might be reading this message. While your classmates are talking in a worldly way, you may find yourself, at a certain point, unable to join in the conversation. Although nothing outward frustrates you, you do sense an inner forbidding. This inward regulation comes from the life of God within you, the life which makes you a child of God.

Your classmates may be discussing sinful things in a happy, excited way, but the divine life within you does not allow you to say a word. Instead, it turns you away from them. That is the leading of the Spirit. This leading of the Spirit marks you out as a son of God. Because of this mark from the leading of the Spirit your classmates will wonder what has happened to you. They will wonder why you do not talk and what is different about you. They will wonder because they are sons of the devil and you are a son of God. You have the leading of the Spirit within you.

I would also like to say a word about fashions and styles of clothing. Today, the children of the devil have their styles and fashions. Surely all the modern fashions are the leading of the devil. Modern fashion is a mark of the children of the evil one. No Christian should dress himself in such a way. Although the churches in the Lord's recovery do not post a list of outward regulations regarding dress, within you you have the divine life which makes you a son of God. When your friends, relatives, and classmates dress themselves in a devilish way, within you is a sense that does not allow you to dress yourself in that manner. This is the leading of the Spirit, the mark that designates you as a son of God.

How do we know that we are the sons of God? We know by the leading of the Spirit, for the leading of the Spirit puts a mark upon us. The inward life constantly gives us a sensation or consciousness that we should not behave ourselves like worldly people do. We must be different from our relatives, friends, classmates, and neighbors. As we obey the inward sense of life, we spontaneously display a mark which tells people that we are different from the devil's children, that we have the life of God within us which makes us sons of God. This is the leading of the Spirit. Do not consider the leading of the Spirit mentioned in verse 14 as an outward matter. It is absolutely an inward sense which comes from the divine life in our spirit.

This leading of the Spirit by the inward sense of the divine life does not happen as an accident. It is a continual matter in our daily life, just like breathing. Normal

breathing is continuous breathing. When breathing becomes an accident, it is an indicator that something is wrong with our health. Since the leading of the Spirit is a matter of life, it should continue normally in every aspect of our daily walk. This is the leading of the Spirit. This leading of the Spirit in our daily life is the proof that we are sons of God.

If we do not live and walk according to this leading of the Spirit, we may be the children of God concerning which the Spirit witnesses with our spirit in crying, "Abba, Father," but we do not have the mark that designates us as the sons of God. We may be God's children, but we do not have the growth which comes by living and walking according to the leading of the Spirit in life. The leading of the Spirit marks us out as being the sons of God in the growth of life.

We need to realize the difference between the children of God in verse 16 and the sons of God in verse 14. The children of God are in the initial stage of the divine life, the stage which mainly concerns the birth, while the sons of God are in a more advanced stage, the stage which concerns the growth in life. In order to be children of God we need the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit, but in order to be the sons of God we need the leading of the Spirit by the sense of the divine life. As long as we have the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, we have the assurance that we are the children of God. However, in order to have the proof, the mark, that we are the sons of God we need to have the leading of the Spirit and to live and walk according to the inner sense of the divine life. All real Christians are children of God, having the witness of the Spirit with their spirit, but not all have the mark that they are the sons of God who are growing in the divine life and living and walking according to the leading of the Spirit. Therefore, we all must move forward in the growth in life from the initial stage of being the children of God to the more advanced stage, showing that we are the sons of God by bearing the distinct mark of the leading of the Spirit in life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

HEIRS OF GLORY

(2)

D. The Firstfruit of the Spirit

Romans 8:17 says "And if children, heirs also; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him." In verse 17 we see that we have progressed from children to heirs. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ. Paul's thought here is very strong. Please notice the semicolon in this verse. It indicates that there is a condition involved in being an heir. We should not say that simply because we are children we are heirs. This is too hasty. There is no condition imposed for us to be the children of God. As long as the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, we are the children of God. However, for us to progress from children to heirs there is a condition. This condition is mentioned in the latter part of the verse.

The condition for being heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ is that "we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him." We may not like suffering, but we need it. Remember that suffering is the incarnation of grace. We should not be distressed by suffering. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him. Although I cannot say that without suffering we will not be glorified, it is certain that the degree of our suffering determines the degree of our glory. The more suffering we pass through, the more our glory will be intensified, for

suffering increases the intensity of our glory. We would like to be glorified, but we do not want to experience suffering. However, suffering increases glory. In 1 Corinthians 15:41 Paul says that "one star differeth from another star in glory," indicating that some stars shine more brightly than others. We all will shine and we all will be glorified, but the intensity of our glory will depend on the amount of suffering we are willing to take. It is certain that the Apostle Paul in that day will shine more brightly than all of us. Do you believe that you will shine as brightly as Paul? We shall all be glorified, but the intensity of our glory will differ according to our suffering. Therefore Paul says in verse 18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us." The present suffering means nothing compared with the coming glory.

Verse 19 reads, "For the anxious watching of the creation eagerly expects the revelation of the sons of God." This revelation denotes the manifestation or the appearing of the sons of God. We all are the sons of God. As I have previously mentioned, if we tell people on the street that we are sons of God, they will think that we are crazy. They will say, "Look at you and me. What is the difference between us? We are both human beings. You are not different from me. You are just another person. Why do you say that you are a son of God?" However, the day will come when the sons of God will be manifested. In that day there will be no need to make the declaration, "From now on we are the sons of God," because we all shall be glorified. We shall be in glory, designated as sons by the glory of God. Then all other people will have to admit that we are the sons of God. They will say, "Look at these people. Who are these people so full of glory? They must be sons of God." There will be no need for us to say anything. We shall be designated by our glorification. The entire creation is waiting for this with watching eyes, for the creation eagerly expects the revelation of the sons of God.

Verse 20 continues, "For the creation was subjected to

vanity, not of its own will, but because of Him Who subjected it." We need to notice the word "vanity." The entire creation is under vanity. Everything under the sun is vanity. The wise king Solomon said, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). Creation is subject to vanity.

Then verse 21 says, "In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." We need to notice two other words, "slavery" and "corruption." In the entire universe there is nothing except vanity and corruption. This corruption is a kind of bondage, a slavery that binds the whole creation. Creation has been made subject to vanity in the hope that it will be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. One day the children of God will be glorified, brought into glory. With that glory there will be freedom, and that freedom will be a kingdom, sphere, or realm. The whole glory will be a kingdom, a sphere, into which we will be brought. When we are brought into that freedom or kingdom of glory, creation will be delivered from vanity, corruption, and slavery. This is the reason that the entire creation is awaiting that time. We have very much to do with the creation, for the future destiny of the creation rests upon us. If we mature slowly, the creation will blame us and murmur against us. It will say, "Dear children of God, you are growing too slowly. We are waiting for the time of your maturity, the time when you will enter into glory, the time when we will be freed from vanity, corruption, and slavery." We must be faithful to the creation and not disappoint it.

Verse 22 says, "For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now." It seems that one star groans to another and that the moon groans to the planets. They all groan together. Not only does the creation groan together, it also travails as in the pangs of childbirth. The whole creation is groaning and travailing together until now.

Verse 23 follows, "And not only so, but we ourselves also, having the firstfruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly expecting sonship, the redemption of our body." Although we have been born through regeneration as the sons of God and have the Spirit as the firstfruit, we also groan because we are still in the body which is linked to the old creation. We must admit that our body still belongs to the old creation. Since our body belongs to the old creation and has not yet been redeemed, we are groaning in it as the creation does. However, while we are groaning we have the firstfruit of the Spirit. The firstfruit of the Spirit is for our enjoyment; it is a foretaste of the coming harvest. This firstfruit is the Holy Spirit as a sampling of the full taste of God as our enjoyment, of all that God is to us. God is so much to us. The full taste will come in the day of glory. Nevertheless before the full taste comes, God has given us a foretaste today. This foretaste is His Divine Spirit as the firstfruit of the harvest of the full enjoyment of all that He is to us.

If you talk with unbelievers, they will admit that, in a sense, they have some enjoyment in their entertainments, like dancing and gambling. However, they will also tell you that they are unhappy. You may ask them, "Why do you go dancing or to a gambling casino?" They would reply, "Because I am so sad, so depressed. I need to do something." They also are groaning, but only groaning; there is nothing else. We, on the contrary, as we are groaning, have within us the Spirit as the firstfruit, as the foretaste of God Himself. Even as we are suffering, we have the enjoyment. We have the taste of the presence of the Lord. The presence of the Lord is simply the Spirit as the firstfruit for our enjoyment. So, we are different from worldly people. They experience groaning without the inward enjoyment. We, however, groan outwardly, but rejoice inwardly. Why do we rejoice? We rejoice because we have the firstfruit of the Spirit. The Divine Spirit within us is the foretaste of God which leads us to the full taste of the enjoyment of God. This is a great item in the blessings of sonship.

While we are groaning and enjoying the firstfruit of the Spirit, we are expecting sonship. Here sonship means full sonship. Although we have sonship within us, this sonship has not yet become full. In that day we will know full sonship. What is full sonship? It is the redemption of our body. We have sonship in our spirit through regeneration and we may also have sonship in our soul through transformation, but we do not as yet have sonship in our body through transfiguration. In the coming day we will also have sonship in our body. This is full sonship, our longing expectation.

While we are waiting we need to grow. We do not need to groan as much as we need to grow. Although we need to rejoice continually, while we are rejoicing we need to grow. Many among us are too young, too immature. We all must grow and be matured. The time of the coming of that glorious day depends upon our growth in life. The faster we grow, the sooner that day will come.

In verse 24 Paul says, "For we have been saved in hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what anyone sees, why does he also hope?" What is the hope mentioned here? It is the hope of glory. We have been saved in the hope that some day we will enter into glory. Paul says that "hope that is seen is not hope; for what anyone sees, why does he also hope?" What does this mean? It means that the thing for which we hope will be wonderful because we have never seen it. Hence, it is a real hope. If we have seen even a little of it, it would not be such an excellent hope. If you were to ask me about the glory in the future, I would say that I know nothing about it because I have never seen it. I cannot speak about that glory because I have not seen it. It is a wonderful hope.

Verse 25 continues, "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly expect it through endurance." So many expectant saints have asked, "Lord, how long? Another ten years? Another generation? How long, Lord?" This is a test to our endurance.

E. The Helping of the Spirit

"And in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness; for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." What does the phrase "in like manner" mean? Why does Paul say this? It is difficult to understand this phrase. I believe that it has an all-inclusive meaning. "In like manner" includes all the points of the foregoing verses--expecting, eagerness. groaning, endurance, hope, and so forth. The phrase "in like manner" relates to all of these points. While we are groaning, the Holy Spirit also is groaning. While we are expecting, He is expecting. While we are hoping and enduring, He is hoping and enduring. Whatever we are, He is also the same. "In like manner" the Spirit joins in to help us. What a comfort this is! While we are groaning, watching, and expecting He is also groaning, watching, and expecting. He is just the same as we are. If we are weak, He apparently is weak also, although actually He is not. He sympathizes with our weakness. He appears to be weak for the sake of our weakness that He might participate in it. When we loudly pray, "O, Father," He also prays loudly. He also prays softly when we pray softly. We may say, "O Father, I'm so pitiful. Have mercy upon me." When we pray in this way, He also prays for us "in like manner." In whatever way we pray, He also prays. In whatever way we are, he also is. If we pray quickly, rejoicingly, and shoutingly, He also prays in this manner. Our manner is His manner. Do not think that the Holy Spirit is so different from us that when we receive the Holy Spirit we will be extraordinary people. This is not the thought contained in Romans 8. Romans 8 reveals that the Holy Spirit is in our manner. Sisters, are you disappointed? Some sisters say, "We cannot shout. We cannot pray loudly as the brothers do. Because of this, it seems that we have been neglected." Be comforted sisters. The Spirit prays in your manner. In whatever manner you are, He also is. Praise the Lord!

Paul also says that the Spirit joins in to help us. He participates in our weakness in order to help us. The Spirit does not ask us to join in with Him; He joins in with us. The Spirit does not say, "Come up to the highest standard to join Me." None of us can do this. Thus, the Spirit joins in in our manner. If your manner is quick, He will also be quick. If you are slow, He will be slow. Try to pray. Whether you pray strongly or weakly, loudly or softly, it does not matter to Him. If you pray, He will pray in you "in like manner." "In like manner" He will join in to help you.

If a man is crippled and I want to help him walk, I have to take his manner. Likewise, if I want to approach a little boy, I must do it in his way. I should not say, "Little boy, I am a big giant who has come to help you." If I do this, the boy will look at me and say, "I do not want you. You are too different from me." If I want to help the little boy, I must shorten myself and squeeze myself into being a little boy and say, "May I play with you?" If I say this, the little boy will be happy and respond, "Good! Let's play together." This means that I join in to help him in his manner.

Sometimes the older brothers in the church life are too big, too high. Although they try to help the saints, they do not help them in the saints' manner. On the day of resurrection, the Lord Jesus came to two disciples who were on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33). The Lord joined them absolutely in their manner. While they were talking, the Lord Jesus pretended not to know anything. He seemed to ask, "What are you talking about?" The two disciples rebuked Him, "Don't you know the things that have come to pass in these days?" The Lord said, "What things?" They said, "The man Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word, has been condemned to death and crucified." The Lord Jesus neither rebuked them nor revealed Himself to them. He kept Himself in their manner, walking with them until they came near to the village. They asked Him to abide with them and He did. As they were seated in the room, the Lord took bread and broke it. Only then were their eyes opened to see that it

was the Lord. When they realized that He was the Lord, He disappeared.

In the church life the older brothers and sisters need to help the younger ones in their manner. They need to join in to help in their weaknesses. None of us is so strong. We all are groaning, expecting, and saying, "O Lord, when?" Day by day we are suffering. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is present, joining in to help us in our manner.

F. The Interceding of the Spirit

Paul continues to say, "for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings in our manner. This groaning apparently is our groaning, but in our groaning is the groaning of the Spirit. This is why His groaning is in the same manner as our groaning. He is in us and His groaning is in our groaning. He groans with us "in like manner." This is the best prayer we can have for the growth in life. Most of our prayers are very utterable with clear words, but they may not be out of our spirit. But when we have a real burden to pray yet we do not know how to utter it, then spontaneously we just groan with that burden without any utterable word. This will be the best prayer within which the Spirit intercedes for us by groaning together with us.

This kind of unutterable prayer is primarily for the growth in life, concerning the true need of which we do not have much understanding. Concerning our material needs and business affairs we are clear and do have the utterance to pray about these things, but concerning the matter of our growth in life we are lacking in both understanding and utterance. However, if we are seeking the Lord regarding the growth in life, oftentimes deep within our spirit we will be burdened with some prayer about which we have no clear understanding and for which we have no utterance. So, spontaneously we are forced to groan. While we are groaning from deep within our spirit, the Spirit who dwells in our spirit

automatically joins in with our groaning, interceding for us mainly that we may have the transformation in life for growth into the maturity of sonship.

Verse 27 says that "He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because He intercedes for the saints according to God." The Spirit intercedes according to God. What does this mean? It means that the interceding Spirit prays for us that we may be conformed to the image of God. We will consider more of this in the next message.

G. The Full Sonship

We have seen that we are the sons of God enjoying all the blessings of sonship. We may itemize the blessings: the Spirit of sonship, the witnessing of the Spirit, the leading of the Spirit, the firstfruit of the Spirit, the helping of the Spirit, and the interceding of the Spirit. Eventually we will have the full sonship of the sons of God revealed in the freedom of glory (vv. 19, 21).

In this portion of the Word three significant terms are used--children, sons, and heirs. These three words correspond to the three stages of sonship. The life of God works in three stages to make us sons of God. The life of God regenerates us in our spirit, transforms us in our soul, and transfigures our body. Hence, we have regeneration, transformation, and transfiguration. These together give us full sonship. As the result of these three steps the sons are fully matured.

In this portion of Romans we are told that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God (v. 16). In verse 16 it does not say sons or heirs, for in the first stage of sonship we are simply little children who have been regenerated by the life of God. After this we will grow. Then verse 14 says that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God." In verse 14 we are no longer babes or children, but sons. When we are capable of being led of the Spirit, it means that we have

attained a certain growth in life. We have grown from children into sons who are able to take the leading of the Spirit. This means that we are in the second stage, the stage of transformation. Ultimately, we will become heirs. According to ancient law, heirs had to be of age and declared the legal heirs that they might claim the inheritance. Therefore, in this portion of Romans we have children by regeneration, sons by transformation, and heirs by transfiguration or glorification. We were born the children of God, we are growing up as the sons of God, and we are waiting for the time when we will be fully matured and legally declared to be the rightful heirs of God. The procedure which makes us legal heirs is the transfiguration of our body, that is, the redemption of our body, the full redemption (v. 23). The transfiguration of our body will qualify us to be the heirs of the divine inheritance. This transfiguration will be accomplished by glorification.

There are great riches in this portion of Romans, and we need several messages to cover them. In this message we have seen a sketch of the three stages of the making of God's sons: regeneration, transformation, and glorification. As a result of these three stages, we will obtain full sonship. These three stages correspond to the three stages of God's salvation: the first stage, justification, produces children; the second stage, sanctification, enables the children to grow into sons; and the third stage, glorification, results in the transfiguration of the body that we may become the legal heirs of the divine inheritance.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY

HEIRS OF GLORY

(3)

II. HEIRS CONFORMED FOR GLORIFICATION

A. Many Brothers of the Firstborn

In the past two messages we considered the blessings of sonship. In this message we shall see that the heirs are conformed for glorification. To what are the heirs conformed? To the image of Christ, God's firstborn Son (Heb. 1:5-6). Christ is God's firstborn Son, and the believers are the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10). As God's firstborn Son, Christ is the model, example, pattern, and prototype for all His brothers, the many sons of God, who will be conformed to His image. This conformation is for the coming glorification. We should not expect to be glorified without firstly growing in life and being conformed to the image of God's Son. If we expect to be glorified without being conformed, we will be disappointed. The glorification to come depends on our conformation to the image of the Son of God. Thus, glorification depends upon our growth in life.

Once again I use the illustration of a carnation seed. The seed is sown into the ground and sprouts: this is regeneration. Then the carnation grows: this is the growth in life, the stage of transformation. Eventually the carnation plant grows to the point of blossoming: this is transfiguration and glorification. The stage of the blossoming of the carnation plant is the stage of its glorification. If while the carnation plant is in the sprout stage it expects without growing to blossom and to be glorified, the time of blossoming will never come. If you do not grow in life, yet await the time of blossoming, the time

of glorification, you are a dreamer. Nevertheless, this is exactly the situation among many Christians today.

Recently, I had dinner with some Christian friends who are very familiar with the outward world situation. They told us that a great many Christians are interested in two main aspects of prophecy: the rapture and the signs relating to the Lord's coming. However, if we expect to be raptured without growing in life, we are dreamers, for rapture is actually our transfiguration and glorification. No carnation seed can grow from a sprout to a blossom overnight. Imagine that a carnation sprout dreamed that overnight it grew from the sprout stage to the blossom stage. This may occur in a dream, but not in real life, for such an unusual development is absolutely against the law of life. According to the law of life, a carnation plant must grow gradually until it reaches maturity. Then and only then will a blossom appear. Likewise, we must grow gradually until we arrive at a full grown man (Eph. 4:13 Gk.). Once we reach the stage of blossoming, we are ready to be transfigured and glorified. Thus, glorification with transfiguration is possible only after we have reached maturity.

We may also use the illustration of graduating from college. Suppose a college freshman dreams that he completes his education in one night and that he will graduate the next morning. That is merely a dream. In reality, he should not expect to graduate until he has completed four years of study. After he has finished all of his courses and passed all of his examinations, he will be approved for graduation. Graduation never comes suddenly.

Many Christians live in a dream. Although many Christians have expected to be taken to the air, eventually they all passed into the earth. During the last century and a half there have been many peculiar predictions regarding the coming of the Lord. Many so-called teachers of prophecy even dared to fix the date when the Lord would descend to the air. However, the years passed and nothing happened. Every prediction failed to materialize.

I was saved as a teenager a few years after the end of World War I. I loved to read the Bible and to know its truths. Therefore, although I was a student with little money, I tried to buy spiritual books. Many of those who taught and wrote about prophecy offered a number of predictions, most of which were shattered by the start of World War II; none were fulfilled. D. M. Panton, a great teacher of the Bible, published a paper entitled Dawn. In the mid-1930's he printed an article which included two photographs, one of Caesar Nero and the other of Mussolini. D. M. Panton said, "Look at these pictures. See how much they resemble one another. Mussolini must be the antichrist." After we came to know about this article, I said in one of the church meetings, "Dear saints, Mr. Panton has published an article telling us that Mussolini is the antichrist. If this is the case, certainly the Lord is coming soon, and we will be raptured. Brothers, deep in my spirit I do know one principle--that the rapture is the issue of maturity. In the New Testament the rapture is likened to a harvest, and a harvest is possible only after the crop has matured and ripened. If the crop is not ripe, but is still tender and green, how can the harvest come? It is impossible. Brothers and sisters, look at the situation among the Lord's people today. Look at the crop. Is it ripe? Do you believe that according to the present stage of the growth of the crop the harvest is imminent? It is impossible. Look at the field--nowhere is there any real growth. Although there are thousands of genuine Christians everywhere on the earth as a result of two centuries of evangelization, of missionaries going out to the uttermost parts of the earth with the gospel, there is still very little growth. Where is the real growth in life? There is hardly any growth and no maturity. How then can we expect to have the harvest? I dare to say that the harvest will not come until the crop is ripe." I spoke this word nearly forty years ago; however, the rapture has not yet happened. Mussolini was killed and buried, and no Christian has seen the antichrist.

We should not approach prophecy in the peculiar way

of prediction. Many writers have done this and every one of them has been put to shame. We must realize that glorification with transfiguration depends upon our growing in life until we reach maturity. If we want to be glorified, we must grow, for glorification comes as the issue of maturity. When we enter into maturity, that maturity will issue in glorification. Glorification will not come as an accident, as an overnight occurrence; it is the result of growth in life. Brothers and sisters, we need to grow. As God's crop we need to ripen until the time of harvest, the time of our transfiguration and glorification.

B. Joint-heirs of Christ

From here on we need to read more verses from Romans 8 and comment on them, including some of the verses which we have covered in the two previous messages. We may begin with verse 17. "And if children, heirs also; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him." Children cannot be legal heirs. In order to become legal heirs the children must grow into sons, and the sons must grow into heirs. When we have reached this stage of growth, we shall be glorified. Although we considered this verse in the last message, I want to approach it now from another angle. We need to understand that the genuine growth of any kind of life depends upon hardship and suffering. Without hardship or suffering it is difficult for any life to grow. In verse 17 we find the matter of suffering. I have already pointed out that the more suffering we undergo, the greater will be our degree of glory. However, the suffering mentioned in verse 17 does not only concern outward glorification; suffering is also for growth in life. The more we suffer, the more we grow and the faster we are matured. If a crop in the field could speak, it might say that it grows not only by the soil, water, fertilizer, air, and sunshine, but that it also grows by suffering. Even the sunshine itself is a source of suffering, for the scorching heat of the sun burns the crop into ripeness. Therefore, if you expect to grow, you need to

tell the Lord, "Lord, I don't reject any kind of suffering. Suffering helps my growth." We should not expect a life that is free of suffering.

Many times I have used the illustration of marriage. As a young brother, you undoubtedly expect to have as your wife a sister who fits your situation exactly. Eventually, however, you discover that your wife is altogether the opposite of your expectations. Do not think that your marriage is designed to cut you into pieces. No, you must say, "Lord, I thank you for such a good wife. My wife does not cut me into pieces, she helps me to grow." No husband likes to hear the word "no" out of his wife's mouth. We all like our wives to say "yes." How sweet it is! However, it seems that most wives are accustomed to saying "no." These "nos" render much growth to us husbands. Young brothers, you should therefore be comforted when your dear wife says "no" to you. Do not be troubled or offended, but say, "Lord, I thank you for all of these 'nos.'" Such suffering helps us to grow and mature. Nevertheless, as Paul says in verse 18, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us." We have covered this aspect of suffering in the previous message.

C. Conformed to the Image of the Firstborn

Verses 26 and 27 say, "And in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness; for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; but He Who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He intercedes for the saints according to God." Here we have the sympathizing, helping, and interceding of the Spirit. For what purpose do we have these things? The purpose is found in verses 28 through 30. Paul begins verse 28 with the words, "And we know," words which connect this verse to the foregoing verses. "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." What is the purpose of God's calling? We find it in verse 29. "Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brothers." Paul does not say that God foreknew and predestined us to go to a happy place or to have a life that will endure forever. These are not our destiny. God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. This destiny was determined before we were even created. Before the creation of the world God had decreed such a destiny for us. Hence, it is a predestiny.

God's firstborn Son is the prototype, and we are the mass production. Christ is the model, mold, and pattern. God has put us all into Him that we may be molded into the image of His firstborn Son. Eventually we all shall be conformed to the mold. Sometimes when the sisters make cakes they put dough into a mold. By being put into the mold the dough assumes the pattern and image of the mold. Furthermore, the dough must also be baked that the cake may bear the pattern of the mold without any change. If the dough could speak, it probably would cry out, "Sister, have mercy on me. Don't apply so much pressure. I can't bear it. Please keep your hands off." However, the sister would reply, "If I keep my hands off, how will you fit into the pattern of the mold? Dear dough, after my molding you must be put into the oven. You may think that pressure is enough suffering for you, but you also need burning. After you have experienced pressure and intense heat you will bear the pattern of the mold permanently." Likewise, Christ, the firstborn Son of God, is the prototype, pattern, and mold, and we are pieces of dough. We all have been put into the mold, and are now being kneaded by the hand of God.

We have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son that He may be the firstborn among many brothers. This is God's purpose. God's purpose is to produce many brothers of His firstborn Son. When Christ

was the only begotten Son, He was unique, but God desired to have many sons who will be the many brothers of His Son. In this way the only begotten Son of God becomes the firstborn among many brothers. He is the firstborn Son, and we are the many sons. What is the purpose of this? The purpose is that we express God in a corporate way. God's kingdom is built up with His many sons, and the Body of Christ is built up with His many brothers. Without the many sons God could never have a kingdom, and without the many brothers Christ could never have a Body. Thus, the many sons of God are for the kingdom of God, and the many brothers of Christ are for the Body of Christ. The kingdom of God is simply the Body life, and this Body life in the church is God's kingdom where He is expressed and where His dominion is exercised on the earth. This is God's purpose.

Therefore verse 30 says, "And whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." In eternity we were predestinated and in time we were called.

Why does God arrange our environment, surroundings, and situations in such a way that we experience suffering? We should not explain this according to our natural concept saying, "The whole earth is filled with sufferings and everyone undergoes hardship. Why should we be an exception?" This is a natural concept, and we should not accept it. We must realize that God's purpose is to make us full-grown sons, not little children. We should not be content to remain children enjoying His cherishing and loving. God intends to make us full sons, completely grown up to be legal heirs that we may inherit all that He is in this universe and that we may express Him and exercise His dominion over the earth. Since God's intention is to bring us into full sonship, we need to grow. There is no doubt that growth comes from inward nourishment, but this inner nourishment needs the coordination of the outward environment. According to our feeling, most of

the outward environment is unpleasant. Thus, the outward environment becomes a suffering as far as we are concerned. I do not say that the outward environment is not good; it is always good, but it may not appear good to your feeling.

Sometimes parents do things to their children which, according to the feeling of the children, are not positive. The children may cry and weep, imagining themselves to be suffering. However, good parents are not deceived by their children's tears. Some young mothers have been cheated by the weeping of their children, changing their policy when they see the tears of their little ones. It is not a gain for children to deceive their parents with their tears. A mother must tell her child, "I don't care about your crying. I know that I am putting you into a very good environment, the one that is best for you. You may say that it is a suffering. But I know how good it is for you."

God deals with us in exactly the same way. He knows in which situation and in which environment we can grow well. He is our Father, and everything is under His arrangement. He can do nothing wrong. Everything He does for us is excellent and wonderful, although to our feeling it may not be good. However, we should not care for our feelings; we should take care of God's arrangement. Was it you who decided to be born in the twentieth century? Was it you who planned into which family you would be born and which parents and brothers and sisters you would have? Was it you who designed your face? You did none of these things. It was God who chose the place of your birth and the design of your face. God selected us, predestinated us, and caused us to be born at the right time and in the right place. He knows what is best for us, and everything is under His control. I say once again that, according to our feelings, our environment may be a suffering, but actually it is a blessing; it is God's sovereign provision. Everything we need for our growth in life has been sovereignly provided by God. Everything is all right. Therefore, when we are experiencing pain and suffering, we must deny them and say. "Satan, you are a liar. This is not a pain or a suffering to me; it is God's arrangement.

This is a blessing that I may grow into full sonship." We all need a proper environment to provide the elements which are required for our growth in life. Nevertheless, when unpleasant things happen to us we may not understand that they come from the hand of our Father for our growth.

1. Inwardly by the Working of the Spirit

Even if we do understand we still say, "How am I going to handle this? Oh, I don't know how to pray." Hence, you begin to groan, and while you are groaning, the Spirit groans in your groaning. When I came to this portion of the Word as a young man I said, "I have never heard the groaning of the Spirit. When did He groan for me?" Eventually, I discovered that in this chapter whatever we do the Spirit also does. When we cry, "Abba, Father," the Spirit cries also. When your spirit witnesses within you, the Spirit also witnesses. Likewise, when you groan the Spirit also groans.

Why do we groan? Because we feel suffering and do not know how to pray. It seems that the Holy Spirit gives you no utterance. You are ignorant, and the Holy Spirit in like manner seems to be ignorant. You do not know how to pray, and the Spirit also appears not to know how to pray. The Spirit prays in your manner. You groan, and He groans also. You groan with hardly any purpose, but the Spirit groans in your groaning with a definite purpose. This purpose cannot be uttered by you, but it can be uttered by the Spirit. However, if He would utter it, you would not understand, for it would be a divine, heavenly language. Since it is difficult for you to understand, the Spirit gives no utterance. He "intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Nevertheless, there is a purpose in it all.

What is the purpose? The Holy Spirit groans in your groaning in order that you may be fully molded and conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son. This is the purpose. When many saints encounter hardship they say, "I just don't know why this happens to me. Why does this happen to me?" I believe that we have all said this or

asked this many times. Even you who have recently been saved perhaps have already spoken in this way. Why do certain things happen to you? Because the groaning Spirit prayed for them. Although you do not know the purpose, He knows, and He prays according to God. Christ is the pattern, and the Spirit prays that everything which happens to you will mold you into this pattern, into the image of the firstborn Son.

Not only does the Holy Spirit groan within us in this way; we also may pray for others in this manner. I have experienced this a number of times in my ministry. I recall the case of a dear brother who loved the Lord greatly. However, he had a very peculiar disposition, and no one could tolerate it. Therefore, we prayed for him saying, "Lord, here is such a dear brother with fine potential. He is such good material. Lord, he loves You. But no one can bear his peculiar disposition. Lord, You take care of this. You know our brother's situation." Because we realized that praying in this way is quite serious we simply said, "Lord, You take care of this. Lord, You know our brother's situation." After a period of time the brother became ill and began to lament, "I don't know why this has happened to me." Immediately he asked his wife to contact the elders and to request that they visit him for fellowship. We went. The first sentence out of his mouth was, "Brothers, you know my situation. I don't know why this has happened to me." Deep within we, like the Holy Spirit, knew why he was suffering; however, we did not dare to say anything. We simply spoke in our brother's manner, "O brother, why has this happened to you?" That was all we could say. When the brother asked us to pray with him, we did not know how to pray. We simply said, "O Lord Jesus, why has this happened to our brother?" Although deep within we did know the reason, all we could say was, "Lord, do Your best." This did not offend him because he also expected the best, and he said, "Amen." He understood our prayer in one way, and we

understood it in another. We were thinking, "Lord, do Your best to deal with him, to subdue him, to burn him." Although we did not dare say this, we had such a purpose within us, a purpose which we could not express at that time. Nevertheless, God who searches the hearts answered that prayer, a prayer that was according to Himself. The brother's difficulty continued and the illness lingered for another period of time. He was very troubled and asked his wife to send for us again. We went and asked along with him, "O brother, why has this illness lasted for such a time?" Once again we were inwardly clear, but did not say anything. When he asked us to pray, we simply prayed, "O Lord, we still ask You to do the best." Praise the Lord that after another period of time this brother's situation changed. Firstly he had some amount of deliverance from his disposition; then he was healed of his illness. Finally he could shout, "Hallelujah! Now I know. Now I know."

Why does the Spirit groan in us with words which cannot be uttered? He groans that we may be molded, conformed to the image of the Son of God. It is much easier to speak about sanctification in life. However, accompanying sanctification is the matter of conformation. We not only need to be sanctified, to be saturated with what God is, but also to be molded. We may be separated from everything common and saturated with God's holy nature, but still lack this conformity. Sanctification probably does not require any suffering. Conformation, on the contrary, needs suffering. In sanctification there is no pattern, only a change in disposition, in nature, but in conformation there is a mold by which we are conformed to the image of God's Son. Along with this mold is the pressure and the molding and the mixing with water and the burning with fire. If the dough, the fine white flour, could speak, it would say, "What a suffering this is to me. You mix me with other things, you press me, and you even put me in an oven to burn me. The entire process of cooking is a suffering." That is correct. Without suffering we cannot be molded into the pattern.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

HEIRS OF GLORY

(4)

2. Outwardly by the Working Together of All Things

We cannot avoid the process mentioned in the previous message, for it is the purpose of the Holy Spirit's intercession with groanings. God the Father knows the purpose of the Spirit's groaning and thus He causes all things to work together (v. 28). Following verses 26 and 27 which speak of the Spirit's intercession, we have verse 28 which 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." The Holy Spirit groans within us, interceding for us, and God the Father answers this intercession by causing all things to work together for good. In Greek the word translated "all things" means all matters, all persons, all things, all in all. God the Father is sovereign and He arranges everything. He knows how many hairs you need (Matt. 10:30) and how many children you should have. Do not complain about your children, for God will not give you more or less than you need. He is sovereign. He knows. He knows whether you need obedient children or naughty children. He knows whether you need boys or girls. Again and again I say that He knows. He causes all things, all matters, and all persons to work together for your good. It seems that God sacrifices everyone for you. To the wife her husband is a sacrifice, and to the husband his wife is a sacrifice. To the children the parents are a sacrifice, and to the parents the children are a sacrifice. Who can do such a work? Only God. I have told the Lord, "Lord, why

do You sacrifice everyone just for me?" I have the inward sensation that all the brothers with whom I coordinate and even all the churches are sacrifices for me. Nevertheless, when you suffer, I suffer more. When the wife suffers loss, the husband suffers more, and when the children suffer, the parents suffer more. Praise the Lord that God causes all things, all matters, and all persons to work together for good to those who love Him and who have been called by Him to the end that He may fulfill His purpose.

God has determined our destiny beforehand, and this destiny can never be fulfilled without the divine arrangement which causes all things to work together for us. Our destiny is to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God. We are not yet fully in the image of the firstborn Son of God, but God the Father is planning, molding, and performing by causing all things to work together for good. Praise the Lord! While we are growing, He is molding.

We all should be comforted. If you have a nice wife, praise the Lord for your nice wife. If you have a difficult wife, praise the Lord even more for your difficult wife. Whether you have a nice wife or a difficult wife, a nice husband or a difficult husband, obedient children or naughty children--whatever you have you should be comforted. You should tell the Lord, "Lord, I can make and I have made many mistakes, but You can never be mistaken. Even my mistakes are in Your hands. If You do not allow me to make a mistake, You just move Your little finger and change the situation and I will not make one. Everything is in Your hands." Therefore, we all must be comforted.

However, do not be so spiritual that you go to an extreme and pray the Father to give you suffering. Do not pray for sufferings. Instead you should pray, "Father, deliver me from temptation. Deliver me from all manner of sufferings. Keep me away from every kind of disturbance." Although you pray in this way, some hardships and afflictions will visit you. When they come, do not complain and do not be troubled, but say, "Father, thank You for this.

Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, Father, not my will but Thine be done." This is the proper attitude. Never pray that sufferings come, but pray the Father to keep sufferings away from you. However, when the sufferings come, do not be disappointed; accept them and continue to pray, "Father, if possible take this away. Keep me in Your presence, away from every trouble and distraction." On one hand we must pray in this way; on the other hand we must be happy with all that the Father gives us, because we know that everything is in His hands and comes our way that we may be conformed to the image of His firstborn Son. This conformation is the preparation for our glorification.

Let us now proceed to verse 31. "What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" We should not take this word according to our natural concept. God is not for us in our way, but in His.

Verse 32 says, "He Who did not spare His own Son. but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The word "all" in this verse is also the Greek word panta, which means all things, matters, and persons. All things, matters, and persons have been freely given to us. We must believe that everything works together for good. Even our enemies are for our good.

"Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God Who justifies" (v. 33). Only God is qualified to place a charge against us, but He justifies us.

"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus Who died, but rather Who was raised, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also intercedes for us." In verse 10 we see clearly that Christ is in us, but here in verse 34 we are told that Christ is at the right hand of God. Thus, in one chapter we are told that Christ is in two places--in us and at the right hand of God. Where is Christ? Because He is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17), He is omnipresent. He is both in heaven and on earth, both at the right hand of God and in our spirit. According to verse 26 the Spirit intercedes

within us, and according to verse 34 Christ intercedes for us at the right hand of God. Do we have two intercessors--one within us and the other at the right hand of God? No, these two are one. This is similar to electricity. We have electricity in our homes as well as in the power plant; nevertheless there is just one electricity. Likewise, Christ intercedes for us both at the right hand of God and from within our spirit.

I would now like to call your attention to the fact that in verse 30 all of the verbs are in past tense. Let us read this verse once again. "And whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Since glorification will occur in the future, why does Paul say "glorified" and not "He will glorify"? Although glorification has not yet occurred, Paul uses the past tense. What does this mean? Once again we see that if we only read the Bible according to the black and white letters we will get into difficulty. I ask you, has glorification been accomplished? Why does the Apostle Paul here say "glorified"? Have you been glorified? The Bible says that we have been glorified already. Everything mentioned in verse 30 is an accomplished fact--predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. There is no problem with saying "predestinated," because that was an action performed in the past. We may also say "called"; however, many people have not yet been called and we must preach the gospel to them that they may be called. Furthermore, although we have been justified, many new converts will be justified. Moreover, none of us, including Paul himself, has been glorified. Nevertheless, Paul put everything in the past tense.

We must remember that we are subject to time. One great teacher has said that there is no clock in heaven because God is the God of eternity. He is the eternal God; with Him there is no time. When were you glorified? You were predestinated, called, justified, and glorified in eternity past. In God's eyes and according to His concept everything has been accomplished. Tell me, if glorification

has not been accomplished, how could the Apostle John have seen the New Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago? He was not dreaming--he actually saw it (Rev. 21:2). Have you ever noticed that nearly all the verbs used in the book of Revelation, a book filled with prophecies of future events, are in the past tense, indicating that everything has been accomplished? Why do I mention this? Because this explains why verse 31 follows verse 30. Our predestination has been secured, and we do not need an insurance company. Our justification and glorification are secured and insured in the eternal God Himself. There is no insurance company on earth that can compare with Him. He Himself is the greatest insurance company. Our salvation, justification, and glorification are insured because He has accomplished everything. According to our feeling, glorification will happen in the future, but according to God's concept it has occurred already. With God everything is timeless. Our predestination, calling, justification, and glorification are eternal matters, not matters of time. Thus, we are insured.

D. Glorification

1. The Revelation of the Sons of God in the Freedom of Glory

We come now to the matter of glorification and continue with verse 19. "For the anxious watching of the creation eagerly expects the revelation of the sons of God." The word "revelation," a more accurate rendering of the Greek word used in this verse, is a better word than manifestation. Revelation means to open the veil. Something has been veiled, covered by a veil. One day the veil will be removed, and the hidden things will be revealed. Although we are the sons of God, we are veiled, not yet revealed. When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was the Son of God but He was veiled by His human flesh. One day on the mountain He was unveiled and revealed (Matt. 17:1-2). It is the same with us. Although we are

sons of God, yet we are under a veil. One day this veil will be removed--that will be our glorification. All the sons of God will come out from under the veil and be revealed. Then the whole universe will behold the sons of God.

The creation is eagerly expecting and anxiously watching to see this revelation of the sons of God, because the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but because of Him Who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (vv. 20-21). As we have seen, the entire creation is under vanity, bondage, and the slavery of corruption. Creation's only hope is to be freed from this slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God when the sons of God are revealed. Although the entire creation is presently held in a condition of vanity and corruption, God will bring in a kingdom to replace this present condition. The present condition is a condition of vanity and slavery of corruption; the coming kingdom will be a kingdom of the glory of God, a kingdom composed primarily of revealed sons of God. At the time of the revelation of this kingdom the whole creation will be liberated. The creation is eagerly expecting and anxiously watching for this kingdom to come. Thus, "the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now" (v. 22). The universe is groaning and travailing in birth awaiting the revelation of the sons of God. Furthermore, we ourselves, "having the firstfruit of the Spirit," also groan as we expect sonship, the redemption of our body (v. 23).

In verse 24 Paul says that "we have been saved in hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what anyone sees, why does he also hope?" The hope mentioned in this verse is the hope of glory. Since none of us has ever seen this hope, it is a hope complete and genuine. Some hope is partial because we have seen a certain percentage of it. However the hope of glory is a whole hope, for we have not seen any part of it. Hence, we are waiting for that hope, "eagerly expecting it through endurance" (v. 25).

2. The Sharing of God's Glory

(Chapter 5:2 says, that we "boast in hope of the glory of God," and 9:23 says that we are "vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory." This glory will be in the revelation of the coming kingdom in which we, as revealed sons of God, shall participate. God has called us into this glory (1 Thes. 2:12; 2 Thes. 2:14; 1 Pet. 5:10). Christ Himself is the hope of this glory (Col. 1:27) which we are expecting and for which we are waiting. Our hope is none other than Christ Himself who will be revealed as our glory. We now boast and rejoice in this hope of glory. We shall share this glory at the day of our glorification. When Christ appears, we shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4). This is our destiny.

III. HEIRS INSEPARABLE FROM GOD'S LOVE

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Your sake we are being put to death all day long, we have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter" (vv. 35-36). Although this certainly speaks of suffering, the following verses declare, "But in all these things we more than conquer through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 37-39). We are not defeated; we more than conquer because God loves us. Why does God care so much for us and do so many things for us? Simply because we are His beloved. No one can separate us from His love. Once He loves us, He loves us forever with an eternal love. Nothing can separate us from Him. Because He loves us and because we are His beloved, sooner or later we all shall be sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified.

Paul was wise and very deep. As I have pointed out

previously, he composed three of the sections in Romans according to three of the attributes of God--His righteousness, holiness, and glory. Eventually, however, Paul guides us into the love of God. Ultimately, our security is not only God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, but also His love. What is God's love? Love is the heart of God. God's love issues out of His heart. Righteousness is the way of God, holiness is the nature of God, glory is the expression of God, and love is the heart of God. After speaking of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, Paul brings us into God's heart of love. Why has God demonstrated His righteousness? Because man was fallen. Man was wrong with God and needed His righteousness. Why must God exercise His holiness? Because man is common. God must sanctify all of His common, chosen ones. Why must God give us His glory? Because all His chosen ones are low, mean, and vile. Hence, He must exercise His glory to transfigure us. But what was in God's heart originally? Love. Before God exercised His righteousness, holiness, and glory He loved us. Love was the fountain, love was the root, and love was the source of it all. God loved us before He predestinated us, He loved us before He called us, He loved us before He justified us, and He loved us before He glorified us. Before everything and anything else He loved us. Our salvation originated with the love of God. Love is the source of all that God does for us, and this love is His heart. Love was the source of God's eternal salvation which includes redemption, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. Salvation began with God's heart of love.

Therefore, after God's salvation has been fully accomplished, His love remains our security. The love of God is not only the source of our salvation, it is the security of our salvation. Many Christians talk about eternal security. Eternal security is the love of God. God cannot be wrong in any of His attributes. Our security is His love. In verse 31 Paul asks, "What shall we then say to these things?" What shall we say about predestination,

calling, justification, and glorification? We have nothing to say except, "Hallelujah!" "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Now we can understand this word in a deeper way. God is for us because from eternity His heart loved us. Thus, His love is our security.

Paul touched upon this love in 5:8 when he said that "God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This actually was an introduction to and a recommendation of the love of God. When we believed in Jesus the Holy Spirit poured out God's love into our hearts (5:5). Although Paul touched upon this matter of love in Romans 5, he did not cover it adequately. He waited until he had compassed the vast scope of God's predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. After finishing the entire record he reached the appropriate time and place to present us a full revelation of the love of God. Paul was persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God because he knew that this love does not derive from nor depend upon us, but upon God Himself. This love was not initiated by us; it was initiated by God in eternity. Because of this Paul could say that we conquer in all things. Paul was convinced that nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This phrase "in Christ Jesus" is very significant. Why did Paul say this? Because he knew that there would be a problem if the love of God had been shown apart from Christ Jesus. Apart from Christ Jesus even a little sin such as losing our temper would separate us from the love of God. However, the love of God is not merely the love of God in itself, but the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Since the love of God is in Christ Jesus everything is insured, and we are assured that nothing can separate us from it. Are you insured? Paul was. I use the word insured; Paul uses the word "persuaded" saying, "I am persuaded." Paul was convinced that in all things "we more than conquer through Him Who loved us." This does not mean that we in ourselves are able to overcome; it means that God is love and that Christ is victor. God loves

us and Christ has accomplished everything for us. Since God's love is eternal, His love in Christ Jesus is our security. We are not only under God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, but we are in His heart of love. Now we can understand 2 Corinthians 13:14 which says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." The love of God is the source. Therefore, the Apostle Paul has brought us through the righteousness of God, the holiness of God, and the glory of God into the heart of the God of love. This is where we are. Hallelujah! This is our eternal insurance policy. Now you know how to answer people when they ask you if you have insurance. You can say, "I have insurance. My insurance policy is Romans 8:31-39. I am insured by the love in God's heart." We are insured by God's eternal love in Christ Jesus.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

GOD'S SELECTION, OUR DESTINY

(1)

We have covered Romans 1 through 8. We may consider chapters nine through eleven as a parenthesis and chapter twelve as a continuation of chapter eight. In the sense of the life process or life practice it is correct to say this; however, I do not think that in Paul's concept these chapters were parenthetical, for in them are some elements which are a continuation between chapters one through eight and twelve through sixteen. Therefore, these three chapters, in a sense, are a parenthesis, but, in another sense, they form a continuation between Romans 8 and 12.

I. OF GOD WHO CALLS

God's selection is our destiny. Our eternal destiny has been fully established by God's selection. This selection and destiny are of the very God who calls, not of those who work. Our selection is absolutely of God who calls. In order to grasp this point we need to read 9:1-13.

"In Christ I speak the truth, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit." This verse proves that the conscience is a part of the human spirit. We have seen that the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit (8:16). However, in this verse we are told that our conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, since the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit and our conscience witnesses with the Holy Spirit, our conscience must be part of our spirit.

Paul's conscience testified that he had great grief and unceasing pain in his heart (v. 2). This was the pain Paul suffered for his kinsmen that they might be saved.

"For I was praying that I myself would be a curse, separated from Christ for my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (v. 3). This is a serious prayer. Paul prayed in such an earnest way because of his desire for Israel to be saved. To pray that Israel be saved was necessary, but to pray that he be a curse was too extreme. Regardless of how spiritual we may be and how much in our spirit we may be, it is still possible for us to utter a prayer in a way that is not of the Lord. When Paul was praying that he might be a curse, separated from Christ, I do not believe that it was of the Lord. Do you believe that the Lord compelled Paul to pray that he become a curse, separated from Christ? I do not think that the Lord required this of him. Then what motivated him to pray this way? Paul's intense desire. He prayed that way because of his great love for his kinsmen.

Many times we have an intense desire for a certain thing and that desire causes us to utter a prayer in an extreme way. A brother may pray for his wife who is seriously ill, praying desperately in every way, even with fasting. The Lord may answer his prayer, but not according to his way. Such was the case with Paul's prayer in verse 3. He prayed with a great desire that God would put him aside and make him a curse that his brothers might be saved. God answered his prayer, but not in his way.

"Who are Israelites, whose are the sonship, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises" (v. 4). Sonship means the right of inheritance. What is the glory mentioned in this verse? The glory of God was manifested at least twice to the people of Israel: in the wilderness when the tabernacle was erected (Exo. 40:34) and in Jerusalem when the temple was built and dedicated (2 Chron. 5:13-14). On both occasions the Israelites saw the glory of God. The covenants are those God made with Abraham (Gen. 17:2; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:16-17) and with the children of Israel at Sinai (Exo. 24:7; Deut. 5:2) and at Moab (Deut. 29:1, 14). These covenants are treasured by the Israelites (Eph.

2:12). The giving of the law refers to the law (Deut. 4:1.3; Psa. 147:19), which is precious to the Israelites. The service mentioned in this verse is undoubtedly the priestly or Levitical service, for all the service related to the tabernacle was under the hand of the priests and Levites. The promises are those God gave to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David (Rom. 15:8; Acts 13:32).

Verse 5 says, "Whose are the fathers. and out of whom according to flesh is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." The fathers were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others. Also, according to His human nature, Christ came out of the children of Israel. Paul says that Christ is "over all, God blessed forever." When Paul came to this point in his writing, he was so filled with the glorious Person of Christ that he poured out what was in his heart--"Christ is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." We all have to be deeply impressed with and fully realize and appreciate the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is the very God who is over all and blessed forever. Though He came out of the Jewish race in flesh, He is the very infinite God. Thus, Isaiah 9:6 says, "Unto us a child is born... and his name shall be called... The mighty God." We praise Him for His deity and we worship Him as the very God forever.

"Not, however, as though the word of God has come to naught. For not all are Israel who are out of Israel" (v. 6). In verse 3, Paul prayed out of his desire for his kinsmen to be saved. As he came to verse 6 he spoke of God's economy. In verse 3 he uttered a prayer out of his desperation, even willing to be "a curse, separated from Christ." In verse 6 he said, "Not all are Israel who are out of Israel." God's economy is that not all who are out of Israel, that is, all who are born of Israel, are the true Israel. All Jews have been born of Israel, but not all of them have been selected by God. All of them are of the Jewish religion, but not all are saved even though outwardly they have all the good things, including Christ, promised by God in His Holy Word.

"Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are

they all children, but, In Isaac shall your seed be called" (v. 7). In verses 6 and 7 Paul is in the light of God's economy and sees things clearly. Only that part of Abraham's seed which is in Isaac is called. Besides Isaac, Abraham had another son named Ishmael. Though Ishmael was born of Abraham, neither he nor his descendants, the Arabs, have been selected by God. They are the children of the flesh and cannot be reckoned as the children of God. Only Isaac and a part of his descendants are selected by God and reckoned as the children of God.

Verse 8 continues, "That is, Those who are the children of the flesh are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as the seed." According to God's economy, it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise who are reckoned as the seed. Not all the seed of Abraham are the children of God. The natural birth is inadequate to make them children of God; they need to be born again (John 3:7). The phrase "children of the promise" denotes the second birth, for it is only by the second birth that they can be the children of the promise and thus be reckoned as the seed.

"For this is the word of promise, About this time next year I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only so, but Rebecca also having conceived of one, Isaac our father, the children not yet being born, nor having done anything good or bad, (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works, but of Him Who calls,) it was said to her, The greater shall serve the less; as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (vv 9-13). These verses unveil to us the fact that God's selection is not according to man's work, but absolutely according to His choice. We are told that of the one man Isaac Rebecca conceived and brought forth two sons, Esau and Jacob. Before the children were born and before they had done either good or bad, God told Rebecca that the greater, who was Esau, would serve the lesser, who was Jacob. This proves that God's selection depends upon His likes and dislikes.

Thus, (God said, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Mal. 1:2-3). This word is very strong. We think that God only loves and that He never hates, but here it says that God hated. "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Only those who are loved and selected by God are reckoned as the seed. God's selection depends upon Himself who calls according to His likes; it does not depend upon man's works. Though God said, "in Isaac shall your seed be called" (Gen. 21:12), yet only one of Isaac's two sons was selected by God. This reveals the fact that God's selection is also not according to man's birth. God does not select people according to anything other than Himself.

II. OF GOD'S MERCY

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (v. 15). When God says, "I will," we should not argue with Him. We are not God and we do not have His sovereignty. We may reason with Him, asking, "Why do you love Jacob and hate Esau?" God may reply, "Don't argue with Me. I will to do it. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Everything depends on My will."

What is the difference between mercy and compassion? It is difficult to distinguish. Although compassion is very close to mercy, I would say that compassion is deeper, finer and richer than mercy. Putting compassion together with mercy in this verse strengthens the fact that God is merciful.

"So then, it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God, the One Who shows mercy" (v. 16). Mercy goes farther than grace. If when I am in a good condition and my standing matches yours you give me a gift, that is grace. However, when I am in a poor condition and my standing is far removed from yours and you give me something, that is mercy. If I come to you as your dear friend and you give me a Bible as a gift, that is grace.

However, if I am a poor unclean beggar, unable to do anything for myself and you give me ten dollars, that is not grace, it is mercy. Thus, mercy reaches farther than grace. Grace only extends to a situation that corresponds to it, but mercy goes much farther, reaching into a situation that is poor and unworthy of grace. According to our natural condition, we were far removed from God, totally unworthy of His grace. We were only eligible to receive His mercy. Thus, 9:15 does not say, "I will have grace on whom I will have grace." No, it says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." You may think that there was nothing good about Jacob, that he was altogether a subtle, crafty person, and that Esau was much better than he. You are right. That is how God has shown His mercy. Jacob was pitiful, but God had mercy on him. God's mercy does not depend upon man's good condition; rather it is shown in man's pitiful condition. It reaches beyond His grace.

It is God's mercy that has reached all of us. None of us was in a condition that corresponded to His grace. We were so poor and so pitiful that there was the need for God's mercy to bridge the gap between us and God. It was God's mercy that brought us into His grace. How we need to realize this and worship God for His mercy! Even now, after being saved and having participated in the riches of His life, we still, in some ways, are in a condition that needs God's mercy to bridge the gap. This is the reason that Hebrews 4:16 says that firstly we need to obtain mercy and then we can find grace for timely help. Oh, how much we need His mercy! We must treasure God's mercy as much as we appreciate His grace. It is always God's mercy that qualifies us to participate in His grace.

So then "it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God, the One Who shows mercy." Our concept is that the one who wills will get what he wills to get and that the one who runs will gain what he runs after. If this were the case, then God's selection would be according to our effort and labor. But it is not so. It is altogether of God who shows mercy. We do not need to

will or to run, for God has mercy on us. If we do know God's mercy, we will not put our trust in our effort; neither will we be disappointed by our failure. The hope for our wretched condition is God's mercy.

"For the scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very thing I have raised you up, that I might show forth My power in you and that My name should be proclaimed in all the earth (v. 17). In Pharaoh God showed forth His power not His mercy, that His name might be proclaimed in all the earth. This shows that even God's enemies are useful to Him in fulfilling His purpose. "So then," verse 18 says, "He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills." What should we say with regard to this? We should say nothing, but worship God's way. Everything depends upon what He wills to do. He is God!

III. OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Paul continues, "You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His purpose? But, O man, who are you that replies against God? We all have to realize who we are. We are God's creatures, and He is our Creator. As His creatures we should not say anything to Him, the Creator. So, Paul asks, "Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why did you make me thus? Or has not the potter authority over the clay, out of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor? (vv. 19-21). God is the potter, and we are pieces of clay. As the potter, God has authority over the clay. If He wills, He can make one vessel to honor and another vessel to dishonor It does not depend on our choice--it depends on His sovereignty.

Romans 9:21 discloses God's purpose in creating man. This verse is unique in its revelation of God's purpose in the creation of man. Without this verse it would be difficult for us to realize that God's purpose in creating man was to make him His vessel to contain Him. We all must thoroughly understand that we are God's containers and that God is our content. Second Corinthians 4:7 says that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." We are

earthen vessels, and God is the treasure and the content. God has sovereignly created us to be His containers according to His predestination.

Second Timothy 2:20-21 conveys the same thought, saying that we are vessels unto honor. So, we need to purge ourselves from dishonorable things that we may be sanctified and suitable for the Lord's use. However, being vessels unto honor is not the result of our choice; it originates with God's sovereignty. It is of God's sovereignty that He make His glory known by creating vessels of mercy to contain Himself. This is a deep word. God's sovereignty is the basis of His selection. His selection depends upon His sovereignty.

"What if God, willing to show forth His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" (v. 22). What should we say about this? We have nothing to say. He is the potter and He has the authority. Human beings are simply clay.

"And what if He should make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has also called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the nations?" (vv. 23-24). All depends upon God's authority. God has the authority to make us, whom He has selected and called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles, vessels of mercy to contain Him, that the riches of His glory may be made known, that is, manifested. According to His sovereign authority, He before prepared us unto this glory. We were predestinated by His sovereignty to be His containers, vessels of honor to express what He is in glory. That is not only a matter of His mercy, but also of His sovereignty.

God's selection has a goal--to have many vessels to contain God and to express Him eternally. So many of us have missed the mark of God's goal, thinking that it was simply to show His love in saving us. Yes, He loves us.

However His love is not only shown to save us, but to make us His vessels. God created us in such a way that we are able to take Him into us and contain Him as our life and life supply, to the end that we be one with Him to express what He is and that He be glorified in us and with us. This is the eternal goal of God's selection. It is also our eternal destiny.

This portion of the Word also unfolds the climax of our usefulness to God, which is not to be used by Him as servants, priests, and kings, but as vessels to contain Him and express Him. If we are to be used as God's vessels, surely He has to be one with us. We are His container and His expression; He is our content and our life. He lives in us that we may live by Him. He and we, we and He, eventually will be one both in life and in nature. This is the goal of His selection, according to His sovereignty. It is also our destiny according to His selection, a destiny which will be fully revealed in the New Jerusalem.

Verses 25 and 26 are quotations from Hosea which confirm the fact that some Gentiles have been selected and called by God to be His people.

Verses 27 through 29 are quotations from Isaiah which confirm the fact that not all Israel was selected, but that only a remnant of them, a seed kept by the Lord, was saved.

IV. BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

God's selection is also by the righteousness of faith. What shall we say then'? That the nations who did not pursue righteousness have attained righteousness, but righteousness which is out of faith" (v. 30). The nations, meaning the Gentiles, have obtained righteousness, although they did not pursue it. This righteousness is not the of the law, but that which is out of faith. The nations have shared in God's selection by the righteousness of God which is out of faith.

"But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because it was not out of faith,

but as it were out of works; they stumbled at the Stone of stumbling, as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a Stone of stumbling, a Rock of offense, and he who believes on Him shall not be put to shame" (vv. 31-33). We can never arrive at righteousness by pursuing the law of righteousness. The Israelites sought to establish their own righteousness, but stumbled at the "Stone of stumbling," which is Christ, the "Rock of offense." Nevertheless, "he who believes on Him shall not be put to shame."

In this connection we also need to read the first three verses of chapter ten. "Brothers, the delight of my heart and my supplication to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to full knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, did not submit to the righteousness of God." It is possible to be exceedingly zealous for God while lacking the proper knowledge of His way. The Jews have missed and continue to miss the mark of God's selection because they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, have attempted to establish their own righteousness by trying to keep the law and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, which is Christ Himself. Hence, they have missed God's salvation. Any attempt to keep the law or to do good to please God, being man's efforts to establish his own righteousness, will cause people to miss the way of God's salvation.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

GOD'S SELECTION, OUR DESTINY

(2)

V. THROUGH CHRIST

A. Christ, the End of the Law

Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes." Christ is the end of the law. This means that He has completed and terminated the law. He came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17). By fulfilling the law He ended and terminated the law. The result of Christ's terminating the law is that God's righteousness is given to everyone who believes in Christ. When He died on the cross, Christ completed and terminated the law. The law ended in Him. Since the law was terminated on the cross of Christ, we should be under it no longer. We may simply receive God's righteousness by believing in Christ.

The Jews treasured the law and tried to keep it that they might establish their own righteousness before God. They did not see that the law had been fully completed and terminated by Christ. If they had seen this, they would have stopped their attempts to keep the law. They would never again have tried to establish their own righteousness before God, but would have taken Christ as their righteousness.

The principle is the same with a great many Christians today. After being saved, they make up their minds to do good to please God. As a result, they spontaneously make regulations for themselves, regulations which may be considered as their self-made laws, and they endeavor to fulfill them in order that they may be pleasing to God. Like the Jews, they do not see that Christ is the end, the

termination of all regulations and that they should take Him as their life that they may live righteously before God. Furthermore, they need to see that the genuine righteousness before God is Christ, the One who has terminated the law that He might be the living righteousness to everyone who believes in Him. Romans 10 unfolds so much of Christ that we may know how to participate in and enjoy Him as our real and living righteousness before God.

B. Christ, Incarnated and Resurrected

We need to read verses 5 through 7. "For Moses writes that the man who does the righteousness which is out of the law shall live in it. But the righteousness which is out of faith speaks in this way, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down. Or, Who will descend into the abyss? That is, to bring Christ up from among the dead." Paul's writing is very deep. Apparently these verses do not mention the incarnation and resurrection of Christ; actually both are included in this portion. Although Paul did not use the words incarnation and resurrection, he nevertheless had both of them in mind when he wrote this part of Romans. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12 saying, "Do not say in your hearts, Who will ascend into heaven?" He then points out that this means "to bring Christ down" and that this refers to Christ's incarnation, for Christ came down from the heavens in His incarnation. Furthermore, Paul says that we should not ask, "Who will descend into the abyss?" To "descend into the abyss" means "to bring Christ up from among the dead," and this refers to Christ's resurrection. To descend into the abyss means to die and to enter into hades. When Christ died He descended into the abyss, and in resurrection He was brought up from

among the dead, that is, out of the abyss. Christ is the One who has passed through incarnation and resurrection. Therefore, we may say that He is the "processed" Christ, Christ incarnated and resurrected.

Christ has passed through a long process from incarnation through resurrection. In this process He accomplished everything that is required by God's righteousness, holiness, and glory and all that is needed to enable us to partake of Him. He was God incarnated to be a man, and, as a man, He was transfigured through resurrection into the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Now in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit He is so available to us that we may receive Him and take Him in at any time and in any place.

We need to say a word about the "abyss" mentioned in verse 7. In Greek the word rendered as "abyss" is abyssos. This word is used in Luke 8:31 (translated "deep" in KJV) referring to the dwelling place of the demons. It also occurs in Revelation 9:1, 2, 11 (always translated "bottomless pit" by KJV in Revelation) denoting the place out of which the "locusts," whose king is Apollyon, will come; in Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 signifying the place out of which the beast which is the antichrist will ascend; and in Revelation 20:1, 3 specifying the place into which Satan will be cast and imprisoned during the millennium. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses this word for the word "deep" in Genesis 1:2. Here in Romans 10:7 it points to the place Christ visited after His death and before His resurrection, which place, according to Acts 2:24, 27, is hades. For Acts 2:24, 27 reveals that Christ went into hades after He died and rose from that place in His resurrection. So, according to biblical usage, the word abyss always refers to the region of death and of Satan's power of darkness into which Christ after His death descended as into the lower parts of the earth (Eph. 4:9), which He conquered, and from which He ascended in His resurrection.

C. Christ, Near to You

Please pay attention to what Paul says in verse 8. "But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart: that is, the word of the faith which we preach." The resurrected Christ as the living Word is near us, in our mouth and in our heart. In this verse Paul suddenly uses the term "the Word" interchangeably for Christ, indicating thereby that this Word undoubtedly is Christ Himself. Christ in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit is the living Word. This corresponds to the New Testament revelation that the Word is the Spirit. If you read Ephesians 6:18 in the Greek, you will discover that the Spirit is the Word. Hence, Christ in His resurrection is both the Spirit and the Word. He is the Spirit for us to touch and He is the Word for us to understand. We may receive Him as both the Spirit and the Word. The resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit is the living Word that is so near to us. He is in our mouth and in our heart. Our mouth is for calling, and our heart is for believing. Thus, we can call upon Him with our mouth and believe in Him with our heart. When we call on Him we are saved; when we believe in Him we are justified.

After being processed through incarnation and resurrection, Christ today is both the Lord sitting on the throne of God in heaven and the life-giving Spirit moving on the earth. Thus, He is near and available to us. He is so near that He is even in our mouth and in our heart. No one can be nearer than this. He is so available that whoever believes in Him with his heart and calls on Him with his mouth will partake of Him. He has accomplished everything and He has passed through every process. He is now moving on earth, ready for and available to anyone who will receive Him.

D. Christ, Believed In and Called Upon

We need to read verses 9 through 13. "That if you confess with your mouth, Lord Jesus, and believe in your

heart that God has raised Him from among the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth man confesses unto salvation. For the scripture says, All who believe on Him shall not be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him. For, Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Paul says that with the heart "man believes unto righteousness." "Unto" is an equivalent of a Greek preposition which, in many instances, means "resulting in." Therefore the result of believing with the heart is righteousness, while the result of confessing with the mouth is salvation. If we want to be justified, that is, to have the righteousness of God, we must believe in the Lord Jesus. If we want to be saved, we need to confess the Lord Jesus, that is to call upon Him.

In Romans 9:21, 23 we are told that under God's selection we, the called ones, have been made vessels of mercy unto honor and glory. However, we still must realize that such vessels by themselves are empty. Vessels need content. Although Romans 9 tells us that we are vessels, it does not give us the way to be filled. It is wonderful to be a vessel of mercy unto honor and glory, but it is pitiful to be empty. We need to be filled. The way to be filled is found in Romans 10. Every vessel has a mouth, an opening. If it has no mouth, it is not a vessel. Instruments such as hammers, knives, and axes have no mouths. However, we are vessels, and as vessels we have an opening--our mouth. Do you know why you have a mouth? You were made with a mouth that you might be filled with the riches of Christ. Our mouth was made for calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. The Lord is so rich! He is rich to all who call upon Him. There is a verse in the Psalms which says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (81:10). As empty vessels with a mouth we should open our mouth wide that we may be filled with the riches of the Lord.

In order to be saved we need to call upon the name of the Lord. However, calling upon His name is not only for

salvation; it is also the way in which we receive the riches of Christ. The Lord is rich to all who call upon Him. When we call upon Him, we participate in and enjoy His riches. Do you want to participate in and enjoy the riches of Christ? If you do, do not be silent; open your mouth and call upon Him. In recent years the Lord has revealed very much to us regarding this matter of calling on His name. Even as late as ten years ago we knew little about this. We thank the Lord that He has made us clear. We appreciate Romans 10, especially verse 12. "For there is no difference between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him." Verse 13 has been used a great deal in gospel preaching. But we also must use it with verse 12, not for gospel preaching, but for filling up all the empty vessels with the riches of the Godhead. If you will open your mouth wide and call upon the Lord, the riches of divinity will be your portion. Now, we have the way to fill the empty vessels. We have a mouth to call on Him that we may be filled with Him, and we have a heart to believe in Him and to retain Him.

The Bible reveals clearly that calling on the Lord is the way to partake of and enjoy the Lord. Deuteronomy 4:7 (ASV) says that the Lord is "nigh unto us whenever we call upon him." Psalm 145:18 says, "the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him." Psalm 18:6 and 118:5 say that David called upon the Lord in his distress. In Psalm 50:15 the Lord asks us to call upon Him in the day of trouble, and in Psalm 86:7 David did it accordingly. Psalm 81:7 says that the children of Israel did the same thing (Exo. 2:23) and that the Lord told them, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (v. 10). Psalm 86:5 says that the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and is plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him. Psalm 116:3-4 says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord." Verse 13 of the same Psalm says, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." In order to take the cup of salvation, that is, to

participate and enjoy the Lord's salvation, we need to call upon the name of the Lord. Isaiah 12:2-6 tells us that the Lord is our salvation, our strength, and our song, and that we can draw water out of the wells of His salvation with joy. The way to draw water out of the wells of the Lord's salvation, that is, to enjoy the Lord as our salvation, is to praise Him, to call upon His name, to sing unto Him, and even to cry out and shout. In Isaiah 55:1-6 we find God's wonderful calling to the people. He calls the thirsty ones to come to the waters, to enjoy the riches of the Lord's provision, such as wine, milk, and good food, and to delight themselves in fatness. The way to do this is to seek the Lord and to "call upon him while he is near." Isaiah 64:7 shows us that by calling upon the Lord we can stir up ourselves to take hold of Him.

Lamentations 3:55-57 makes it clear that when we call upon the Lord He draws near to us and that our calling upon Him is our breathing, our cry. By this we can realize that to call upon the Lord is not only to cry to Him, but also to experience a spiritual breathing (Exo. 2:23) in which we breathe out all that is within us, whether it be agony, pain, pressure, etc. Jeremiah did this when he called upon the Lord out of the low dungeon, that is, out of the lowest pit. Whenever we are in a spiritual dungeon or pit, under a certain suppression, we can call on the Lord, breathing out the heaviness within us, and thus be delivered from the lowest pit. This kind of calling on the Lord not only enables us to breathe out the negative things from within us, but also to breathe in the Lord Himself with all His riches as our strength, enjoyment, comfort, and rest. In this way we partake of the riches of the Lord. Hence, here in Romans 10:12 Paul tells us that "the Lord is rich to all who call upon Him." Today in resurrection the Lord is ready and available for our participation in Him and He is rich for our enjoyment of Him. We simply need to call on Him all the time. Calling on Him, we partake of and enjoy all His riches.

Calling on the Lord is different from merely praying to Him. The Greek word for "call on" or "call upon" means to

invoke a person, to call a person by name: Although it is possible to pray to the Lord silently, calling on the Lord requires that we cry out to Him or address Him audibly. The Hebrew word for "call" in Genesis 4:26 firstly means to "call out to" or to "cry unto." Isaiah 12:4 and 6 show that to call upon the Lord's name is to "cry out and shout." Lamentations 3:55 and 56 reveal the same thing--to call upon the Lord's name is to "cry" to the Lord. Hence, David said, "I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God" (2 Sam. 22:7). To call upon the Lord is to cry to Him.

According to the Scripture record, this matter of calling on the name of the Lord began with the third generation of mankind. From the time of Enos "men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). Then Abraham (Gen. 12:8), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), Job (Job 12:4), Moses (Deut. 4:7), Jabez (1 Chron. 4:10), Samson (Judg. 16:28), Samuel (1 Sam. 12:18), David (2 Sam. 22:4; 1 Chron. 21:16), Jonah (Jonah 1:6), Elijah (1 Kings 18:24), Elisha (2 Kings 5:11), Jeremiah (Lam. 3:55)--they all practiced this matter of calling on the name of the Lord. Moreover, in Joel 2:32, Zephaniah 3:9, and Zechariah 13:9 it is prophesied that people will call on the name of the Lord.

On the day of Pentecost the New Testament believers also called on the name of the Lord to receive the outpoured Spirit as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17-21). God poured out His Spirit, and the believers opened their mouths to receive the Spirit by calling on the name of the Lord. The Spirit has been poured out by God, but we have to receive Him. The way to receive Him is to open our mouths and call on the Lord. Hence, the New Testament believers, like Stephen (Acts 7:59), practiced this. By practicing this they made it known that they were followers of the Lord (Acts 9:14). When Paul was Saul, the persecutor of the church, he intended to arrest the believers, recognizing them by their calling on the name of the Lord. After he was converted, he was advised to wash away his sins (mainly his persecution of those who called on the Lord) by calling on the name of the Lord himself

(Acts 22:16). Undoubtedly, this practice was common among the early saints.

In addressing his first epistle to the church at Corinth Paul said, "All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2). This indicates that all the early believers practiced this matter of calling. In his second epistle to Timothy Paul charged him to pursue spiritual things "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2:22). So, we must practice it too. The Old Testament saints called on the Lord daily (Psa. 88:9) and throughout their entire life (Psa. 116:2). How about us? We should practice it more, calling on the Lord "out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22) and with "a pure lip" (Zeph. 3:9, Heb.). If we practice this, we will certainly partake of the Lord's riches and enjoy them. To call on the Lord is not only for salvation, but also for the enjoyment of the Lord with all His riches.

First Corinthians opens with calling on the name of the Lord, revealing that it is a book of the enjoyment of the Lord. It tells us that Christ is our wisdom and power (1 Cor. 1:24) and that He has been made our righteousness, sanctification, redemption (1:30), and so many other items for our enjoyment. Eventually, in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit of whom we may drink (1 Cor. 15:45; 12:13). The way to drink of Him as the life-giving Spirit is to call on His name. Thus, 1 Corinthians 12:3 indicates that if we say, "Lord Jesus," we are immediately in the Spirit. To say, "Lord Jesus" is to call on the name of the Lord. Jesus is the name of the Lord, and the Spirit is His person. When we call on the name of the Lord, we get the person of the Lord. When we call, "Lord Jesus," we get the Spirit. This kind of calling on the name of the Lord to receive the Spirit is not only spiritual breathing, but also spiritual drinking. When we call on the name of the Lord, we breathe Him in as the breath of life and we drink of Him as the water of life. The second stanza of hymn number seventy-three in our hymnal says,

Blessed Jesus! Mighty Savior!
In Thy *Name* is all I need;
Just to *breathe* the *Name* of Jesus,
Is to *drink* of Life indeed.

This is the way for us to partake of and enjoy the Lord. We all need to do it. May the Lord bless us in this matter. May it be fully recovered in these days.

E. Christ, Preached and Heard

In verses 14 and 15 Paul says, "How then shall they call upon Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who preaches? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce glad tidings of good things!" Calling upon the Lord requires believing in Him, believing in Him requires the hearing of Him, and the hearing of Him requires the preaching of the glad tidings. If the gospel is to be preached, someone must be sent by God. Those who are sent by God preach the glad tidings that people may hear, believe, call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. After we have believed in the Lord and called upon Him we must also preach Him. Christ has been preached and heard throughout the whole earth. He has been preached by the sent ones and heard by both the Jews and the nations. Many of them have believed unto righteousness and have called unto salvation.

F. Christ, Received and Rejected

In verses 16 through 21 we see Christ received and rejected. On the one hand Christ has been received by the nations, but on the other hand He has been rejected by Israel.

Both chapters nine and ten of Romans cover one point--the selection of God. God's selection is our destiny. This selection is of God who calls; it is of God's mercy and sovereignty; it is by the righteousness of faith, and it is through Christ.

Of all the chapters in the book of Romans, chapter ten presents the most about Christ. In 10:4 Christ is called "the end of the law." In no other chapter in the whole New Testament is Christ designated in such a way. Hence, Romans 10 gives us a very crucial title of Christ: the end of the law. This Christ was incarnated by coming down from heaven and was resurrected by coming up from the abyss. Having passed through this process, Christ, who is the end of the law, has become the living Word. He is near us, even in our mouth and in our heart. The two phrases "in your mouth" and "in your heart" imply that Christ is like the air. Only air can be in our mouth and in our heart. The resurrected Christ is the living Word, which is the Spirit; He is like the air, the breath, that we take into our being. All we need to do is exercise our mouth to breathe Him in, our heart to receive Him, and our spirit to retain Him. If we do this, we shall be saved and supplied with all His riches by calling on His name. We also need to preach Him. As we preach Him and people hear Him, some will believe and others will reject.

Romans 10 presents an excellent description and definition of Christ for our participation. We not only have to believe in Him with our heart, but also call on Him with our mouth. We have to call on Him, not only for salvation, but also for the enjoyment of His riches. We were made vessels to contain Him; we were selected and predestinated to be His containers. This requires our cooperation in receiving Him and taking Him in. In order to do this we need to open ourselves from the depths of our being and call upon Him with our mouth from deep within our spirit. Thus, in chapter nine we have the vessels and in chapter ten we are given the way to have the vessels filled with the riches of Christ. This is the economy of God's selection, the purpose of His heart's desire.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

GOD'S ECONOMY IN HIS SELECTION

In this message we come to the second point in the section on God's selection, God's economy. God has an economy, a divine arrangement, in His selection. This divine arrangement or administration is over the entire world and the whole human race. This administration under God's sovereignty is His divine economy.

I. A REMNANT RESERVED BY GRACE

In 11:1 Paul asks, "I say then, Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!" Paul was an excellent attorney, capable of arguing and winning either side of a case. If we did not have Romans 11, we would certainly think that God, after having chosen Israel, must have changed His mind. Chapters nine and ten of Romans seem to indicate that God has given up Israel. Because some people think this way Paul asked, "Has God cast away His people?" Then he answered the question himself, saying strongly, "Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite out of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says in the case of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what does the divine answer say to him? I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (11:1-4). Elijah, a prophet of God, pleaded with God against Israel. However, God told Elijah not to accuse the people before Him because He had reserved to Himself seven thousand men

who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Paul continues, "So then at the present time also there is a remnant according to the selection of grace. But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace" (vv. 5-6).

Paul argued in a marvelous way, always winning his case regardless of which side of the question he debated. When in chapter ten he said that Israel was bad, he proved how bad they were. Romans 10:21 says, "But to Israel he says, All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contradicting people." Certainly the worst people on earth are a disobedient and contradicting people. When we read a statement like this we are inclined to say, "Israel's situation is hopeless. Israel is finished." However, when we come to chapter eleven we see a record of how the Lord Himself argued with Elijah. Elijah said, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars." Both of these statements were true. Then Elijah said, "I am left alone and they seek my life." The Lord came to Elijah and seemed to say, "Elijah, listen to Me. You are not alone. I have reserved seven thousand men. Elijah, what are you talking about?" In chapter ten it appeared that, in a sense, Paul was against Israel. Now in chapter eleven he is in favor of Israel. In 11:5 Paul says that "at the present time also there is a remnant according to the selection of grace." Paul simply cannot be defeated. Paul was saying, "Not only were seven thousand men reserved by God in the time of Elijah, but at the present time, the time in which we are living, God still has a selection according to grace. Today also there is a remnant reserved." The principle is the same for our own time. Regardless of how far Christianity has degraded, we believe that among the thousands and even millions of Christians there are a number, a remnant, that have been reserved by God.

I am not speaking proudly, but I consider myself as one whom the Lord has reserved. How do you feel about yourself? A number of times in the past years my thought was the same as Elijah's. But I praise the Lord that eventually I discovered that the Lord had reserved a good

number to Himself. God has reserved a remnant for His eternal purpose. Do not be disappointed.

Verse 6 says, "But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace." Never forget that we have all been reserved by grace. It is not the result of our work; it is altogether by His grace. If it were otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.

"What then? That which Israel is seeking for he has not obtained, but those who were chosen have obtained it, and the rest were hardened" (v. 7). In principle, the situation today is the same. What have we to boast of? Only the grace of the Lord.

Verse 8 says, "As it is written, God gave them a spirit of deep sleep, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, until this very day." Is this our condition? Some people have eyes, but their eyes have lost their sight; some have ears, but their ears have lost their function. This is exactly the situation in our own time. In 1937 I was assigned by the work of the Lord to travel throughout northern China with the purpose of sharing with Christianity all the truths that the Lord had given us. I was assigned to do this by the work under the leadership of Brother Nee. I was charged not to stay in any of the local churches, but to travel throughout northern China. During that time I performed a good deal of traveling ministry in denominations. By that I learned that the situation was pitiful. Not many people had a heart; most did not have eyes to see or ears to hear. Then I gave up traveling and stayed in Cheefoo, my home town. I was clearly burdened by the Lord not to travel anymore but simply to stay in that city with the local church. After I remained there for four years, a revival occurred.

Let me tell you another story. During 1934 I stayed for quite some time in Shanghai with Brother Nee. One day as we were driving to another city he said to me, "Brother, the denominations have rejected us." Quoting Paul's word in Acts 13:46 he said, "Let us go to the Gentiles." Since that time the work in the Lord's recovery took a definite turn toward the Gentiles. Since the time I first stayed

with Brother Nee in 1933 until the time we parted from one another in 1950, he did not receive one invitation from any denomination in China. Although no denomination invited him to minister, his books are very popular. Regardless of the situation, the Lord has His remnant today.

Let us go on to verse 9. "And David says, Let their table become a snare and a trap and a cause of falling and a just retribution to them." We have seen the same thing happen in today's situation.

Verse 10 says, "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and let them bend their back continually." Is it not the same in today's Christianity? Are not the eyes of many darkened and their backs bent? They lack the sight to see and are unable to stand upright.

II. THE NATIONS SAVED THROUGH ISRAEL'S STUMBLING

God's economy in His selection is firstly with the remnant reserved by grace and secondly with the nations, the Gentiles saved through Israel's stumbling. In verse 11 Paul says, "I say then, have they stumbled that they might fall? Certainly not! But by their false step salvation has come to the nations to provoke them to jealousy." In 9:32 Paul said that Israel "stumbled at the Stone of stumbling." Now in 11:11 he says that they have not stumbled that they might fall. Paul developed his argument very carefully, saying that they stumbled, but that they did not fall. In the next part of verse 11 Paul describes their stumbling as a "false step." As a result of this false step of unbelief, salvation has come to the nations. What a case Paul presents, and what an attorney he was! No one can defeat him. Everyone must submit to him. In 11:12 Paul says, "Now if their false step is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the nations; how much more will their fullness be?" The false step made by Israel has become the riches of the world and their loss the riches of the nations. Who other than Paul is capable of arguing in this way?

In 11:13 Paul says that he magnifies his ministry among the nations. "For I speak to you, the nations. Since I am indeed an apostle of the nations, I glorify my ministry, if somehow I may provoke those of my flesh to jealousy and save some of them." Although Paul was glorifying his ministry among the nations, he was actually debating for Israel.

We need to read verse 15 carefully. "For if their casting aside is the reconciliation of the world, what will be their receiving back but life from among the dead?" Please notice that Paul did not say "casting away." To cast away is one thing; to cast aside is another. In 11:1 Paul asks, "Has God cast away His people?" Paul answered the question himself saying, "Certainly not!" Hence, there is a significant difference between being cast away and being cast aside. To be cast away means to be given up, while to be cast aside means to be put aside for a period of time. Therefore, Paul's thought was that God had cast aside Israel, not that He had cast them away.

Let us read verses 16 through 18. "Now if the dough offered as the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow-partaker of the root of the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches; but if you boast, remember that you do not bear the root, but the root you." Who is the root of the olive tree and who is the dough offered as the firstfruit? I believe that the correct answer is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In 11:28 Paul says that Israel is "beloved for the fathers' sake." The "fathers" refers to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These three patriarchs were the root of the olive tree and the dough offered as the firstfruit.

We need to be clear regarding the difference between the dough offered as the firstfruit and the lump. Suppose you have a lump of dough for baking cakes and you take a piece of dough out of that lump. That piece of dough may be called the firstfruit. In the Bible the dough offered as the firstfruit was not for the people to eat; it was first

offered to God and then given to the priests to be their food. According to Numbers 15:18-21, God told Israel that after they had entered the land they had to offer the first piece of dough to the Lord. That piece of dough was termed the firstfruit, and the phrase "the dough offered as the firstfruit" in Romans 11:16 is a reference to it. The Apostle Paul uses this first piece of dough to illustrate Abraham along with Isaac and Jacob. When we come to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the life-study of Genesis, we shall discover that these three patriarchs should be considered as one person and that the spiritual experiences of the three are actually the experiences of one person. These three patriarchs were and still are the first piece of dough offered to God as the firstfruit, and all of their descendants are the whole lump. Likewise, the three patriarchs were and still are the root of God's cultivated olive tree (Jer. 11:16), and all of their descendants are the branches. Therefore, Paul's argument is that if the dough offered to God is holy, then the entire lump is holy. This means that all the Israelites are holy. Furthermore, if the root, the patriarchs, is holy, then all the branches, the descendants of the patriarchs, are also holy. Although Israel has stumbled, they did not fall. They have been cut off temporarily; later they will be grafted in again.

In Romans 9 the chosen ones of God are likened to clay and in Romans 11 they are likened to a lump of flour used for making cakes. Which do you think is better? Would you like to be a piece of clay or a piece of dough? Although I prefer to be a piece of dough, it is still good to be clay because clay is used to make vessels of mercy to contain Christ. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 4:7 we are told that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Furthermore, 2 Timothy 2:20 says, "there are... vessels of gold and of silver... to honor." We have seen that the clay vessels in Romans 9 are filled by calling on the name of the Lord as revealed in Romans 10. The same is true for the vessels in

2 Timothy 2:20. In verse 22 of that chapter we are told that the seekers of the Lord need to call upon Him out of a pure heart. Therefore, the way in which the vessels of honor are filled is by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Romans 9 shows us that we are pieces of clay made into vessels which contain Christ. This is wonderful. However, I am even happier to be a piece of dough, a part of the lump. Clay has no life, but the lump is a matter of life being made from fine wheat flour. Although clay is useful in making vessels to contain Christ for the glory of God, the lump is for the satisfaction of God; it is offered to God as food for His satisfaction. A piece of lifeless clay cannot satisfy God. Only in the lump do we have the living element which satisfies God.

While the dough is for God's satisfaction, the root is for our satisfaction. Romans 11:17 says that we, "being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow-partaker of the root of the fatness of the olive tree." When we come to the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in our life-study of Genesis, we shall see that they were the root of the fatness of the olive tree. The entire olive tree depends upon their fatness. Praise the Lord that we, the wild olive tree, have been grafted into God's cultivated olive tree that we might be fellow-partakers of its root of fatness! This is our enjoyment. God enjoys the dough; we enjoy the root. Both the dough and the root are of the plant life, the life which satisfies God and man. Both the wheat and the olive produce enjoyment and satisfaction for God and man. Praise the Lord! Once again we see how deep a writer was Paul. Nothing in Romans is superficial.

In verse 17 Paul says that we, the Gentiles, "being a wild olive tree, were grafted and became a partaker of the root." Grafting is a matter of life. For the branch of a wild tree to be grafted into a cultivated tree is for it to receive the life of the cultivated tree. Hence, it is not a matter for us Gentiles to change our religion, but to receive the life of the root, which life is Christ. Many Gentiles have turned from their heathen religions to the Christian religion

without ever receiving the life of Christ. They have never been grafted into the olive tree cultivated by God with Christ as life. But we have been grafted in to enjoy the riches of Christ's life with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Praise the Lord!

Paul, speaking on behalf of the Gentiles, says in verse 19, "You will say then, Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." The Gentiles may think this way. Paul answered, "Right. They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be high-minded, but fear; For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; on those who fell, severity; but on you the kindness of God, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off" (vv. 20-22). How wise is Paul's word.

Therefore, by Israel's false step, by their stumbling, salvation has come to the nations. However, Israel did not fall; they only stumbled. This is God's economy in His selection.

III. ISRAEL RESTORED THROUGH THE NATIONS' MERCY

"And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?" (vv. 23-24). Although Paul seems to be speaking on behalf of the Gentiles, he is actually more in favor of the Jews because he was a Jew himself. Underlying his words concerning the Gentiles is his burden for the Jews.

"For I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in yourselves, that hardness has come upon a part of Israel until the fullness of the nations comes in" (v. 25). The "fullness of the nations" refers to the

converts among the Gentiles. Now is the time when a great many Gentiles will be converted. Hence, the "fullness of the nations" has not yet been completed; it is continuing at the present time. The "fullness of the nations" is different from the phrase "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). Some Christians confuse these two phrases. The words "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" denote the prophecy regarding the termination of Gentile power; "the fullness of the nations" denotes the completeness of the conversion among the nations.

In verse 26 Paul declares, "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come out of Zion, He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." At that time all the remaining Israelites will be saved. "And this is the covenant from Me to them, when I take away their sins. According to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but according to the selection they are beloved for the fathers' sake" (vv. 27-28). Notice the two "sakes" in verse 28: "your sake" and the "fathers' sake." They are enemies for our sake, but beloved for the fathers' sake. "For the free gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (v. 29). God's gifts and God's calling are eternal, without repentance, without change. Once God's gift is given, it is given forever. Once God has called us, He has called us for eternity. He would never repent of His gifts and calling. How we thank God that "with Him there is no variation" (James 1:17, Gk.). "For just as you once disobeyed God, but now have obtained mercy through their disobedience, so these also now have disobeyed that through your mercy they also now may obtain mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all" (vv. 30-32). Here we see that Paul uses both disobedience and mercy as means for his argument. Man's disobedience affords God's mercy an opportunity, and God's mercy brings man salvation. Thus, we see once again that Paul has won every case. God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. This is God's economy. What can we say? All that we can say is, "Hallelujah for His mercy!"

He has even used our disobedience as an enclosure to keep us as vessels upon whom He shows His mercy.

IV. A PRAISE FOR GOD'S SELECTION

At this point Paul lifted up a praise to God, a praise for God's selection. "O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments and untraceable His paths! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him? Because out of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (vv. 33-36). It seems that in Romans 9 through 11 Paul has given us a map by which we may trace God's paths. God receives praise and glory in three stages: in the past, for all things have come out of Him; in the present, for all things are through Him; and in the future, for all things will be to Him. All things came into being out of God in the past, all things exist through Him in the present, and all things will be to Him in the future. God's selection is according to Himself, according to His choice, not according to anything else. All things are of Him, by Him, and for Him. "To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICING THE BODY LIFE

(1)

In this message we come to the most practical section in the book of Romans, the section on transformation (12:1--15:13). Transformation is for life practice. As we have seen, sanctification is for the life process. Since the day we were justified we have been participating in this process of life. This life process will sanctify us and eventually glorify us. The life practice is somewhat different from the life process. For the practice of life we need transformation, for we can never have the proper practice of life in our natural life. Nothing natural is useful for the life practice. The natural element must be transformed into an element that is spiritual and holy. Hence, for the sake of the life practice we need a thorough transformation. Furthermore, the Holy Word reveals that the practice of life is mainly with the church, with the Body life. The local church life is the practical kingdom of God on earth today.

Many so-called spiritual Christians truly love the Lord and pursue the growth of life according to Romans 6 and 8. However, after Romans 8 and even after Romans 11 there is another section, indicating that even if we have attained the standard revealed in Romans 8 we still are

lacking because we do not have the church life. The spiritual experiences of sanctification, glorification, and conformation do not exist for themselves. Sanctification is not for sanctification, and conformation is not for conformation. Both of these experiences are for the church life. As we shall see, after chapters eight and eleven Paul begs us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. The purpose of this presentation is not for us to be more spiritual, but for us to practice the Body life.

Many seeking Christians do not like to talk about the church life. They seem to say, "As long as we are spiritual and sanctified and are growing in life, everything is fine. The Lord will build us together one day spontaneously." I would say strongly that their book of Romans has only eight chapters, only half of the book. They do not seem to realize that Romans has sixteen chapters. But in the book of Romans we have five complete chapters that dwell on the matter of the church. Life is not for life--life is for the Body. Life is for the church. We have to be alert, for we can be veiled even by the best things. Praise the Lord that in Romans we have five chapters on the church life. The material on justification, sanctification, and glorification together equals five and a half chapters, but the church life itself occupies five chapters.

I wish to point out that the church is Paul's final word in the book of Romans. When we listen to someone speak we always wait for his concluding word, and the concluding word in the book of Romans concerns the church. Therefore, if you stop at chapter eight you will miss a great deal, separating yourself from the final word of Paul's discourse. We must proceed all the way to Paul's conclusion.

Why did Paul write the book of Romans? He did not write merely for justification, sanctification, or even for glorification. Romans was written ultimately and consummately for the church life. The consummation of the book of Romans is the church. Praise the Lord that Paul was so strong and rich in the matter of the church that he took five chapters to emphasize it. He took five chapters to cover the church life in a wonderful way. In

Romans Paul does not present the church life in a doctrinal way, but in a very experiential and practical way. As we come to Romans 15 and 16, we shall see that Paul describes and presents the churches in the way of experience and practice, not in the way of doctrine.

If you fail to probe into the depths of Romans 12 through 16 you will consider these five chapters merely to be chapters filled with exhortations and teachings concerning the behavior of Christians. If you think this way, it proves that you still hold a natural concept in understanding this portion of the Bible. We should not understand the Holy Word according to our natural concept. Most of the Christian teachers say that Romans 12 through 16 describes the behavior of believers. They say that after we are saved we need to exhibit good Christian behavior. I must admit that when I conducted a thorough study of Romans more than twenty years ago with almost a thousand people I still clung to this natural concept. In that study I also said that Romans 12 through 16 depicts the behavior of believers. It was not until recent years that, after studying Romans again and again, I said to myself, "Man, how natural you were in understanding the holy, divine revelation."

Apparently the last five chapters of Romans describe the behavior of Christians. However, what is the main item, the main aspect, of a believer's behavior? It is the church life. The church life, the Body life, is the main structure of a Christian's behavior. After he has been saved a believer's behavior is primarily concerned with the church life. Do you realize that our church life is ninety percent of our living? We have even coined a new word--"churching." Day after day we are churching. We are churching people. I can testify to you that I am churching day and night. We spend a great deal of time, money, and energy that we may continue churching. We do not care for time, the cost, or the energy--we only care for the church. We are churching all the time. The Apostle Paul

held this concept of churching when he wrote the book of Romans. He did not care only for so-called behavior; his main concern was the church life. We need to practice the processed life, which is unfolded in the section on sanctification in chapters five through eight, in the church life, and for this we need transformation. Therefore, the transformation in life is for the practice of life, and the practice of life is conducted mainly in the church life.

Consider the contents of Romans 12 through 16. Undoubtedly the focus of Romans 12 is the Body life. From the beginning of chapter fourteen through the first part of chapter fifteen we have a long portion dealing with the matter of receiving the saints. The receiving of the saints is also for the church life. Furthermore, chapters fifteen and sixteen are a practical record of the church life, not of a church in the heavens, but of churches in localities on the earth. Between these two portions we have chapter thirteen. I have been bothered about chapter thirteen, finding it difficult to determine whether it belongs to the practice of the Body life presented in chapter twelve or whether it should stand alone with the three items of submission, love, and spiritual warfare. Even at this writing I am not very certain about the position of Romans 13. It may be considered as a part of the subsection on the living of a normal life. If so, then Romans 12 through 16 will have three items related to transformation, and all of these items belong to the church life: firstly, the practice of the Body life; secondly, the receiving of the saints; and thirdly, the ultimate consummation of the gospel, that is, the local churches. Hence, every aspect of the section on transformation is related to the Body life. What is your daily life? Properly speaking, your daily life is a part of your church life. If you had no daily life, you could not have the genuine church life. Your daily life is for the church life. Therefore, based upon this understanding, I prefer to say that chapter thirteen is a continuation of chapter twelve and is a part of the subsection concerning the normal life of Christians for the church life.

I. TRANSFORMATION FOR THE BODY LIFE

A. Transformation

Before we consider 12:1-2 I want to give a definition of transformation. Transformation is a good word. In Greek this word includes the meaning of change, to have a change. Thus, the King James Version rendered this word in 2 Corinthians 3:18 as "changed" instead of "transformed." However, the King James Version translated the same Greek word as "transformed" in Romans 12:2. To render the Greek as "changed" is very inadequate. Transformation does not merely denote a change; it means that a substance is changed both in nature and in form. In English the words transformed or transformation also mean a change in both nature and form. This type of change is a metabolic change. It is not just an outward change, but a change in inward constitution as well as in external form. This change occurs by the process of metabolism. In the process of metabolism an organic element filled with vitamins comes into our being and produces a chemical change in our organic life. This chemical reaction changes the constitution of our being from one form into another. This is transformation.

Suppose that a person has a very pale complexion and that someone else, wishing to change his colorless complexion, applies some coloring to his skin. This, no doubt, produces an outward change, but it is not an organic change, a change in life. How then can a person truly have a colorful face? By daily absorbing into his body healthy food with the necessary organic elements. Because your body is a living organism, when an organic substance enters into it a chemical compound is formed organically by the process of metabolism. Gradually this inward process will change the coloration of your face. This change is not outward; it is a change from within, a change resulting from the process of metabolism.

According to the Bible, this metabolic change is termed transformation. In the process of transformation the life of

Christ is added to our being. When His life, which is organic and filled with vitamins, permeates our being, a spiritual, chemical compound is formed. This changes our constitution both in nature and in form. This is transformation. It is not outward correction or external adjustment. It is absolutely an inward metabolic change in our organic element, a change in life and with life by the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). In the process of transformation the divine element is wrought into us. If we keep in mind this proper understanding of transformation as we approach Romans 12 through 16, we shall realize that this portion of the Word is altogether different from what our natural concept would lead us to believe it is.

At the end of Romans 8 the life process reaches its completion. In chapter one we were sinners, mean, vile, and filled with evil. However, after passing through several chapters and coming to the end of Romans 8, we have been sanctified and conformed as sons of God. What a difference! At the end of Romans 8 we have become conformed sons of God, sons beloved of Him forever. Thus, the first eight chapters of Romans unfold the life process which brings us all the way from sinners to sons of God. Then in Romans 9 through 11 Paul affords us a revelation of God's selection, God's economy, and our destiny. In that portion Paul helps us realize how God selected us, made us as vessels to contain Him, intends to fill us with all the riches of Christ, and has established an economy regarding the order in which men will be saved. After speaking of these things Paul is ready to speak about the practice of life. At the beginning of Romans 12, Paul is prepared to tell us how to practice the very life in which we have been and are being processed. The practice of this processed life is the church life.

B. The Body Life

1. The Practicality of the Church Life

We have already pointed out that the focus of Romans 12 is the Body life. The Body life is the practicality of the church life. Without the Body life, the church life is only a

term. The church life is realized, becomes real, in the practice of the Body life. Christians today do have the term "church," but lack the Body life. As far as the Body life is concerned, there is a void in the experience of many Christians. Thus, there is the need for the real recovery of the Body life that the Lord may have His church built on the earth today in a practical way. This is the reason that we are so burdened for the Body life.

2. A Corporate Life

The Body life is a corporate life. We can realize this by looking at our physical body. Our physical body is a corporate entity composed of many members. All the members have their life and function in the body. If any member becomes separate or detached from the body, it loses its life and function. No member of the body can be independent of the body or become individualistic. We must realize that none of us as members of the Body can be a complete entity. Every one of us is simply a member of the Body. We need to remain in the Body for life and function. So many Christians do not have the riches of life and are unable to function at all simply because they are detached from the Body. Romans 12 reveals the importance of the practice of the Body life. It shows us that we are members one of another in one Body. We, being many, are one Body, one entity. In the Body we can function and express Christ in a corporate way.

It is a sad thing that today very few Christians have seen the corporate life or are willing to pay attention to it. Most of the seeking Christians devote their full attention to Romans 8, pursuing the experiences of the Spirit of life. But they do not realize that the experiences of Romans 8 are for the corporate life in Romans 12. God's goal is for us to live a Body life, which is a corporate life. His redemption, justification, and sanctification are for this goal. If we do not pay our attention to the Body life, we shall surely miss God's goal. To be redeemed, to be

justified, to be sanctified, and to be conformed to Christ--all are for us to have the proper corporate life. We should not stop with the experiences of sanctification and conformation in Romans 8. We need to see that the experiences of sanctification and conformation in the Spirit are meant to bring us forward to Romans 12 that we may practice the corporate life. Simply to be sanctified individually or to be spiritual in an individualistic way is not God's way of sanctification and spirituality. Genuine sanctification and spirituality are for the Body life. We do believe that in these last days the Lord, in His recovery, has moved from Romans 8 to Romans 12. The focus of the Lord's recovery today is not sanctification or spirituality in an individualistic way, but the Body life, the church life, in a corporate way. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we may see this and practice it by the experiences of sanctification in the Spirit of life.

II. BY THE PRESENTING OF OUR BODIES

A. The Begging of the Apostle

Romans 12:1 says, "I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your most reasonable service." In 12:1 Paul speaks in a begging way, revealing the importance of the matter concerning which he is about to charge us. It unveils God's desire and purpose. For centuries and ages God has had a particular desire--to have a body for Christ. Hence, the Apostle said, "I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God." Notice that it is not "compassion" in singular, but "compassions" in plural. In 9:15 we have seen that compassion is richer and deeper than mercy. God not only has one kind of compassion, but many kinds of compassion upon us. He has had compassion on us in selecting us. He has had compassion on us in calling us, in saving us, and in bringing us into His life. As the previous chapters show, He has had many compassions on us in the past. It was through these compassions of God that the Apostle Paul begged us to present our bodies to God. If we realize the

compassions of God and are moved by them, we shall do what the Apostle begged us to do.

B. Presenting Our Bodies as a Sacrifice

1. Many Bodies, One Sacrifice

In verse 1 Paul also begs us to present our bodies "a living sacrifice." In 6:13, 19 he encouraged us to present the members of our bodies as weapons for fighting and as servants for serving because Romans 6 is a matter of warfare and service. However, in the church life it is a question of sacrifice, of offering ourselves to God for His satisfaction. The church life as a whole is an offering for the satisfaction of God. Although many bodies are presented, the sacrifice is one. Why are there many bodies but only one sacrifice? Because the many members are one Body and the many believers are one church.

Why does Paul use the word "living"? Because he compares this sacrifice with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The sacrifices offered in Old Testament days were all slain, but the church is not a slain offering; it is a living offering full of Christ as life. In chapter eight we see that the believers are filled with Christ as the life-giving Spirit. When they come to chapter twelve to offer themselves as a sacrifice to God, they are a living offering filled with the Spirit of life.

Furthermore, the sacrifice is holy, meaning that it is separate from common things and that it possesses God's nature. Our God is holy. He is absolutely different and separate from all other things. This holy nature of His has been wrought into the members of the Body. So the Body is holy and unique. It is different from a club, the YMCA, and every kind of social organization. The Body is holy, and nothing common can be brought into it. Thus, this offering is the only thing that is well-pleasing to God and is for the Body of Christ. For the practice of the Body life this offering is needed. We need to offer our bodies for the Body of Christ.

2. A Priestly Service Which Is Most Reasonable

To offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is our most reasonable service. The words "present" and "sacrifice" mentioned above indicate that the "reasonable service" is a priestly service. If we have a sober mind and if we intend to be reasonable, fair, and logical, then we certainly must have the church life. People who do not like to have the church life are the most foolish of people. To practice anything other than the church life is foolish, but to give up everything for the church life is logical and reasonable. Nothing is more reasonable than churching. To spend two dollars on a worldly item or amusement is foolish, but to spend two million dollars on the church life is reasonable. If I had a hundred lives, I would give them all for the church life. However, I would not give even the smallest fraction of my life to the worldly things, for to do that would be stupid. What a reasonable service it is to give ourselves to the church life! I can testify that I have been in the Lord's work for more than forty years and that I do not have the slightest regret about it. Whenever I think about the church I am excited. Every time I think about the church life and about my ministry for the church life I am in the heavens. What a reasonable service it is!

When Paul began to speak about the church life, he implored the believers to present their bodies because as human beings nothing is more real and practical than our body. If your body is not in the church life, please do not say how much you yourself are for the church life. In the past years many people have said to me, "Brother, I stand with you. Because the burden of my business is so heavy I cannot be in the church life, but I am one with what you are doing." Others have said, "I'm too tired to attend the meeting. You go to the meeting and I'll stay home and pray for you. I can't go to the meeting physically because I'm so tired, but my heart and spirit will be there with

you." These words sound pleasant but they are a deceit. We must realize that we are in our bodies. Where our bodies are, we are. Suppose that all the saints should say that they are too tired to attend the meeting. What would happen to the meeting? Thus, Paul begged the brothers to present their bodies. If you mean business for the Lord's purpose, you need to present your body.

It is good for you to come to the meeting even if you sleep through most of it. It is better to come to a meeting and sleep than not to come at all. You may attend a meeting and sleep through it all except for the last few minutes. Perhaps during the last five minutes you will be inspired and receive a great help. I am familiar with a number of cases in which this has happened.

Let me tell you of one that occurred in my home province of Shantung. I was visiting a certain church with a young apprentice, a brother who was under my hand learning how to serve the Lord. His name was Chao. The wife of the leading brother in this little church loved the Lord very much and she served us food three times a day. As a result of all her work she was tired out. However, she could not stop attending the meetings. One day in particular she came and sat in the front row. Brother Chao was asked to speak a word in the meeting that night. While he was speaking, the sister fell asleep. During his message the young brother was very patient. Nevertheless, near the end of his message, unable to restrain himself any longer, he turned to the sister and said, "If you keep on sleeping, I'll kick you out!" When he did this I was very worried. After the meeting I told him never to do that again. I felt ashamed as we returned to the sister's house for hospitality. However, the sister greeted us cheerfully. This sister came to the meeting and slept almost the entire meeting, but during the last few minutes she received help. We need to come to the meetings bodily. Do not say that you will be in the church spiritually but not bodily. You need to present your body.

III. BY THE RENEWING OF OUR MIND

A. Do Not Be Conformed to This Age

Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect." Paul tells us not to be "conformed to this age." We should not be molded by this age. What is this age? The age is the present, practical world life, which is the opposition to and substitute of the church life. The entire world is a Satanic system, a system constituted by Satan. The Greek word for world, cosmos, denotes an organization, a system. Satan has systematized every person and every item of human life. This world system is composed of many ages. Just as the universal church is composed of many local churches, so the world is composed of many ages. Every local church is a part of the universal church, and every age is a part of the world. Each age has its modern fashion. The English word "modern" is an equivalent of the Greek word rendered "age." The Greek words translated as "Do not be conformed to this age" may be translated as, "Do not be modernized." Hence, to be modernized means to be fashioned, conformed according to the present age. Since an age, being the present, practical world life, is a part of the world system, you cannot be in the world without being in one of the ages. You cannot touch the world unless you touch one of the ages. Therefore, in order to forsake the world you must also forsake the age.

The changes in the age of the world system can be illustrated by the changes in ladies' hairdos. Sixty years ago, especially in the Western world, it was common for women to arrange their hair into a high tower, the higher the better. I became familiar with this because the Western ladies purchased hairnets that were imported from North China where I lived as a boy. Suddenly the orders began to specify small hairnets. I wondered about the reason for the change. Eventually I learned that the age had changed and that the modern style had altered.

Each age has its fashion and style. Sixty years ago the Western ladies fashioned their hair into a high tower. Later short hair became common, and the so-called "bobbed hair" became popular. In recent years the young people have adopted the so-called "hippie type" hairdo of this age. If a young man allows his hair to grow long, it proves that he has been modernized.

The world opposes the church, and the ages oppose the churches. If we mean business to have the church life, we must give up the age. Since the present age opposes the church life, we cannot follow the age and be fashioned according to it and still truly experience the Body life. A person who is possessed by the modern age may attend the Sunday meetings, but he cannot practice the church life. If we want the Body life, the practice of the church life, we must not follow this age nor be conformed to it. This is the reason that Paul told us not to be conformed to this age.

B. Be Transformed by the Renewing of the Mind

We should not be conformed to the age, but transformed by the renewing of our mind (Eph. 4:23; Titus 3:5). To be conformed to the age means to adopt the modern fashions outwardly; to be transformed is to have an organic element wrought into our being to produce a metabolic change inwardly. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The mind in Romans 12 is different from the mind both in Romans 7 and Romans 8. In Romans 7 the mind was alone, acting independently. In Romans 8 the mind was dependent, being set on the spirit. However, I doubt that the mind in Romans 8 has been transformed or renewed. Simply to set our mind on the spirit is inadequate. The mind should not only be dependent, but also renewed. Romans 12:2 tells us that we need a renewed mind. The mind is renewed not only by outward teachings, but by the element of Christ being added to it. When the Lord Jesus spreads Himself from

our spirit into our mind, our mind will be renewed. By the renewing of our mind our soul is metabolically changed. In this way we experience transformation in our soul, a necessity for the church life. If we intend to practice the church life, we need to experience such a transformation in our soul by the renewing of our mind.

C. To Test and Prove the Will of God

We need the renewal of our mind and the transformation of our soul that we "may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect." What is the will of God? The will of God is to have the Body life, the church life. Do not apply the mention of the will of God in 12:2 to your personal human situation, to the matters of marriage, employment, or housing. Some people pray, "O Lord, I am going to buy a new house. What is your will? How many bedrooms and bathrooms should it have? How much should I pay for it? Lord, I want to know Your will." Forget about praying in this manner, for the more you pray and seek the Lord's will in this way, the more you will find yourself in darkness and out of His will. The will mentioned in 12:2 is to have the church life. The house that you purchase, the job that you have, and the person that you marry should all depend on the church life. Even the clothes that you wear should depend on the church life. If you are right with the church life, you will know what you must do. Everything must be for the church life, for to have the church life is the unique will of God. This is good, well-pleasing, and perfect. And this is for the Body life. The presenting of our bodies, the transforming of our souls, and the renewing of our minds are all for the Body life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICING THE BODY LIFE

(2)

In the previous message we have considered the matters of transformation for the Body life, presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice for God's satisfaction, and the renewing of our mind that we may prove the will of God, which is to have the church life. In this message we shall consider some other aspects of transformation in practicing the Body life.

IV. BY THE EXERCISING OF OUR GIFTS

A. Not Thinking Highly of Ourselves, But Thinking Soberly According to the Measure of Faith

Romans 12:3 says, "For I say through the grace given to me to everyone among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." In this verse we come to a very practical point. Everyone of us thinks highly of himself. Outwardly you may appear to be humble, but inwardly you think quite highly of yourself. This is a problem to the church life. If we are to have the proper church life, the first thing that must be torn down is the high opinion that we have of ourselves. We need "to think so as to be sober-minded." If you think highly of yourself, your mind is not sober or normal. It means that you have an abnormal element in your mind. Your mind needs to be adjusted and renewed, and all the negative elements in it need to be swallowed

up by the life of Christ. Then your mind will be renewed and sobered. Furthermore, we need to think "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." It is not difficult to understand the meaning of "a measure of faith." How much God has transfused and infused Himself into you constitutes your measure of faith. Your measure of faith equals the amount of God's element which has been transfused into you. That is the faith which God has allotted to you, and you need to consider yourself soberly according to that measure.

B. Realizing One Body with Many Members Having Different Functions

"For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (vv. 4-5). We need to realize that the many members of the one Body have different functions. Two young sisters may be very close to one another in age, but still have different functions. What one sister can do the other sister cannot do. If we would all realize this, we would not think so highly of ourselves, but would respect others. I hope that so many of the young brothers could say to one another, "Brother, what I can do, you cannot do, and what you can do, I cannot do." We all have different functions.

The different functions of the members of the Body are illustrated by the human face. Look at your face: you have eyes, ears, a nose, and lips. The eye may say to Brother Nose, "Do you know that I cannot do what you can do and that you cannot do what I can do?" Brother Nose would reply, "Yes, Brother Eye. That is wonderful. And we all must understand that neither of us can do what Brother Ear can do." Then perhaps Brother Ear would respond, "Brothers, you are right. But Brother Lips can do what none of us are able to do." The face illustrates what is true of the entire body: we have many members and each has a different function. This is the way it should be in the church life. As I see the members functioning in the meetings, I am very happy because they can do what I

cannot do. Of course, it is also true that I can do what they cannot do.

C. As Members Coordinating with One Another

Verse 5 says, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members of one another." This means that though we are many yet we are one Body. We are many members, not many separate units. As members, we have to coordinate with each other that we may be a living, functioning Body. If we do not cooperate with each other, then we are detached members, and the Body life cannot be practically realized. When it says in verse 5 that we "are severally members one of another," the word "severally" does not mean separately; it means differently. It means that you are one kind of member and that I am another. Perhaps you are a nose, I am an eye, and another sister is an ear. Hence, we are severally members one of another. This needs a full cooperation.

D. Exercising Our Different Gifts According to the Grace Given to Us

We need to read verses 6 through 8. "And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them accordingly: whether prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; or service, in the service; or he who teaches, in teaching; or he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness." In verse 6 Paul says that we have "gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." What is grace? As we saw in a previous message, grace is simply God in Christ as our enjoyment. When this grace, this divine element, which is the divine life, comes into our being, it brings with it certain skills and abilities which are the gifts. The gifts, the spiritual abilities, come from the divine element which we have enjoyed. As you enjoy God, receiving and assimilating His divine element into your being, out of this divine element proceeds some gift, skill, or ability. These gifts differ according to the divine element which we have enjoyed and which we have

assimilated into our being. The grace given to us refers to the grace we have enjoyed and assimilated. Therefore, the gifts mentioned in Romans 12 are the gifts of grace in life.

This can be proved by other verses in the book of Romans. Romans 5:17 says that "those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life." This verse indicates that grace is related to life. Furthermore, in 5:21 Paul says that "grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." These two verses from Romans 5 prove that grace is related to life. What is grace? It is the divine life for our enjoyment. When the eternal life of God becomes our enjoyment, that is grace. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul said, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The grace of God which was with Paul was the divine life within Paul as his enjoyment. Thus, he labored more than the other apostles, although actually it was not Paul himself, but the divine life which he enjoyed. Thus, grace in Romans is a matter of life.

The gifts in Romans 12 are according to grace. This means that the gifts are granted according to the measure of life. If you have enjoyed the life of God to a high degree, you will receive a higher gift. However, if your enjoyment of the life of God is limited, your gift also will be limited, for the measure of your gift is limited by the extent to which you have enjoyed the divine life as grace within you. The gifts enumerated in Romans 12 are not the miraculous gifts which come to you suddenly. No, the gifts in Romans 12 are like the abilities of the members of our human body. The measure of ability depends upon the amount of life in the body. If the body is mature with considerable growth of life and with a great amount of life, it will have an abundant overflow of life, and this overflow of the inner life of the body will produce abilities. These abilities resemble the gifts in Romans 12. All of the items included in verses 6 through 8 are gifts of grace in life. We

may list seven of them: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and showing mercy. We need to remember that each of these seven items, including the showing of mercy, is a gift.

Many Christians seem to think that the only gifts are speaking in tongues, interpretation, healing, and miracles. However, it is quite strange that none of these gifts is mentioned in Romans 12. In Romans 12 Paul says nothing about speaking in tongues, interpretation, healing, and miracles, but he does speak about the gifts which are necessary for the Body life. Please notice that verse 6 says, "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us," and that it does not say, according to the so-called baptism. I need to repeat once again the definition of grace: grace is the divine element coming into our being to be our life for our enjoyment. Grace is not outward; it is the element of the divine life that is wrought into our being inwardly and which gives us some skill or ability. Let us now consider the gifts of grace in life in more detail.

1. Prophecy According to the Proportion of Faith

If you consult various versions and translations of Romans, you will find that most of them agree that prophecy in Romans 12 does not mainly denote prediction. Even in the Scripture as a whole, the word prophesy does not mainly mean to predict. In both the Old and New Testaments to prophesy means: (1) to tell for, that is, to speak for others; (2) to tell forth, that is, to speak things forth; and (3) to foretell, that is, to predict, to speak things before they happen. The whole book of Isaiah is a book of prophecy. It is not only composed with foretellings, but the more with tellings forth and tellings for. It is true that Isaiah does contain some predictive prophecies, but the majority of the oracles and utterances in that book are the speaking forth of the prophet on behalf of God. Hence, the meaning of the word to prophesy is mainly "speaking for" and "speaking forth." What is prophecy? It is the speaking for God under His direct inspiration. In his *Word Studies*

in the New Testament (Vol. 3, p. 156) Marvin Vincent says this about prophecy: "In the New Testament, as in the Old, the prominent idea is not prediction, but the inspired delivery of warning, exhortation, instruction, judging, and making manifest the secrets of the heart. See 1 Corinthians 14:3, 24, and 25. The New Testament prophets are distinguished from teachers by speaking under direct inspiration." Thus, the main idea of prophecy in the Bible is not prediction, but speaking for God under His direct inspiration.

2. Service in the Service

The word "service" in verse 7 denotes the service of the deacons and the deaconesses in the local churches (See Rom. 16:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; and Phil. 1:1). The deacons and deaconesses are the serving ones in a local church. They must have a serving spirit and a serving attitude. They have to keep themselves always in service. The practice of the Body life needs this kind of service.

3. Teaching in Teaching

What is the difference between teaching and prophesying? As we have seen, prophesying is speaking for the Lord under His direct inspiration, that is, to speak according to the revelation the Lord has imparted. Teaching is different from that. Teaching is the speaking based upon prophesying. Some brothers may take what is given in others' prophesying and teach people according to it. This is teaching. The teaching ones have to keep themselves in the exercise of their teaching gift.

4. Exhorting in Exhortation

What then is exhortation? How does it differ from prophecy and teaching? Prophecy, teaching, and exhortation are all speaking gifts. However, exhortation is based on both prophecy and teaching. Perhaps during a special conference or training a brother prophesies under the direct inspiration of God. Some brothers receive the

revelation given in that prophesying, take it back with them to their locality, and teach others according to it. That is teaching. Then, based upon the direct speaking under God's inspiration and the teaching according to this inspiration, some others may exhort. That is exhortation. These three kinds of speaking are for the building up of the Body; they minister the life supply to the saints that they may grow together by God's Word. The exhorting ones also have to keep themselves in the exercise of their exhorting gift.

5. Giving in Simplicity

The ability to give in simplicity is also a gift of grace in life. This denotes the giving which supplies and takes care of the needy ones in the church. In the church we need such givers. We need those who are able to impart material possessions to help the needy ones, to speed the Lord's work, and to care for the church's practical needs. Therefore, we need many saints with such a measure of life that they may have the giving gift and be able to give in simplicity.

6. Leading in Diligence

"He who leads" signifies the leading brothers in the church. Whoever desires to be a leading brother must first learn to be diligent. If you are sloppy, you cannot share in the leadership. I would call the attention of all the leading brothers to one thing: that the first quality of leadership is diligence. A leading brother, that is, an elder, needs to be diligent in everything and in every way all the time. The elders' ability, function, and gift in taking the lead depend upon their diligence.

7. Showing Mercy in Cheerfulness

The ability in life to show mercy is also a gift. To show mercy in cheerfulness is not a matter of natural generosity. Some people have a naturally generous character; they were born that way. However, to show mercy in cheerfulness is a quality that is formed in us by transformation.

When you grow in the life of Christ and come to love the Lord more, a certain quality will be formed in you, and you will be burdened to take care of others and show mercy to the unworthy ones. This is not a characteristic of your natural birth, but a quality developed in you by your growth in life through the process of transformation. Hence, to show mercy is also one of the gifts in life. To show mercy means to help with sympathy. Whenever you truly help one by sympathizing with him, it means that you are showing mercy to him. Suppose a brother has a problem or a difficulty and you sympathize with him and render some help. That is an act of showing mercy.

If you put together all seven gifts mentioned in Romans 12, you will discover that they are the gifts that are necessary for the practicing of the Body life for the local church. In the local church we firstly need the speaking for God under His direct inspiration. Based upon this inspired speaking we may have teaching, and based upon both prophesying and teaching we may have exhortation. Along with this we have the leadership of the elders and the service of the deacons. In addition, we have those that are able to give material things to the church, care for the needy, and further the Lord's work. Finally, there are those who show mercy to others. In an age filled with difficulties and troubles, they can sympathize with others and show mercy to them. These seven gifts are adequate for practicing the church life. Paul was marvelous. He was an expert in the church life, presenting all these matters in a very simple but inclusive way. How we should worship the Lord for such an apostle!

We all need to be impressed with the fact that in Romans 12 the gifts of speaking in tongues, interpretation, healing, and miracles are not mentioned. Such gifts are miraculous gifts, but in Romans 12 we find the gifts of grace in life. An example of a miraculous gift is the speaking in a human language by Balaam's donkey. Although the donkey did not possess a human life, it spoke a human language. Undoubtedly, that was a

miraculous gift. The gifts listed in Romans 12 are not miraculous gifts; they are the gifts of grace in life. As you enjoy God as life and grow in life, you find that, corresponding to your growth in life, you have a certain skill or ability. This is what we call a gift of grace in life. The donkey did not need to have growth in life in order to speak a human language. It did not matter whether the donkey was small or big, young or old. The gift was miraculous: it did not depend upon the donkey's growth. However, to be an elder in the church does not depend upon a miraculous gift. Do not think that after being saved a short while you can pray for several hours, receive the so-called baptism, and suddenly become an elder. If a person could become an elder in this way, it would mean that eldership is a miraculous gift. But to be an elder you do not need miraculous gifts; you need the gift of grace by growth in life. You need to grow day by day and year by year. If you do not exhibit the growth in life, you cannot be an elder. You cannot be an elder if you lack the adequate measure of life. I hope that everyone who reads this message is now able to differentiate between these two categories of gifts--the miraculous gifts and the gifts of grace in life.

Many of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 are miraculous gifts. However, even there some of the gifts are not miraculous. For example, neither the word of wisdom nor the word of knowledge is miraculous. As we have seen, in Romans 12 none of the gifts are miraculous; all of the gifts found there are the gifts of grace in life which require the growth in life. Your growth in life gives you a certain measure of life, and out of that measure of life your skill or gift will be manifested. This will qualify you for a particular ministry or service in the church life.

The gifts of grace in life are necessary for the practice of the Body life. If you neglect the gifts of grace in life and concentrate on the miraculous gifts, the church will be divided in a very short time. Be assured that we could never be one by stressing miraculous gifts. The miraculous gifts tend to divide, while the gifts of grace in life build up.

Paul was very experienced in the Body life and he knew that the gifts of grace in life are necessary for the building of the church. Therefore, in Romans 12 he did not list the miraculous gifts among the items necessary for the church life. No one can deny the wisdom of the Apostle Paul. Although he mentioned speaking tongues in 1 Corinthians, he did not include it in the book of Romans. There certainly must have been a reason for this. Paul, an expert in the church life, knew from his writing of 1 Corinthians that the miraculous gifts had been the cause of divisions there in Corinth. Even in 1 Corinthians we can see the fact that speaking in tongues and the other miraculous gifts had a divisive effect on the church. Therefore, Paul did not include these gifts in the book of Romans. Paul was both wise and careful, recognizing the fact that the miraculous gifts were helpful to individual Christians. In 1 Corinthians Paul said that speaking in tongues builds up the individual who exercises it, but that it does not build up the church (1 Cor. 14:4). He told the Corinthians to care for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:12, 26). In the book of Romans his concern was not the building up of a particular individual, but the building up of the Body. Thus, he did not include the miraculous gifts in this book. I know that this word may not be pleasant to those who have had a background of tongues-speaking. Nevertheless, I ask you to be patient and to consider what is best for the church life in the long run. If you mean business to practice the church life, you should not appraise the miraculous gifts so highly, but rather pay your complete attention to the gifts of grace in life that will build up the church.

The book of Romans was written soon after 1 Corinthians. Both of these books were written while Paul was on his third journey of ministry. While Paul was staying at Ephesus on his third journey of ministry, information came to him about the confusion and division that were rampant in Corinth. Thus, from Ephesus he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians adjusting them for the abuse of the miraculous gifts. After writing that letter

he visited Corinth personally. While he was staying in Corinth he wrote the book of Romans. These are facts of history. First Corinthians was written either in A.D. 56, 57 or 59, and Romans was written approximately a year afterward. In 1 Corinthians Paul adjusted the abuse of tongues-speaking and of the other miraculous gifts. Soon afterward, when he wrote the book of Romans, he said nothing about the miraculous gifts, probably because he was keenly aware of the confusion they had wrought in Corinth. Remember that he wrote the book of Romans from Corinth, the scene of confusion and abuse regarding miraculous gifts. We should not neglect history, for it has many lessons to teach us. It is quite significant that the book of Romans was written from Corinth. At that time Corinth was the hot bed of miraculous gifts, yet Paul did not say a word about miraculous gifts in the book of Romans. This is very significant and it deserves our attention.

I want to speak a little more about the gifts that proceed out of the growth of life. Before Paul talked about the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, he spoke strongly about the growth in life in chapter three. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye are God's farm, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). As we have pointed out many times in the past, the farm grows the materials for the building. All the materials that are necessary for the building of God's house are the product of the growth on the farm. Then Paul said that as a wise masterbuilder he laid the foundation and that we all need to be careful how we build thereupon (1 Cor. 3:10). We should build with gold, silver, and precious stones and not with wood, hay, and stubble (v. 12). If you put together all these verses from 1 Corinthians 3, you will see that Paul was telling the Corinthians the proper way to build up the church in their locality. The proper way of building the church is not by miraculous gifts, but by the genuine growth in life which will transform the saints into precious materials for God's temple. Furthermore, Paul said that he fed and planted them and that Apollos watered them (1 Cor. 3:2-6). The

feeding, planting, and watering are all for the growth, the growth which will cultivate the talents and gifts that are useful in building up the house of God with the proper transformed materials.

Consider a newborn child. At the time of birth the child has every necessary organ. However, few of the organs can function at the time of birth because the child lacks the necessary measure of growth in life. The more the mother feeds her child, the more the child grows. After a certain length of time, the child will be able to walk and after another period of time, he will be able to speak. Eventually, he will be fully grown, and all of his talents will have been completely cultivated for practical use. When he has matured, he will have the required skills, and these skills are the gifts that come out of the growth in life. This is what Paul meant by gifts in Romans 12.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

TRANSFORMATION: IN PRACTICING THE BODY LIFE (3) AND IN SUBJECTION, LOVE, AND WARFARE

V. BY THE LIVING OF A NORMAL LIFE

We have seen the definition of transformation and three points relating to transformation in practicing the Body life: the presenting of our bodies, the renewing of our minds, and the exercising of our gifts. Now we come to a further point, the living of a normal life (12:9-21).

A. Toward Others

1. Loving

In living a normal life, we firstly should have love toward others. In verse 9 Paul says, "Let love be without hypocrisy," and in verse 10 he says, "Love one another warmly in brotherly love."

2. Showing Honor

Verse 10 also speaks of "vying with one another in showing honor." In the matter of showing honor we must move quickly and be the first one to show honor to others.

3. Communicating and Showing Hospitality

Furthermore, we need to communicate to the needs of the saints and to pursue hospitality (v. 13).

4. Rejoicing with Those Who Rejoice and Weeping with Those Who Weep

In verse 15 Paul says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." We must be transformed

before we can rejoice and weep with others. Some people were born in such a way that they are unable to weep or to rejoice. Regardless of how happy or joyful you are, they remain expressionless, resembling the statue of Mary at the entrance of a Catholic church, which never changes its expression. Some brothers and sisters are like this. They do not know how to rejoice or to weep with others; they seem to be stones without human affection. However, the church life needs emotional people. We all must be properly emotional and full of expression. I would like to have a face that can express all my emotions properly and adequately. We cannot put together people with stone faces and call it the church life; we must be living stones, stones full of affection. We must learn to rejoice and to weep with others.

5. Being of the Same Mind

Then Paul admonishes us saying, "Be of the same mind toward one another, not minding high things, but being led away to the lowly. Do not be wise in yourselves" (v. 16). Paul was practical. When he tells us to be led away to lowly things, he includes everything. We should try to be led away to whatever is lowly. Do not be so high, but be led away to lowly things.

B. Toward God

Verse 11 describes the way we should be toward God: "Not slothful in zeal; burning in spirit; serving the Lord as a slave."

1. Not Slothful

In the church life we need to be diligent. No slothful person can prevail in practicing the church life. For the sake of the Body our slothfulness must be dealt with.

2. Burning in spirit

For the Body life, we need a body that is presented, a mind that is renewed in the transformation of the soul,

and a spirit that is burning. Our whole being--spirit, soul, and body--is included in the church life. For the sake of the church life, our body needs to be presented, our soul needs to be transformed, and our mind needs to be metabolically changed. Our mind must be renewed, not simply by being taught, but by being transformed, having the element of Christ spread into it to produce a metabolic change. The transformation of our soul primarily depends upon the renewing of our mind. If we are serious about practicing the church life, we need to present our body, to have our soul transformed, and to be burned and burning in our spirit. If we have a heart for the church life, but fail to present our body to the church, we are impractical. However, suppose we are bodily in the church life, yet our mind is filled with old concepts, thoughts, and traditions. Suppose our mind is occupied by our own natural cleverness, imaginations, and concepts. We may come to the church with our body, but we bring with us our very troublesome mind. Such an unrenewed mind will be a great problem to the church. Our body must be presented and our mind must be renewed. Suppose, by the Lord's mercy, our body has been presented and our mind has been renewed, but our spirit remains cold. That will never work for the church life. After the presenting of the body and the renewing of the mind, we need the burning of the spirit. How we long to see that all the saints in the Lord's recovery would have three characteristics: a body that has been absolutely presented for the church life; a mind that has been completely renewed by metabolic transformation in the soul, a mind that is free from worldly, natural, and religious thoughts, wholly saturated with the Lord's mind, and purely for the Lord; and a spirit that is set on fire. If all the saints in the Lord's recovery are like this, how wonderful the church life will be.

3. Serving as a Slave

In the church life we must serve the Lord as a slave. A slave is one who has been sold to his master and who no

longer has any freedom. We need to be this kind of person for the Body life, serving the Lord as slaves and having no freedom to do things according to ourselves. Therefore, toward God we must not be slothful. We must burn in our spirit and serve Him as a slave.

C. Toward Ourselves

In Romans 12 we also see four aspects of a normal life toward ourselves.

1. Rejoicing in Hope

We Christians should be a rejoicing people because we always have the enjoyment of the Lord. If we enjoy the Lord in His riches, we will not only be joyful inwardly, but we will be rejoicing outwardly. Even in times of trouble we should and can rejoice in hope. We are not people who are without God and without Christ, having no hope (Eph. 2:12). We have God and we have Christ. So, regardless of the situation, we have hope and we can rejoice in hope.

2. Enduring in Tribulation

We Christians must also be able to endure tribulation. We must be an enduring people. By rejoicing in hope we can endure any kind of tribulation. Chapter 5:3 says that we can exult in tribulation. We not only endure, but also exult in tribulation.

3. Persevering in Prayer

In order to endure tribulation we need to be persevering in prayer. We need to pray persistently. This will not only enable us to endure tribulation, but also to remain in the enjoyment of the Lord, in His presence and in His will.

4. Abhorring and Conquering What is Evil and Cleaving to What is Good

In addition to all this, as God's holy people, we must abhor and conquer the evil things and cleave to the good things. We Christians, who are separated unto God, must

maintain the highest standard of behavior, a standard above that of moral and ethical people.

D. Toward the Persecutor and Enemy

We must also live a normal life in relation to our persecutors and enemies.

1. Blessing and Not Cursing

We should bless those who persecute us and not curse them (v. 14). Regardless of how bad people may be toward us, our mouth should only express blessing, not cursing. How the Lord blessed us when we were His enemies! We should bless our enemies and persecutors in the same way. This also is an aspect of the life that follows the Lord's steps.

2. Repaying No Evil for Evil

We should repay no one evil for evil (v. 17). Under the law it was eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Today we are not under law but under grace. We must not repay evil for evil, but rather repay good for evil, as the Lord has done to us.

3. Not Avenging Ourselves

Furthermore, we should not avenge ourselves, but give place to the wrath of God; for vengeance belongs to the Lord (v. 19). While we are practicing the church life with a normal human life, we should not avenge ourselves in any way. We should be willing to suffer people's wrongdoing and the loss of everything. We should leave the whole situation in the sovereign hand of the Lord and give Him the place to do whatever He likes according to His sovereignty.

4. Heaping Coals of Fire on Them by Feeding Them and Giving Them Drink

In verse 20 Paul says, "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing

this you will heap coals of fire upon his head." This is actually loving our enemies. Our love to them will be coals of fire heaped upon their heads to turn them to the Lord. The best way to calm our enemies is to give them something to eat and drink. Thus, Paul commands us, "Do not be conquered by the evil, but conquer the evil with the good" (v. 21).

5. Living in Peace with All Men

Finally, we need to live in peace with all men, as far as it depends upon us to do so (v. 18). Sometimes it is not possible to live in peace with all men because the other parties are not willing to have a life of peace. In such a situation, there is nothing that we can do. Therefore, Paul says that we should live in peace with all men "if possible."

E. In General: Taking Forethought for Things Honorable in the Sight of All Men

In general, we must take "forethought for things honorable in the sight of all men" (v. 17). We must be very thoughtful before all men about honorable things, and we must be thoughtful beforehand. In order to keep from offending people we should not oppose anything that is honorable. However, we should not care for these honorable things in a blind way lest we be distracted from the Lord's way. Since we are not only living before God but also before men, we need to take forethought for things honorable in the sight of men. Second Corinthians 8:21 says, "We take forethought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (Gk.).

TRANSFORMATION IN SUBJECTION, LOVE, AND WARFARE

I. IN SUBJECTION

Romans 13:1 says, "Let every person be subject to the authorities over them. For there is no authority except

from God, and those which exist are appointed by God." A natural character is a rebellious character, but a transformed character is submissive. Subjecting ourselves to the authorities appointed by God requires a certain amount of transformation. Sisters, if you want to submit to your husbands, you need transformation. If we are submissive to God's appointed authorities, it is an indicator that we have a certain amount of transformation, because our natural character and disposition are rebellious. We were born rebellious, and our natural response to authority is to say, "No." Thus, subjection to authority requires transformation from the growth in life. "Therefore he who resists the authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose will receive to themselves judgment" (v. 2). It is not good to resist authority. Either the judgment will descend upon you from the authority or it will come to you directly from God.

In verse 5 Paul says that "it is necessary to be subject, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience." Because of conscience, we need to learn, by being transformed, to be subject to authorities.

Furthermore, we need to pay taxes and to render revenue to whom they are due. We also must render fear and honor to whom they are due. To render tax, fear, and honor to whom they are due indicates that we are subject to authority.

II. IN LOVE

"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does not work evil to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." The commandment to love sums up all the other commandments. We need the Holy Spirit to work in us and to give us an amount of transformation in life that we may practice love toward all men. Love is the expression of

life. It is not just an outward behavior, but an expression of the inward life. Simply trying to love without the supply of life does not work. In order to love people and spontaneously fulfill the commandments, we need the life supply and the transformation in life. Our natural life is not a life of God's love. We need to be transformed in life that we may have God's nature of love to love people. If we are careless in loving others, we do not need transformation in life. But if we are going to practice love toward all men, we need to be transformed in life.

III. IN WARFARE

Now we come to transformation in waging the warfare, meaning spiritual warfare. Verse 11 says, "And this, knowing the time, that now is the hour for you to be raised out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed." Salvation here means salvation in the last stage, which is the redemption of our body. Salvation encompasses our spirit, soul, and body. In the first stage of salvation, the Lord regenerates our spirit; in the second stage, He transforms our soul; and in the third stage, which is the last, at the time of His return He will transfigure our vile body into a glorious one (Phil. 3:21). When verse 11 says that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, it is referring to the third stage of salvation, the transfiguration of our body. In other words, this refers to the redemption of our body, or, to use another term, the full sonship revealed in 8:19, 21, and 23.

A. To Be Raised Out of Sleep

We need to realize that now is the time to wake up from sleep. Although night is the time for sleep, "the night is far advanced" (13:12). So, we should wake up, be watchful, and sleep no more.

B. To Cast Off the Works of Darkness and Put on the Weapons of Light

The present age is the nighttime. When the Lord Jesus returns, day will dawn. The next age will be the daytime. Since the night is advanced and the day is near, we need

not only to wake up from sleep, but also to cast off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light (v. 12). This indicates a warfare.

C. To Walk Seemingly As in the Day

"Let us walk becomingly as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy" (v. 13). All of these works must be cast aside. They are the works of darkness, and we are the children of the day.

D. To Put on Christ

Verse 14 is very important. "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts." In verse 12 we are told to "put on the weapons of light" and in verse 14 to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." By placing these two phrases together, we can see that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the weapons of light. Furthermore, the phrase "make no provision for the flesh" corresponds to 8:12, where Paul says that "we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh." The warfare in 13:14 is between the lusts and the Spirit as in Galatians 5:17. Christ is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). Thus, we must put on Christ in order to fight the battle against our lusts. Here the warfare does not concern the devil or the principalities in the air as in Ephesians 6:12; it concerns the lusts against which we must fight by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ as our weapons of light. This kind of warfare is different from that in 7:23. There it is the evil law in our flesh warring against the good law in our mind; it has nothing to do with the Spirit. But here it is that we, by putting on Christ, fight against the fleshy works of darkness.

What does it mean to put on Christ? We have been baptized into Christ and are already in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27). Why then must we still put on Christ? To put on Christ actually means to live by Christ and to live out Christ. Although we are in Christ, we need to live by Christ and to live out Christ practically. We need to have a daily living that is by Christ and that expresses Christ. The expression of Christ in our daily life is our weapon for fighting against the flesh. Since the battle in verse 14 is not against the devil and spiritual wickedness, but against the flesh with all of its lusts, we need to live by Christ. The more we live by Christ, the more He becomes our weapons against the lusts of the flesh.

E. Making No Provision for the Flesh

Paul says that we should "make no provision for the flesh." We should not supply the flesh with anything. This indicates that the flesh continues to exist. Regardless of how spiritual we become, the flesh can still be revived. The flesh is hungry and desires food, but we must starve it to death, making no provision that will allow it to fulfill its lusts.

What does it mean to make provision for the flesh? Since the young people especially may find it difficult to understand this, I would like to give some illustrations. The present human society is dark and evil, containing numerous provisions for the flesh. Consider, for instance, the newspapers with their pictures and advertisements. I do not believe that anyone is so spiritual that when he sees an evil picture in the newspaper that he will not be influenced. Your experiences will testify to you that when you looked at some of the advertisements and pictures in the newspapers your flesh was aroused. Those movie advertisements were a provision for the flesh. Furthermore, television has also been much used by the enemy to provide food for the hungry flesh. I am not legal to say that Christians should not watch television, but I do say that it is better to keep away from it. Do not think

that you are so strong. Suppose there is a deep well nearby. If I do not wish to fall into the well, I should stay away from it and not walk around it. However, if I continue to walk near the well, although I may not fall in it today, I probably will in the future. It is better to be protected and stay away from the well. Likewise, it is dangerous to watch television. If you intend to watch television, you should pray, "Lord, look at the television with me. Be one with me in my spirit to watch television." If you pray in this way, it may be all right for you to do it. Otherwise, perhaps you should consider giving it up. At any rate, television has been a powerful means for the enemy to make provision for the flesh, and many evil things have occurred as a result of its influence.

As I have said previously, it is difficult to determine in which subsection of the book of Romans to place chapter thirteen. It may be a continuation of chapter twelve. If it does not actually belong to the portion on the living of a normal life, it is at least closely associated with it. So, 12:9 through 13:14 may be considered as a whole portion concerning the living of a normal life. Undoubtedly 12:1-8 concerns the practice of the Body life. Along with this practice of the Body life, we need the living of a normal life which is portrayed in 12:9-21 and possibly in chapter thirteen as well. We should not neglect this part of Romans. All of the verses in this section are very clear, and we need not say much about them. It would be a great help to the young people to memorize some of these verses such as, "Let love be without hypocrisy" and "Abhor what is evil; cleave to what is good" and "Love one another warmly in brotherly love." These sayings are almost proverbs. If the young people memorize these verses, it will help them to experience the transformation which will give them the living of a normal life to practice the proper church life. Without the living of such a normal life, we are lacking the necessary base for the church life. I believe that this was the reason that, immediately after describing the practice of the church life, Paul presents the requirements of the living of a normal human life. The

best presentation of the normal living in the entire Bible is found in these verses. Therefore, we need to pray over them and fellowship with one another concerning them.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

TRANSFORMATION IN RECEIVING THE BELIEVERS

(1)

The gospel of Romans is wonderful. In the first eleven chapters Paul completely covers justification, sanctification, glorification, and selection. If we read these four main sections, we shall see that God has accomplished nearly all that He intended to do. In Romans 1 through 11 we have seen God's creation, man's fall, Christ's redemption, God's justification, and God's reconciliation. Furthermore, Paul has unveiled to us God's identification, the life process of sanctification, and glorification. Also Paul has led us into the source of all of God's activities--His heart of love. Paul also has led us into the secret chamber of God's selection where we have seen His economy. What a panoramic view we have seen! Consider all of the items we have passed through: God's creation, the fall of man, God's redemption, justification, reconciliation, identification, sanctification, glorification, love, and selection. Although all of these items are wonderful, none of them is the ultimate consummation of God's work.

The ultimate consummation of God's work is the church life. Satan is subtle and has caused many of the dear, seeking Christians to even hate the word church. Many Christians uplift sanctification and life, but seem to cast the church behind their back, not caring for it, and even opposing it. Most of them hold the erroneous concept that the church is not for now, but for the future. Hence, whenever we talk about the church we find ourselves in

trouble. This is the subtlety of the enemy. Nearly two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus promised that He would soon return; yet He has not come because the church is not ready. Where is the church properly built as the Lord mentioned in Matthew 16:18? Without the church properly prepared, there is no way for the Lord Jesus to return. His coming back requires two things: the restoration of the nation of Israel and the recovery of the church life. If you understand prophecy, you will realize that these two matters are the greatest signs of the Lord's return. The restoration of Israel and the recovery of the church are necessary for the Lord's coming back. Without this preparation it is impossible for the Lord to return. In the Lord's recovery we are preparing the way for His return. Every day we read in the newspapers regarding the events in the Middle East. All that is occurring there is the preparation for the restoration of the nation of Israel. Although I am assured that the Lord is working in the Middle East, I am quite concerned about His work among us. He must match His work with Israel by His work with the church. Thus, we must pay our full attention to the church life.

After eleven chapters of discourse, Paul comes to the ultimate point, the church life, in Romans 12. We have already seen that Paul uses five chapters to cover the church life. I have previously pointed out that the section on the church life begins in a specific manner, with Paul saying, "I beg you therefore, brothers" (12:1). Paul was begging us to present our bodies physically and practically for the church life. After begging us to present our bodies for the church life, Paul proceeded to the second part of our being, our soul, and spoke to us regarding our need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (12:2). Our soul needs a radical, essential, and metabolic change in both nature and form. Our whole being needs to be changed for the sake of the church life, for nothing natural, common, worldly, or modern is suitable for the Body life. We need a metabolic transformation through the inward working of the divine life element. We need a

radical revolution in our thought, emotion, and will. Once we undergo this kind of metabolic transformation in our whole being, we shall be good for the church life. Furthermore, once our body has been presented and our soul transformed by the renewing of our mind, our spirit needs to be burning. Our spirit must be set on fire. If we have all of these qualities, we shall see out of the growth in life the manifestation of the gifts of grace in life. The different gifts and functions will begin to emerge. We must not be like the pew-sitters in the so-called churches who go to the church building and sit in their pews as dead members without any function. Such people can never participate in the church life. The people in the church life must have their bodies presented, their souls transformed by the renewing of their minds, and their spirits burning. Then the necessary gifts will be exercised and we shall have the church life.

For the proper church life, we need the proper Christian life. Therefore, beginning at 12:9 and continuing through 13:14 Paul covers the normal Christian life. We have seen that in this portion of Romans Paul covers many points: our attitude and behavior toward God, our fellow members, ourselves, and our persecutors; our attitude toward the government and the established authorities; the exercise of the principle of love; and the warfare against the flesh. In order to practice the church life, we need to have a normal Christian daily life, a life which matches the church life. We need to have our body presented, our soul transformed, our mind renewed, our spirit burning, and our gifts exercised. Thus, at the end of Romans 13, the church life has been portrayed and the Christian life adequately defined.

However, there is still a great need. We must take care of the matter of receiving the saints. In the matter of receiving the saints, we need to exercise the discernment which is derived from the practicing of the church life and the living of a normal Christian life. If we are unclear about receiving the believers, we shall damage the church

life and cut it into pieces. We shall resemble a person who, in so many details, takes care of his physical body, but is negligent about a particular matter which can cause death. If we are not careful about receiving the saints, the church will be mutilated. During the more than forty years I have been in the church life, I have met a good number of dear saints who proclaimed that they had seen the Body, but who, after a short time, became divisive over doctrine, damaged the church, and cut themselves off from the fellowship of the church. When they first contacted the church, they said, "Hallelujah, I have seen the church," but they became dissenting a few months later. Therefore, I say that we must be very careful about properly receiving the believers.

In order to receive our fellow believers in the Lord, we need transformation. If we remain natural, we shall be unable to go along with others. In fact, according to our natural disposition, we cannot even agree with ourselves consistently. We all fight with ourselves. Thus, it is very difficult for any Christian remaining in his natural disposition to go along with others. Receiving the saints requires transformation. I believe that Paul's word in Romans 12:2 concerning being transformed by the renewing of the mind not only governs the section on the practice of the Body life, but also all the other chapters relating to the church life. Transformation governs the items found in chapter thirteen as well as some of the aspects of chapters fourteen and fifteen. If we are not transformed to at least a certain degree, we shall be unable to be one with other believers. Although we may meet with them, we shall be unable to fellowship with them or to open ourselves to them. If we were to open ourselves to them, we would end up fighting with them because we are untransformed and so natural in our concept, behavior, and all that we are and do. Thus, in order to receive our fellow believers, we need transformation. All of Romans 14 and part of 15 is devoted to this matter. As we shall see, Paul deals with the receiving of the believers with respect to five main points.

I. ACCORDING TO GOD'S RECEIVING, NOT ACCORDING TO DOCTRINAL CONCEPTS

We must receive the saints according to God's receiving of them. Whomever God has received, we are compelled to receive. We have no choice. Consider a family with many children. Some of the children are good and the others bad; some are sweet and the others naughty. Perhaps in such a large family some of the children may not be happy with all of their brothers and sisters. However, the children must realize that it does not rest with them to determine who their brothers and sisters will be. That depends upon the parents. If one of the children in this family thinks that his brother is ugly and complains against him, his complaint should not be directed against his brother, but against his parents who brought him forth. Our heavenly Father has brought forth many children, many Christians, and He has received them all. Therefore, we also must receive them, not according to our tastes or preferences, but according to God's receiving.

However, most of the receiving of the believers in Christianity is not according to God's receiving, but according to doctrinal concepts. Consider the example of baptism. There are many different concepts about baptism. Some people insist on sprinkling, some on immersion, others argue about the name in which we baptize people, and still others argue against physical baptism, claiming that baptism is purely spiritual. How many different schools of opinion there are over this one matter of baptism! This is dreadful. And this over just one doctrine! It would take us months to cover all the differing doctrinal concepts, such as eternal security, predestination, free will, rapture, etc. Even the teaching of head covering has caused some divisions. Certain Christian groups pay a great deal of attention to the matter of head covering for the sisters. There is much argument even about this as people debate the size, color, and thickness of the material used as a covering. I know of one group that insists upon a white head covering, not

permitting any other color. Even this little thing has caused division.

No one can say that the churches in the Lord's recovery are heretical. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and is divinely inspired word for word. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He was incarnated as a man and lived on this earth, that He died upon the cross for our sins, that He was resurrected physically, and spiritually, that He has ascended to the heavens and is the Lord of all at the right hand of God, and that He dwells within us. We believe in the unique God, the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We believe that the Lord Jesus is coming again and that He will establish His kingdom on the earth. There is nothing heretical about any of this. Nevertheless, some people criticize us and find fault with us because we do not agree with all of their opinions regarding doctrine. Some insist upon baptizing others three times and demand that the church practice this. However, if we make this our practice, we shall denominate ourselves as a "three-times-baptizing church." Others insist on speaking in tongues. Undoubtedly, the Bible includes tongue-speaking, but we cannot make the church a tongue-speaking church. The church must be general. Many dear saints have attempted to make the church in the Lord's recovery into a particular kind of church according to their doctrinal concept, but we simply cannot agree with that. Therefore, some have separated from us because they were divisive over doctrines or particular practices.

The pitiful history of Christianity is a history of division and confusion. Much of this division has been caused by divergent doctrinal concepts. We have learned this lesson after a thorough study of church history and we do not want to repeat the tragedy of the history of Christianity. Therefore, we will never argue about head covering or baptism or holy days or about the wine used at the Lord's table. We will never dispute about trifling matters such as the bread and the cup used at the Lord's table, the kind of water used in baptism, and the way of

baptizing people. The Lord's recovery is not concerned with that. The Lord's recovery is for Christ as life and for the church as the expression of Christ in unity in each locality. Some dear saints, after claiming to see the church, continued to hold to their particular doctrinal understanding. As a result, they caused a great deal of trouble, inflicting suffering upon themselves and severing themselves from the Lord's recovery in their attempt to cut the church into pieces. Thus, we must be careful not to receive people according to doctrinal concepts, but according to God's receiving.

Paul knew how important was the matter of receiving the believers and consequently he devoted all of chapter fourteen plus part of chapter fifteen to this subject. In Romans 12 we see the Body. In Romans 14 we are given a warning. If we do not take heed to this warning, we shall use doctrine as a knife to cut in pieces the very Body revealed in chapter twelve. Many Christians talk about the Body of Christ according to Romans 12; nevertheless, they are responsible for killing the Body and for cutting it into pieces by wielding the knife of doctrinal divisiveness. This is why the Body that is revealed according to Romans 12 must be lived out according to Romans 14. Without Romans 14 we are unable to have the proper practice of the Body unveiled in chapter twelve. Many Christians pay attention to Romans 12, but neglect Romans 14, talking about the Body, but remaining divisive and divided because they continue to hold to their doctrinal concepts. They are unwilling to drop them. Thus, it is impossible for them to experience the Body life. Therefore, Paul, after revealing the proper church life and the normal Christian life, takes up the crucial point of receiving the believers. If we do not care for this point, we shall commit spiritual suicide as far as the church life is concerned. In order to have the Body life, we must receive the believers according to God's receiving of them in a general way, not according to our doctrinal concepts in a particular way.

The most terrible doctrinal concepts are mainly those held by the religious, Jewish believers. These concepts fall

into two categories: eating and keeping of days. Those who hold these concepts insist that certain foods are holy and that others are unclean, that certain days are holy and that others are common. They base their dietary regulations on Leviticus 11. In their eyes, the Gentiles are little more than unclean beasts that eat everything. Acts 10 shows that even Peter, the first apostle, was religious with respect to eating. His religious nature forced God to give him the same revelation three times regarding what is sanctified and what is common (Acts 10:9-16). When the Lord told Peter to "kill and eat," Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:13-14). The Lord answered Peter saying, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15). We see by this that Peter, like so many others, clung to doctrinal concepts because he was religious. When such people argue for their concepts, they think that they are fighting for the truth of God. Actually, they are frustrating God's move in the building of the Body of Christ. No doctrinal concept should be our ground in receiving the believers. The only ground for us to receive the believers is God's receiving.

A. Receive Him Who Is Weak in Faith

In 14:1 Paul says, "Now him who is weak in faith receive." Some believers are weak in faith because they have not yet received much of the transfusing and infusing of the element of God into them. Nevertheless, they do have a measure of faith and must be received.

Some believers, being weak in faith, dare not to eat everything or to regard every day the same. Yet they do have a measure of faith and are genuine believers in Christ. So, based upon this measure of faith of theirs and the fact that they are believers, we must receive them.

B. Not Passing Judgment on Reasonings

We need to read all of 14:1-5. "Now him who is weak in faith receive, not with a view to passing judgment on

reasonings. One believes that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has received him. Who are you that judges another's household servant? To his own lord he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One judges one day above another, another judges every day alike. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind." In Romans 14 Paul himself was an excellent example of not passing judgment on doctrinal reasonings, for he did not express his opinion about which doctrine is right or wrong. Certainly he knew the correct doctrines about eating and about the keeping of days. Nevertheless, he did not take sides, but charged all of us to be general and not to criticize others. Let others be free to eat whatever they want and to keep whatever day they want. To them one day is holier than another, but to the ones who are stronger in faith every day is the same.

We also must learn not to pass judgments on doctrinal reasonings. When people ask you about the method of baptism or the kind of water used, you should not get into a doctrinal argument. In other words, do not make a judgment on the matter. The best way to reply to doctrinal questions is to help people to turn themselves from doctrinal concepts to Christ who is our life. By nature, we are all inclined to convince others and to argue with them about our concepts. We must avoid that.

C. Receive Him, for God Has Received Him

In 14:3 Paul says "for God has received him." This is the basis on which we receive others. As long as our Father has received a person, we must also receive him. We have no choice. Regardless how weak or how peculiar a believer may be, we must receive him.

D. All Are the Lord's and All Live to the Lord

Let us read 14:6-9. "He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who eats, eats to the Lord, for he

gives thanks to God; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself; for whether we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For Christ died and lived again for this, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." All genuine believers are the Lord's. All have been born of the same Lord regardless of the way in which they have been baptized, of the food they eat, or the days they observe. Verses 6 through 9 show us what is important and what is not important. To live for the Lord and to belong to the Lord are important. As long as a person belongs to the Lord and lives to Him, he is all right. We must not place further demands upon him in accordance with our doctrinal concepts. If, on the other hand, we begin to argue about doctrine, we shall soon be divided according to our various concepts. We must care for the important things. As long as God the Father has received us all and as long as we believe in the Lord and live to Him, we should receive one another.

II. IN THE LIGHT OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT

Furthermore, we must also receive the saints in the light of the judgment seat. We need to read verses 10 through 12. "But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God." The "judgment-seat of God" of verse 10 is the "judgment seat of Christ" of 2 Corinthians 5:10. The judgment at the judgment seat of God will be held before the millennium, immediately after Christ's return (1 Cor. 4:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:19; Luke 19:15), and the life and work of the believers will be judged at that time (Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 4:5; 3:13-15; Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15). This judgment has

nothing to do with a believer's salvation, for everyone who appears at the judgment seat of God will have already been saved. This judgment will judge the believers' life and work after they have been saved. This judgment will determine a believer's reward in the millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12; Luke 14:14; 2 Tim. 4:8). The believers will stand before this judgment seat to give account to God of their life and work. Here is Paul's thought: we should not argue with others or criticize them, but take care of ourselves, because one day we shall stand before the judgment seat of God to give an account of our life and work after we were saved. Since this judgment concerns how the believers have lived before the Lord and what they have worked for the Lord after they were saved, and since the transformation of the believers has very much to do with this judgment, it is mentioned here in the section on transformation.

Because the truth of the judgment of the believers has been almost completely hidden from the saints, we need to read and comment upon some of the verses given as references in the preceding paragraph. We may begin with 2 Corinthians 5:10. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This is not the eternal judgment of God mentioned in Romans 2:2, 3, 5, 16 and 3:8, which will be mainly carried out at the white throne revealed in Revelation 20:11-15. The eternal judgment at the white throne will be after the millennium, will judge all the dead unbelievers, and will concern eternal punishment in the lake of fire. The judgment at the judgment seat of Christ will judge the life and work of the believers and it will determine whether the believers will receive a reward for the "good" or suffer a type of loss for the "bad." Then 1 Corinthians 4:5 says, "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." This verse also denotes the

judgment at the judgment seat of God or of Christ. If we do rightly, we shall receive "praise of God." Matthew 16:27 also speaks of the judgment of the believers. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." This verse tells us that at His coming the Lord will reward us according to our works. We find a similar thought in Matthew 25:19. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." What does this mean? It means that the Lord will look into our record and that we will have to render a full account to Him of our life and work after we were saved. This will occur at the judgment seat of Christ. Luke 19:15 is closely related to this. "And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading." Once again, this denotes the reckoning that will be made to the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ.

We need to pay close attention to 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The words "suffer loss" in verse 15 do not mean to perish. Our salvation is eternal and we cannot perish. However, if you suffer loss, you will be saved "as by fire." Many Christians neglect this verse. Nearly all of them claim that as long as they are saved there will be no problem in the future judgment. If you tell them that they might suffer loss, they will insist that such a thought is heretical. Nevertheless, we must listen to Paul's clear word in 1 Corinthians 3:15. Paul definitely says that if a man's work is burned, he will suffer a loss. What kind of work will be burned? The wood, hay, and stubble mentioned in verse 12. What kind of loss will this be?

Although we cannot say with certainty, it is definite that some loss will be incurred. It is not the loss of our salvation, for Paul says of the man whose work is burned that "he himself shall be saved." Nevertheless, we should not be complacent, because Paul concludes the verse by saying that the man will be saved "so as by fire," a phrase which is better rendered as "as through fire." When hearing this some may respond that this is the Catholic teaching of purgatory. I am familiar with the Catholic teaching about purgatory and with the fact that Catholicism does use this verse from 1 Corinthians as a basis for their teaching about it. According to the Catholic teaching concerning purgatory, you may shorten the suffering of a relative who is enduring the purifying fires of purgatory after his death by making a monetary contribution on his behalf. However, when we refer to the pure Word of the Bible, we do not have in mind this concept of purgatory. Along with Paul, we are simply saying that we must be careful, for when the Lord returns He will ask us to render to Him a full account of our life and work. He will say, "I gave you a certain gift. What have you done for Me? What have you accomplished for Me since you were saved? What kind of building work have you done? Have you built with wood, hay, and stubble, or with gold, silver, and precious stones?" This will determine whether or not the Lord will reward us. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul tells us clearly that if our work remains, we shall receive a positive reward, but if our work is consumed, we will suffer loss, although we shall be eternally saved. I dare not say what the loss will be, but I know that it will not be pleasant. I simply present to you the pure Word. This is an aspect of the judgment seat of Christ. This is the clear word of the Bible, and the Bible can never be wrong. To be saved is one thing; to receive a positive reward from the Lord for your work is another thing; and to suffer loss for your improper work is still another. This is very serious, and we should not be loose about it.

Because Christians are not clear about the pure Word of God, there are the two major schools of Calvinism and Arminianism. According to the Calvinist school, once you are saved you are eternally saved, and there will be no

problems in the future. According to the Arminian school, it is possible to be lost again if you do not live and work uprightly after you are saved. These two schools represent two extremes, and neither school has found the bridge in the Bible which spans the gap between them. The bridge is the judgment seat of God. Once we have been saved, we are eternally saved and can never be lost. This contrasts with the Pentecostal teaching which claims that people are not eternally saved in this life and that it is possible to be saved and lost many times during the span of one lifetime. This kind of salvation is like an elevator: it goes up and down. However, the Bible declares that God's salvation is eternal. In John 10:28-29 we are told that once we have eternal life we shall never perish. Nevertheless, there are verses, such as 1 Corinthians 3:15, which tell us that in the future we may suffer loss. When the Lord returns, He will gather all His servants before Him and have them give an account to Him of their life and work. Although we are saved eternally, we must still give an account to the Lord of our life and work at the judgment seat of Christ. The Lord will look into our account and decide whether we will receive a reward or suffer a loss. In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul could say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." However, this does not mean that every believer will receive such a crown. Whether or not you receive a crown of righteousness will depend on the results at the judgment seat. Finally, in Revelation 22:12 the Lord Jesus Himself says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." I believe that by now the matter of the judgment at the judgment seat of Christ has been made clear. We must be careful about judging others, for we ourselves will be judged by God.

We must receive the believers in the light of the judgment seat of God. We should not criticize others, but judge ourselves. If we do not judge ourselves, we shall have to give an account before the judgment seat of

Christ. Some believers judged the ones who wanted to get rid of their oldness by the water burial, but did not judge themselves for going to the movies. If you criticize others without judging yourself for attending the movies, at the judgment seat the Lord will ask you to give an account of that. Some sisters in a certain group cover their head with a long white covering and are accustomed to judging and condemning other sisters who pray without a covering or who, at best, only wear a small cap. Although these sisters cover themselves with a long white covering in the church meetings, some of them usurp the headship of their husbands at home. They need to judge themselves in this matter. Do not judge others, judge yourself. Whenever we are about to receive another believer in the Lord, we must exercise our discernment in the light of the judgment seat and say, "O Lord, have mercy on me. I am not worthy to judge my brother. Cover me, Lord. I want to be judged by You. I want to pass judgment on myself, on my life and living." This should be our attitude.

We should not criticize others, but should pass judgment on ourselves. If we fail to do it now, we shall stand before the judgment seat of God and do it then. We must all be enlightened by the judgment seat. Whenever a new believer comes to us, we must exercise our discernment in receiving him. However, in the light of the judgment seat of God, we must judge ourselves more. Thus, Paul's thought in Romans 14:10-12 is that we should not judge others, but let the Lord take care of them. We should judge ourselves. As we are about to judge others, let us remember that the Lord will reckon with us when He returns. This is a serious matter.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

TRANSFORMATION IN RECEIVING THE BELIEVERS

(2)

In this message we need to consider some more points concerning the matter of transformation in receiving the believers.

III. IN THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE

We need to receive the believers in the principle of love. In 14:13-15 Paul says, "Therefore, let us judge one another no longer, but rather judge this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause of falling before the brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that there is nothing common in itself; but to him who reckons anything to be common, to that man it is common. But if because of food your brother is grieved, you no longer walk according to love. Do not destroy by your food that man for whom Christ died." If we receive the believers in love, we shall not judge others, not put stumbling blocks before them, not grieve the brothers, not destroy the man for whom Christ died, but rather walk according to love. We must receive in the principle of love all the believers for whom Christ died. Please remember that Romans was written shortly after Paul had written 1 Corinthians, and that he wrote Romans from Corinth. Paul devoted 1 Corinthians 13 to the matter of love, inserting it between the two chapters that deal with spiritual gifts. In chapter thirteen Paul presented the most excellent way of exercising the gifts and he listed many of the attributes and characteristics of love. I believe that this concept of love was fresh within him when he wrote chapter fourteen of Romans. Therefore, in Romans, it seems that Paul was telling the saints, "You must receive others in the principle of love. Love must govern you. Love must be the controlling principle in the receiving of the saints."

IV. FOR THE KINGDOM LIFE

The receiving of the believers is not an insignificant matter. It is related to the judgment seat in the future and it concerns the kingdom life in the present.

A. Not Letting Your Good Be Slandered

According to the context, verse 16 refers to the eating by the ones who are stronger in faith. It is good to be strong in the faith that there is nothing common and that everything is suitable for eating. But you should not let your good be slandered in your being unwilling to take care of those who are weak in faith. For their sake, you must be careful about eating what you think is good for eating. Paul's intention is that, for the sake of the weaker ones, it is better that you not eat.

B. Living the Life of the Kingdom of God

1. The Church--the Kingdom of God in this Age

The church is the kingdom of God in this age (Matt. 16:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). There is much argument between various schools of teaching concerning the kingdom of God. One school of thought claims that the kingdom of God is not with us today. According to this school, the kingdom of God was suspended at the time of Matthew 13. This school affirms that when the Lord Jesus came He came with the kingdom of God and presented it to the Jewish people. Since the Jewish people rejected the kingdom of God, the Lord suspended it until the time of His return. Thus, this school teaches that during the period in which we live there is no kingdom of God. However, Romans 14:17 says "the kingdom of God is...." This is a strong proof that the kingdom of God is here today. Further evidence that the church is the kingdom of God today is found in Matthew 16:18-19, where we see that the words church and kingdom are synonymous and are used interchangeably by the Lord Jesus Himself. In verse 18 the Lord said, "I will build my church," and in

verse 19 He said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Hence, the building of the church is actually the establishing of the kingdom. Furthermore, Paul in the epistles considered the kingdom of God as equivalent to the church (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). How wrong it is to say that the kingdom has been suspended and that it will return at the coming of the Lord! We should not accept this concept concerning the kingdom. We must return to the pure Word which says that the church life is the kingdom of God.

2. A Matter of Exercise and Discipline

The church is a matter of grace and life, whereas the kingdom is a matter of exercise in this age and discipline in the coming age (Matt. 25:15-30; 1 Cor. 3:13-15). The church, like a human head, has a different appearance when seen from different angles. If you look at the back of my head, you do not see any holes; however, if you look at the front, you will see seven of them. Although the back of my head differs from the front, both are aspects of one entity. It is the same with the church. From one angle we see the church as a matter of grace and life: from another angle we see it as the kingdom of God with exercise and discipline. In the church, on the one hand we enjoy grace and experience life, while on the other hand we undergo a certain amount of exercise.

We should not neglect our need for such exercise. Because of our need for exercise, the church is the present kingdom of God. According to some of the Brethren teachers, every believer will enter the millennial kingdom as a king. But, look at ourselves. Do we resemble kings? If the Lord Jesus should come and ask you to be a king I think that you would be frightened because you don't know how to be a king. You have never been exercised and trained to be a king. I have been told that the kings of Britain are trained to be kings from their youth. Birth is insufficient; a king must be trained and exercised. Although you have the potential of being a king, the kingship also depends upon your exercise. Do not be loose and careless. If you are unwilling to be exercised in this

age, you will be disciplined in the coming age. Your destiny is to be a king, and sooner or later the Lord will make you one.

God has arranged all the details of your daily life to enable you to be exercised. Every event which transpires in your life is a part of God's sovereign arrangement. Without the help of your environment and circumstances you cannot know yourself. You will imagine yourself to be an angel, considering yourself to be nice and wonderful, but ignorant of how poor, mean, and wild you actually are. You need a spouse, children, brothers and sisters in the church, and various circumstances to give you a multi-dimensional photograph of yourself that you may be exposed from every direction. When you see this photograph, you will declare, "Is it I? I didn't know that I was that bad." I have experienced this myself. When I have been tempted to blame others, the Lord has told me to put the blame on myself. He has told me to thank Him for the dear brothers that expose me and give me a healthy look at myself. Without such brothers I could not be exposed. This is an exercise we undergo in the church life for the sake of the kingdom.

In one sense, the church is God's family, God's home (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). In this house we enjoy grace and receive the life supply. In another sense, the church is also the kingdom. What is the meaning of the word kingdom? It means ruling. Many Christians say, "I like to attend the meetings, but I don't like to be ruled. Whom do those elders think they are? Why must they be in the lead?" On the one hand the church is a family, a home that is full of grace and life; on the other hand the church is a kingdom, a government to rule. In the church as the kingdom we do have the leadership and the rule under the headship of Christ. This is a matter of exercise. In order to have the church life we need the exercise of the kingdom. Thus, the church is our home and the church is also our kingdom. In our home we have the enjoyment of love, the supply of grace, and the riches of life. In the kingdom we have the

rule, the government, the exercise, and the discipline. Praise the Lord for both aspects of the church! I have heard many saints proclaim concerning the church, "Praise the Lord, I am home!" However, we also need to proclaim, "Hallelujah, I am also in the kingdom!"

3. What the Kingdom Life Is

Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." When you are about to receive the saints, you must realize that the saints are not to be received according to your doctrinal concepts or religious practices regarding eating and drinking. The kingdom of God is neither eating nor drinking. The kingdom of God is righteousness toward yourself, peace toward others, and joy with God in your spirit. Whether you eat turtle or cabbage means nothing. However, righteousness, peace, and joy mean a great deal, for these items are the expression of Christ. When Christ is expressed, He is our righteousness toward ourselves, our peace toward others, and our joy with God. We must be strict with ourselves and make no excuses for ourselves. Toward ourselves we must be right, narrow, and righteous in everything we do. Toward others we must endeavor to pursue peace, continually seeking to be at peace with them. However, some brothers do not even have peace with their wives, and some sisters have no peace with their husbands. We must be careful to maintain peace with everyone related to us. This peace is Christ lived out from our being. Furthermore, we need joy. Every day we should be joyful. If we cannot say, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord," every day, it means that we are defeated and are not in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of joy. We must constantly be joyful with God, praising Him, and saying, "Hallelujah." Righteousness, peace, and joy are the characteristics of the kingdom of God today. And the kingdom of God is the exercise of the church life. The church life is for the kingdom life, and the kingdom life is an exercise of the Christian life. We need such exercise.

C. Serving Christ in This

In verse 18 Paul says, "For he who in this serves Christ as a slave is well-pleasing to God and approved by men." By this word we can see that what is mentioned in verse 17 is for us to serve Christ. This means that to receive the believers is to serve Christ. We have to do this as in the kingdom of God and in the way of serving Christ as a slave, in the way of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, not in the way of taking care of doctrinal concepts. Surely this way will be well-pleasing to God and approved by men. And this way will never cause any division, but always keep the unity of the Spirit for the practical Body life.

D. Pursuing the Things of Peace and the Things Which Build

Furthermore, Paul says in verse 19, "So let us pursue the things of peace, and things which build one another." The things of peace are the things that keep the unity of the Body. The things that build up one another are the things that minister life to the members of the Body for the mutual building. We must pursue both categories of things. We have to seek after the things that keep the unity of the Body with peace and the things that minister life to others. In order to do this, we have to leave all the doctrinal concepts behind and overcome all the frustrations that originate from mental knowledge. Satan is subtle. Through all the centuries, he has used and is still using doctrinal concepts and mental knowledge to frustrate the ministry of life and to divide the Body of Christ. Therefore, we must overcome his subtlety by pursuing the things of peace for keeping unity, and the things that minister life to others for the building of the Body.

E. Not Breaking Down the Work of God

Verses 20-21 say, "Do not break down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but it is evil for a man to eat so as to be a stumbling block. It is good not to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything

by which your brother stumbles." In all saved persons there is an amount of God's work. God has called and saved them. God has done at least this much divine work in them. If we cause any of the believers to stumble by our doctrinal concepts, we break down, destroy, God's work of grace in him. We should take care of God's work, not our doctrinal concepts. All of our religious practices must be cast aside for the sake of God's work of grace in others. We are free to eat anything and we may do anything that is not sinful, but we should not eat anything or do anything by which a brother stumbles. We must take care of the building of the brothers in life, not the keeping of our religious concepts in knowledge.

F. Doing Everything in Faith Without Doubting

In verses 22 and 23 Paul says, "The faith which you have, have it to yourself before God. Blessed is he who does not judge himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not out of faith, for all which is not out of faith is sin." If we are the strong ones in faith, we should have faith to ourselves before God. It is blessed that we do not judge what we approve of doing because we have the faith in doing it. But the weaker ones in faith, who do not have the faith as we do, are condemned if they eat anything about which they have doubts, because they do not eat by faith. All which is not by faith is sin. So, we have to take care of the ones weaker in faith, not causing them to do anything about which they do not have faith.

V. ACCORDING TO CHRIST

Paul was very wise. If we are not in the spirit as we read this portion of Romans, we will miss much of the depth of what Paul wrote. Paul began the section on receiving the saints with the matter of doctrinal concepts, concepts held mainly by religious Jews, and he concludes it with receiving the saints according to Christ. We must not receive the believers according to doctrinal concepts, but according to Christ.

A. Bearing the Weaknesses of the Weak

Romans 15:1 says, "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak, and not to please ourselves." In receiving the believers, we must bear the weaknesses of the weak and not please ourselves. The Lord Jesus always bears the weaknesses of His believers (2 Cor. 12:9) and does not please Himself. In receiving the believers, we have to do the same according to Him, not pleasing ourselves, but bearing others' weaknesses.

B. Pleasing Our Neighbor unto Building as Christ Did

"Let each of us please his neighbor unto what is good for building. For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached You fell upon Me" (vv. 2-3). We have to please others that they may be built up in the Body. We do not need to please others for any purpose other than the purpose that they be built up in the Body. For the sake of this purpose, we must pay the price that we may please others. Christ did not please Himself; He pleased the Father by bearing the reproaches which should have fallen upon the Father. Likewise, we should not please ourselves; we should please others by bearing their weaknesses that they may be built up in the Body of Christ.

C. Being Like-minded One to Another According to Christ

"For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope. Now the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus" (vv. 4-5). "Whatever was written" refers to what is quoted in verse 3 concerning Christ and is for the instruction that produces endurance and encouragement with hope. The record concerning Christ in the Scriptures surely is full of instruction. If we receive its instruction, we will be

supplied with the endurance and encouragement of Christ that we may have hope. In receiving the believers, we need this kind of endurance and encouragement with hope. In receiving the believers, we need to endure the weaknesses of the ones whom we are going to receive. We also need to be encouraged with the hope that they may improve and be empowered in faith by the Lord's grace. In receiving the weaker believers, we have to realize that our God is the God of endurance and encouragement who can cause us to endure others' weaknesses and to be encouraged with what He can do in others by His grace. If we are so encouraged by such a God, we shall be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, not according to anything else. Since there is only one Christ Jesus, if we are all according to Christ, we shall be like-minded with one another. However, if our mind is in accordance with teachings, concepts, gifts, religious practices, or any other such thing, we shall be divided. The only way to be like-minded toward one another is to be according to Christ. To receive the believers according to our teachings, concepts, gifts, or religious practices does not need any endurance or encouragement with hope. But to receive all believers according to Christ does need an amount of endurance and encouragement with hope which the very God of endurance and encouragement will supply us if we care for the keeping of unity and the building up of the Body.

D. Glorifying God with One Accord and with One Mouth

Verse 6 says, "That you may with one accord and with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some versions say "with one mind and with one mouth." However, in Greek the word is accord, not mind. Nevertheless, the word accord actually means one mind. We all need to be like-minded. When we are like-minded, we shall be in one accord and shall have one mouth, meaning that we shall have the same concept and the same way of speaking. There will be many believers, but only one mouth. Whenever we have the same mind and are of one accord, we all say the same thing. Therefore,

with one mind and one mouth we glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapter 9:5 it says that Christ is the over-all and ever-blessed God. That is according to His divinity. But here it speaks of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is according to His humanity. According to His divinity, He is the over-all and ever-blessed God; according to His humanity, God is His God. If, in receiving the believers, we behave ourselves according to the Lord Jesus, we shall glorify God as He does.

E. Receiving One Another as Christ Received Us

Verse 7 says, "Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." This verse, when taken along with 14:3, proves that Christ's receiving is God's receiving. What Christ has received, God has received. Christ has received us to the glory of God. Our receiving of the believers must be according to God's and Christ's receiving, not according to anything else. Whomever God and Christ have received we have to receive, regardless of how much they differ from us in doctrinal concepts or religious practices. This is for the glory of God.

F. Christ, a Servant for the Circumcision and for the Nations

We need to read 15:8-11. "For I say that Christ has become a servant of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the nations to glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, Therefore I will confess to You among the nations and I will sing praise to Your name. And again he says, Rejoice, nations, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all the nations, and let all the peoples praise Him." In these verses we see that Christ is all-inclusive. Why has He become a servant of the circumcision, the Jews? He has become a servant of the Jews for the sake of the truth of God, to confirm the promises given to their fathers. However, verse 9 says that He is not only a servant for the circumcision, but "for the nations to glorify God for His

mercy." For the circumcision, the Jews, Christ is a servant for the truth of God, but for the nations He is a servant that the nations may glorify God for His mercy. Christ is all-inclusive. He is for the nations, the Gentiles, as well as for the circumcision, the Jews.

To the Jews, it is a matter of God's truth, for God has made promises to their fathers. Christ became a servant for them to confirm all the promises God gave to their fathers. For this, God is truthful. To the Gentiles, it is a matter of God's mercy. Christ became a servant for them to glorify God for His mercy. Christ confessed God and praised His name among the Gentiles. He asked the Gentiles to rejoice and praise God for His mercy. To the Jews, God is truthful, but to the Gentiles, God is merciful. For this we, the Gentiles, have to praise Him that He may be glorified in His mercy.

G. Christ, the Root of Jesse for the Nations

Verse 12 reveals even more of the all-inclusiveness of Christ. "And again, Isaiah says, There shall be the root of Jesse, even He Who arises to rule the nations; in Him the nations will hope." Although Christ is the root of Jesse, the source of the fathers of the Jews, He will be the ruler of the Gentiles, and in Him the Gentiles will hope. Here we see the all-inclusiveness of Christ. He is the root of Jesse, meaning that He is the supply for the Jewish people. According to Romans 11, His being the root means that He is the source and supply for the Jews. In the future this root of Jesse will arise to rule over all the Gentile nations. Thus, He supplies the Jews and overshadows the nations. By being the root to the Jewish people and by being the overshadowing One, the ruler, over the nations, He brings together the Jews and the nations and makes them one. I believe that should be the deepest concept of the Apostle Paul in writing this portion of Romans. Christ embraces both the Jews and the Gentiles. By being the root of the Jews and the overshadowing One of the nations, Christ embraces both peoples and brings them together for one Body, for one new man, the church.

Christ is all-inclusive and all-embracing. Since Christ is such an all-embracing One, bringing together the Jews and the Gentiles, we must receive all different believers according to this Christ. Never say, "This is an American, that is a Britisher, that is a German, that is a Japanese, that is a Filipino, and that is a Korean. I cannot accept so many different people." Consider Christ who is the root of one people and is the ruler, the overshadowing One, over another people. He is all-inclusive. In receiving the saints, we must likewise be all-embracing, receiving people from the East, West, South, and North. Whoever they are and whatever they are, we must embrace all believers together in one Body. I believe that this is what it means to receive the saints according to Christ.

In this message and in the preceding message we have covered five aspects of transformation in receiving the believers: according to God's receiving, in the light of the judgment seat, in the principle of love, for the kingdom life, and according to Christ. We need to remember all of these points and practice them. If we receive the saints in this way, we shall receive the Lord's blessing with hope, joy, and peace in believing. Therefore, Paul concluded this portion of Romans with the words, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit" (v. 13). In receiving the believers in the way as instructed in this section of Romans, we experience the God of endurance and encouragement and the God of hope. In the proper church life, we will be filled with all joy and peace with faith. In such a church life, we experience the power of the Holy Spirit and we abound in hope. The church life means a great deal to us. We all need to get into it and live in it.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE GOSPEL

In all of the foregoing messages we have covered seven sections of the book of Romans: introduction, condemnation, justification, sanctification, glorification, selection, and transformation. Now we come to the last section, the conclusion (15:14-16:27). Although Paul has covered so much, in this section of Romans he shows us some experiential and practical matters. He presents a full unveiling of the ultimate consummation of the gospel. I use the word "unveiling" because so many of the precious things have been veiled. In this message I want to point out some of the treasures that are hidden and concealed in the last section of Romans.

None of Paul's other epistles has such a long conclusion as does the letter to the Romans. Why is the conclusion so long? I doubt that any of us would compose a letter in this way. However, Paul was wise and deep, knowing that after the section on transformation he still needed to present the ultimate consummation of God's gospel--the practical church life. Furthermore, he did not write about the church life in a doctrinal way, but in an exceedingly practical way. Hence, we find no doctrine in the conclusion; everything in this section is experiential and practical. As we shall see, in this section Paul tells us of his zeal in preaching the gospel and of his desire to visit Spain. He tells how he was burdened to supply the material needs of the saints in Judea and that the Gentile believers wanted to help the Jewish saints in this matter.

In Romans 16 the words "church" and "churches" are used five times. If we read this chapter carefully in the spirit, we will realize that Paul wrote it with a definite purpose. Every reference to the church in this chapter is experiential and practical. In 16:1 Paul speaks of Phoebe,

a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea. In 16:4 he says that the churches of the nations were thankful to Prisca and Aquila because they risked their necks for Paul and also for the churches. In 16:5 we find mention of "the church in their house," meaning that the church in Rome met in the house of Prisca and Aquila. In 16:16 he mentions the churches of Christ and in 16:23 he says that Gaius was the host of the entire church. Verse 20 is also very important. "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." Under whose feet will Satan be crushed by the God of peace? Under the feet of the people in the churches. God will crush Satan beneath the feet of the "churching" people, and the grace of the Lord Jesus will be dispensed into them. Finally, Paul sends his greetings to many saints; almost the entire chapter is devoted to this. I admire Paul's excellent memory, for he recalled the names of so many saints and mentioned their particular characteristics.

The conclusion of Romans resembles the painting of a forest. If you look at this painting from afar, you will only see the forest itself; you will be unable to perceive the hidden things, the treasures hidden within the woods and under the leaves of the trees. Whenever I studied the book of Romans as a youth, I skipped over the conclusion, thinking that I had completed the doctrinal portions and did not need to give attention to the list of names in chapter sixteen. Because I found these peculiar names difficult to pronounce, I decided to study this book only through 15:13 and the last three verses of chapter sixteen which are a melody of praise to God and should not be neglected. Recently, however, the Holy Spirit brought me into the forest and showed me some of the treasures concealed beneath the shadows cast by the trees. Now I believe that the conclusion is the most precious and valuable section of the entire book of Romans. The practical church life is hidden under the shadows of the trees. We may say that the greetings to the individual saints are the trees and that under the trees are the churches as the treasures--the church at Cenchrea, the

churches of the nations, the church in the home of Prisca and Aquila, the churches of Christ, and the church which received hospitality from Gaius. Now I want to consider these hidden treasures in some detail.

I. THE OFFERING OF THE NATIONS

A. Through the Ministering of Christ

We need to read 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." Paul was a minister of Christ, a public servant serving people with Christ, ministering Christ into the Gentile believers. He was like a waiter serving people at the dining table with delicious food. Paul was a waiter at the universal dining table, serving people with Christ. All the people at this dining table were filled with Christ, and Christ became the transforming element within their being. Thus, the Gentiles were transformed with the essence of the wonderful, all-inclusive Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit. Moreover, this verse reveals that Paul was a priest, for he was "ministering as a priest the gospel of God." As a priest he offered to God the believing Gentiles as a sweet sacrifice for His satisfaction. The very Gentiles whom he served with Christ he presented to God as an offering.

B. In the Wide-Spread Preaching of the Gospel

The offering of the nations was made possible through the wide-spread preaching of the gospel (15:18-23). In 15:19 Paul says that "from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." During Paul's time, Illyricum was a remote region on the northeastern corner of Europe. Paul preached the gospel from Jerusalem, a cultured city, to a remote, uncultured region. Furthermore, he desired to travel all the way to Spain (v. 24).

Our preaching of the gospel must be uplifted. Our gospel should not be a kind of heaven-going gospel; it must be a gospel which ministers Christ to people. We need to minister Christ to people that they may be sanctified and transformed with the very essence of Christ and thereby become an offering to God. Whenever and wherever the church preaches the gospel, we must do it with the conviction that we are ministering Christ to people, that we are serving Christ as food for hungry sinners. We must minister Christ to them in order that Christ might become within them the sanctifying element to change their very being.

C. Sanctified in the Holy Spirit and Accepted by God

In 15:16 Paul says that "the offering of the nations might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit." To be sanctified means to be separated, to be made holy with transformation in life. Paul considers the Gentile believers as a sweet offering to God. Once they were unclean and defiled people, but now they are sanctified and have become an offering pleasing to God. They have been transformed and conformed to the image of God and thus are fully acceptable to Him. This was the result of Paul's ministering Christ into the Gentiles. When Christ was wrought into them, becoming their very element, the Gentiles became a corporate offering to God, an offering that had been saturated with Christ and permeated with His divine essence. Hence, they were presented to God for His satisfaction.

II. THE COMMUNICATION IN LOVE

A. Between the Gentile and Jewish Saints

Out of the ministering of Christ to the nations and the offering of them as a sacrifice to God, developed the fellowship of love, the communication in love between the Gentile and Jewish saints (15:25-28, 30, 32). The Gentile saints communicated with the Jewish saints by the means of giving practical, material things. Formerly, in the eyes of the Jews, the Gentiles were swine; now they have

become saints, a fragrant offering to God. Thus, the Gentile believers had it in their heart to care for the material needs of their Jewish brothers and they offered their own possessions as the expression of their desire to take care of the needs of the saints in Judea. When the Apostle Paul came to the Gentiles, he came with Christ and ministered Christ into them. When he returned from them to Judea, he returned with material possessions for the needy saints. Paul came with Christ and returned with material possessions of the saints' love. This was the result of Paul's ministry.

The spirituality of many Christians today is too impractical. They say, "I am for Christ and I will bring Christ everywhere, but I don't care for money or for material possessions." If you say this, it may mean that your spirituality is impractical. Consider the example of the Apostle Paul. He went to Achaia and Macedonia, ministering Christ to the people. What was the outcome of this? The outcome was that the Gentile believers contributed their own material possessions to care for their ex-enemies, their Jewish brothers in Christ. After the Gentiles had been converted, regenerated, sanctified, and transformed, their old heart had been removed and a new heart had been implanted, a heart of concern for their Jewish brothers. They expressed this concern in a practical way by giving material things. They did not say, "Paul, we stand with you, we go with you, and our prayer follows you. Send our greetings to the dear saints in the Holy Land." Paul exemplified the practical church life by going with Christ and returning with material possessions. This is the genuine communication in love and practical expression of concern.

B. For the Sharing in the Fullness of the Blessing of Christ

We have seen Paul's relationship with two parties: with the Gentiles, to whom he ministered Christ, and with the Jews, to whom he brought material possessions.

However, 15:29 unfolds Paul's relationship with a third party: the believers in Rome whom he hoped to see on his way to Spain. In this verse we see how Paul expected to come to the saints in Rome. "And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ." Paul did not say this in any other epistle. Paul went to the Gentiles with Christ, returned to the Jewish brothers with material possessions, and expected to visit Rome in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. This is the church life. The church life is being filled up with Christ, filled with love in the communication of material possessions, and filled with the fullness of the blessing of Christ. I expect to see in all the churches in the Lord's recovery that Christ is ministered to people everywhere, that these people will respond with sincerity and love in their material possessions, and that there will also be the mutual participation in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. We should not be those who share doctrinal truths wherever we go. Wherever we go we must go with the fullness of the blessing of Christ. However, before we can go with the blessing of Christ, we must first experience it ourselves. Paul could go anywhere to share the fullness of the blessing of Christ because he had the full experience of it. As we travel among the churches, let us not take with us doctrines and gifts, but the fullness of the blessing of Christ. It is not only a matter of giving material things, although such communication is a true expression of the reality of Christ. If we have the reality of Christ, we shall pour ourselves out as an expression of our love toward the needy saints. Paul was very wise, giving us a picture of the proper practice of the church life in experience, not in doctrine. With Paul we see the experience of all the riches of Christ. When he came to people with the fullness of the blessing of Christ, it meant that he came to them ministering all the riches of Christ.

III. THE FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN

A. Among the Saints, Between the Churches

I believe that the Apostle Paul took the lead in the

fellowship of concern among the saints and between the churches (16:1-19, 21-23). Paul initiated the fellowship of concern. He was concerned for the saints, the Lord's servants, and for the churches. He was a brother who was altogether immersed in the fellowship of concern. All of the particular greetings recorded in Romans 16 are an evidence of his far-reaching concern. I like this chapter because it reveals that included in this fellowship of concern are the churches. This fellowship of concern was among the saints within the churches and between the churches.

I have already said that the church and the churches are mentioned five times in Romans 16. Let us now examine each occurrence in more detail. In 16:1 Paul says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deaconess of the church which is at Cenchrea." Phoebe was a deaconess, that is, a serving one. Paul held her in such high esteem that in the following verse he said that "she has been a patroness of many and of myself as well." The term "patroness" in Greek is a word of dignity, denoting one who helps, sustains, and supplies. A patroness is one who stands beside you, serves you, nourishes and cherishes you, and cares for all your needs. Paul's use of this word with reference to Phoebe discloses how much she was appreciated and regarded. Phoebe was a sister who served others at any price and at any cost. If we mean business with the Lord in the church life, we also need to serve the church and care for it regardless of the cost. If we lack the heart to care for the church, we are unworthy of the practice of the church life. The first requirement for the practice of the church life is that we serve the church. Sister Phoebe was a patroness of the church. Likewise we all must be the serving ones in the church life.

Secondly, Paul indicates that we need to risk our necks for the church. Speaking of Prisca and Aquila, Paul says in 16:4 that they "risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the nations." We need to risk our lives for the church life. Prisca and Aquila did not count their own lives as dear to

them; they were willing to care for the churches at the cost of their own lives. Therefore, all the churches of the nations, of the Gentile world, were grateful to them. Do not think that Paul spoke about Prisca and Aquila in a light way. He wrote with a definite purpose, indicating that if we truly love the Lord's church, we need to risk our lives for it. We must be willing to pay this cost not only for one church, but also for the churches. Some dear saints only care for the church in their locality. This is absolutely wrong. Prisca and Aquila were for all the churches. Although it is right to be located by the Lord in a specific place, our heart should be wide and broad enough to embrace all the churches.

The third mention of the church is in 16:5, where Paul says "greet the church in their house," referring to the house of Prisca and Aquila. On the one hand this couple was for all the churches; on the other hand they were for their local church in particular. When they were living in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), the church in Ephesus was in their house (1 Cor. 16:19). When they were in Rome, the church in Rome met in their house. The "church in their house" in verse 5 was the church in Rome. To have the church in your home is a very heavy burden. If you try it, you will discover how heavy a burden it is. However, Prisca and Aquila were absolute for the church life; they cared not for the heavy burden.

In 16:16 Paul says, "The churches of Christ greet you." Suddenly Paul mentions "the churches of Christ." Wherever the churches are located, in your city or in my town, they must be the churches of Christ. The church in every locality must be the church of Christ. Do not say that the church is the church of Brother So-and-So. Such a saying is mistaken. We must all learn to say "the churches of Christ."

The last mention of the church in Romans regards hospitality. "Gaius, my host, and of the whole church, greets you" (v. 23). Without hospitality there is something lacking in the practical church life. If there is no

hospitality in a certain church, that church must be poor. However, the more hospitality you have, the richer your church life will be. Gaius was not only the host of one apostle, but the host of the entire church. I do not believe that he rendered hospitality to the whole church all at once, but that probably the saints who traveled to his city and perhaps remained there for a while, received hospitality from him. His home was open and available to all the saints. The genuine church life depends upon this kind of hospitality. When a home is open to hospitality, it will be filled with the blessing of Christ. We praise the Lord that the more hospitality we render, the greater will be our experience of the church life. This is practical.

In summary, we may list these five aspects of the church life: serving the church; risking our lives for the church; having the church in our home; never considering the church as anyone's church, but acknowledging that it is the church of Christ; extending hospitality to everyone in the church and being a host to all the churches. In his greetings recorded in Romans 16, Paul unveiled the crucial indicators of the proper church life both in a particular local church and among the churches. His greetings also underscore the qualities of many of the dear saints. Thus, in Romans 16 we see the churches in localities and the details of the genuine church life expressed in the attributes and virtues of so many saints. This is a complete portrait of the ancient church life. Once again I say that in Romans we do not find the doctrine of the church; we behold the practicality of the church life. Hence, the ultimate consummation of the gospel is the church life.

What a great contrast there is between Romans 1 and 16. In chapter one we see sinners, people that are evil, unclean, and condemned; in chapter sixteen we see the churches that are holy and glorious. There is no comparison. How did vile sinners become glorious churches? Through the lengthy process revealed from chapter one through chapter sixteen, the process of

redemption, justification, sanctification, glorification, selection, and transformation. As a result of a long process sinners have become glorious churches, churches that are holy and yet so practical.

B. For the Crushing of Satan

After the greeting which shows the fellowship of concern among the saints and between the churches, the Apostle declared that the God of peace would crush Satan, and would crush him soon under the feet of the saints who are in the church life (16:20). This indicates that the crushing of Satan by God is related to the church life. If we are not in the church and do not practice the church life, it will be difficult for us to have Satan crushed under our feet by God. The church life is the strongest means by which God overcomes Satan. Whenever we are separated from the church, we become a prey for Satan, for it is difficult for us to fight Satan individually. But, praise the Lord, that when we are in the church and are one with the Body, Satan is under our feet, and we enjoy God as the God of peace in the church life. We experience and participate in the peace of God by our victory over the troublemaker, Satan. As long as Satan, the troublemaker, is not under our feet, it will be difficult for us to have peace. When he is crushed under our feet in the church life, we have the peace of God as a token of our victory over him. So, both the crushing of Satan and the peace of God are experienced in the church life.

C. For the Grace of Christ to Be Dispensed to All the Saints

Following his declaration that God will crush Satan under the feet of the church people, the Apostle gives his blessing to them, saying that the grace of the Lord Jesus would be with them (16:20). This indicates that it is in the church life that the grace of the Lord Jesus is dispensed to all the saints. A great many believers miss this grace because they are separate from the church life. We all can

testify that we have a rich enjoyment of the Lord's grace when we are living in the churches and practicing the Body life with all the saints. The church is the place where the Lord dispenses His grace and where we may partake of it. The church is not only the place where we have Satan crushed under our feet and experience the God of peace, but also the place where we enjoy the rich grace of the Lord.

IV. THE CONCLUDING PRAISE

Let us read 16:25-27. "Now to Him Who is of power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in times of the ages, but now has been manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the command of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations unto obedience of faith, to the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever and ever! Amen." This concluding praise is like a melody. Paul refers to God as the One who has "power to establish you." In Romans 16 our need is no longer salvation or sanctification; our need is to be established. Everything has been accomplished, and we only need to be established. We are not established according to doctrines or dispensational truths, but according to the gospel, the preaching of Christ, and the revelation of the mystery. Oh, how the saints today need to be rescued from the divisive doctrines and dividing practices and to be established by the pure and full gospel of God, by the preaching and ministering of the living and all-inclusive Christ, and by the revelation of God's mystery! Only the pure gospel, the living Christ, and God's revealed mystery can establish us and keep us in unity for the church life.

This mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages, and has not been revealed, is mainly of two aspects: one is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2 ASV), which is Christ, who is in the believers (Col. 1:26-27) as

their life and their everything that they may become the members of His Body; another is the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4-6), which is the church as His Body to express His fullness (Eph. 1:22-23). Therefore, Christ and the church are the great mystery (Eph. 5:32). Romans firstly tells us how the believers have been baptized into Christ (6:3), how Christ has been wrought into the believers (8:10), and how the believers have put on Christ (13:14). Then it reveals how all these believers are built together into one Body (12:4-5) to express Christ. Thus the churches have come into existence in many cities in a local and practical way, with all the saints loving one another and fellowshipping with one another among all the churches to express the Body of Christ for the fulfillment of God's mystery. This is the ultimate consummation of the full gospel of God. It is through this that Satan is crushed under the feet of the saints (16:20), that the grace of Christ is dispensed to all the saints (16:20), and that the glory is and will be to God unto the ages of the ages (16:27). The eternal God has made known this mystery to all the nations unto obedience of faith.

In Romans 15 and 16 God is called the God of endurance and encouragement (15:5), the God of hope (15:13), the God of peace (16:20), the eternal God (16:26), and the only wise God (16:27). Our God is a rich God in many aspects--in endurance, encouragement, hope, peace, wisdom, and being eternal--and the gospel in Romans is the gospel of such a rich God. The gospel of such a rich God consummates in the practical church life. Hallelujah!

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

A CLOSING WORD

I. THE GOD IN ROMANS

We have seen that God is revealed progressively throughout the book of Romans. God is revealed in twelve situations in Romans.

First of all, Romans shows us God in His creation (1:19-20). God is invisible; yet the invisible things of God, such as His eternal power and divine nature, are clearly seen, being apprehended by means of the things created by Him.

Secondly, Romans unveils to us God in condemnation (Rom. 2). After being created, man fell and became sinful. This brought in God's condemnation.

After this, Romans presents to us God in redemption (Rom. 3). God's condemnation reveals man's need of salvation, but for the righteous God to save sinful man, redemption is needed.

After redemption, God is revealed in justification (Rom. 3 and 4). God is righteous and He cannot be unrighteous. The redeeming death of Christ has fulfilled and satisfied God's righteous requirements for us sinners. Hence, the redemption of Christ not only affords God the righteous ground upon which to justify those who believe in Christ's redemption, but also God Himself is bound by His righteousness to do so.

Following this, God is seen in reconciliation (Rom. 5). We were not only sinners, but also enemies of God. God's justification is based upon Christ's redemption and issues in His reconciliation. Here we joy in God and enjoy God in all that He is to us.

More than this, God is realized by us in our identification with Christ (Rom. 6). God has not only reconciled us to Himself, but has also identified us with Christ. We were born in Adam, but God has transferred us from Adam into Christ. In Romans 6 God has become the God in identification, having accomplished a great work in order to make us one with Himself. God has identified us with Himself in Christ.

Romans also shows that God is experienced by us in sanctification (Rom. 6 through 8). He has made us one with Christ so that we may be sanctified not only positionally, but also dispositionally. Identification thus issues in sanctification. In sanctification, He is the God in our spirit. The very God who created us, redeemed us, and justified us is now in us! He is no longer merely objective to us, but He is very subjective. He is no longer just in the heavens, far away from us; He is now right within us, in "our spirit" (8:16).

Romans also reveals that God is enjoyed by us in glorification (Rom. 8). He has foreknown us, predestinated us, called us, and justified us. He is now sanctifying us and He will glorify us (8:29-30).

Moreover, God is further revealed to us in His love that secures our destiny (8:31-39). In justification He has made us partakers of His righteousness, in sanctification He is working His holiness into our being, and in glorification He will bring us into His glory. His love is the security of all these things.

God is also seen in His selection (Rom. 9 through 11). It is not that we have selected Him, but rather that He has selected us. His selection is our destiny. In His selection we have been destined to have a share, a portion, in Him.

Eventually, God is glorified in the Body of Christ (Rom. 12). In chapter twelve God is in the Body. He is not only God in the spirits of the believers, but God in a corporate, collective entity.

Finally, Romans unfolds to us that God is expressed in the church life (Rom. 16). The Body of Christ is spiritual and universal. It has to be expressed practically in various localities as churches. God is expressed in Christ, Christ is expressed in His Body, and the Body of Christ is expressed in the churches. As we come to Romans 16, we discover that God is in the local churches. On the one hand, God is in our spirit; on the other hand, He is in all the local churches.

II. THE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S WORK

In Romans 1 we find the word "creation"; in Romans 16 we find the word "churches." It is quite easy to say how God created: He spoke the word and creation came into being. However, it is difficult to say how He produced the churches. God had to perform a work in various stages as part of a lengthy process which included redemption, justification, reconciliation, regeneration, sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. As a result of this lengthy process, God has made the churches. The churches are the peak, the consummation, of God's work and building. He cannot go any higher. Therefore, the book of Romans ends with chapter sixteen. In Romans 16 the Lord's work has reached its summit. When I read Romans 16, I am satisfied because He is satisfied. We must tell God, "Lord, You cannot go any further. You have reached the peak." With the establishing of the churches in Romans 16, the eternal God has attained the peak of His work and is satisfied.

Most of the Christian teachers say, "Look ahead. Look to the future. This world is evil and the age is dark. There is nothing good on earth. Look forward to the future." However, this was not Paul's attitude in the book of Romans. If we had written Romans, we would have added another chapter saying, "Dear brothers, look at the poor situation. We must look ahead to the future when we will

all be raptured. Then we will be in heaven. Paul, however, did not speak this way in Romans, and there must have been a reason why he did not. Although Christians like to dream of the future in heaven, Paul knew that the Lord desires to have the churches on earth. We look to the future, but the Lord wants us firstly to have the church life at the present time. Paul understood that the Lord is satisfied to have local churches on the earth.

If you study all the books in the New Testament, you will find that, other than Romans, not one of them ends with such a melody as we find in the last three verses of chapter sixteen. Although some people have called these verses a doxology and a benediction, I prefer to call them a melody. When Paul wrote these words, he was excited, happy, and satisfied. Not even the book of Revelation concludes with such a melody. In Romans 16 we have the local churches, and when we have the local churches, it is sufficient for us to be excited, happy and satisfied. Once you have the local churches, what else do you need? After Paul unveiled the local church life, including many of the virtues and attributes of the dear saints, he was very happy and concluded his letter with a melody of praise.

In his concluding praise, Paul said, "Now to Him Who is of power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in times of the ages" (16:25). We need nothing further. We simply need to acknowledge that God has given us everything and then keep what we already have. Paul said that God was of power to establish us according to his gospel, not according to the gospel of Mark or Luke. What is the difference between the gospels of Mark and Luke and the gospel of Paul? In Mark and Luke we have salvation, but in neither of them do we find the churches. However, Paul's gospel includes the churches and presents a portrait of the local church life, mentioning people such as

Phoebe who served the church and Prisca and Aquila who risked their necks for the churches. Never forget that Paul's gospel has sixteen chapters, not eight or twelve.

Once again I say that Paul was excited and satisfied at the end of Romans. God had started from creation and had reached His peak in the local churches. Therefore, Romans is an extract or an abstract of the whole Bible. The Bible begins in Genesis with God's creation and concludes in Revelation with the New Jerusalem, the totality of all the local churches and the consummation of God's building. Romans consummates with the local churches, and the Bible as a whole consummates with the New Jerusalem as the totality of all the local churches. This is the view from God's side.

III. A PRACTICAL VIEW

Now we must consider the view from our side. In chapter one we saw that we were sinners and that neither culture nor religion could help us. Regardless of the kind of people we were, we were all under God's condemnation. Our problems began to be solved in chapter three with God's redemption. Then came justification, reconciliation, identification, sanctification, conformation, and glorification. Following this, we come to chapter twelve where we find ourselves, being transformed, in the Body. We have become members of the Body. Many Christians are satisfied with the experience of Romans 8. As long as they are holy and spiritual, they are content. However, others proceed further and talk about the Body revealed in Romans 12. Nevertheless, if you inquire of them, you will find that many of them are disappointed and say, "We know that there is such a thing as the Body, but we have no way to practice it. Where is the Body? How can we have it and practice it?" Some Christians use the terms "Body life" and "Body ministry," but by Body ministry they mean a few persons ministering instead of one pastor.

That is their concept of Body ministry. Therefore, I must ask you, Where is the Body? Many seeking Christians cannot find it and have no way of realizing it.

Most of those who talk about the Body in Romans 12 have neglected the practice of Romans 14. However, it is impossible to have the reality of chapter twelve without the proper practice of chapter fourteen. Without Romans 14, we cannot have the Body, because without the practice of receiving the believers revealed in this chapter, Christians will remain divided over doctrinal concepts. Doctrine divides; life unites. Christian history has fully proved that no doctrine builds up; every doctrine is divisive. Whether or not a doctrine is scriptural or unscriptural, right or wrong, it still divides. Christianity has been cut into thousands of pieces by all the different doctrines. Without exception every doctrine has produced a sect or division. There is no need to say that cultic doctrines divide; even the proper, sound, fundamental, scriptural, spiritual doctrines are divisive. Therefore, we should not devote our attention to doctrine. Instead we should pray, "Lord, rescue us from all doctrinal concepts. Lord, bring us into Yourself. You are our unique concept. Our concept is Christ." Christ is one; doctrines are many. Christ must be our unique concept.

This was Paul's meaning when he told us "to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus" (15:5). The Jewish believers in the ancient times held many doctrinal tenets. Also, a number of the Gentile believers held certain philosophical concepts. We learn from church history that during the time of the Apostle Paul the religious background of the Jews and the cultural background of the Gentiles created problems in the church life. Although the Jews and the Gentiles were genuine believers in the Lord Jesus, they brought with them into the church life their concepts from their backgrounds, the Jews bringing their religious beliefs and the Gentiles their

philosophical concepts. Some so-called Gentile believers considered that their philosophy corresponded to much of biblical teaching. As a result, the saints found it difficult to be one. Thus, Paul told them to drop their doctrinal concepts for the sake of unity. Paul told the Jewish and the Gentile believers alike to come to Christ and take Christ as their life and concept. Thus, Paul told the believers that Christ is for both the circumcision and for the nations. Christ is the root of Jesse, the source of supply for all the Jews, and He is the One who rises to rule over the nations. Christ's rule over the nations is sweet, gracious, and full of healing. Christ embraces both Jews and Gentiles together as one Body. Thus, we must forget our Jewish or Gentile background, our religious or philosophical background, and keep Christ as our unique concept. We must have nothing but Christ. If someone should ask you about philosophy, you should reply, "I don't know any philosophy. What I know is only Christ." If someone asks you a question about religion, you should respond, "I have no religion. Christ is my life and my everything. I only have Christ." Christ is the root of Jesse and Christ is the One who will rule over the nations.

In the book of Romans we see that the Apostle Paul was absolutely for the local churches. In 16:1 he recommended Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea. Paul's first recommendation was of a sister serving in a particular local church. Do not recommend any believer who does not have a local church. Do not say, "I commend to you sister So-and-So who belongs to the Body of Christ and who is traveling around the world." I have no doubt that such a sister belongs to the Body of Christ, but where is her church? Once I know her church, I would then like to know what kind of sister she is in that church. Does she attend meetings only on Sunday mornings to receive teachings? Is she a sister who serves the church? How does she serve the church? The church is practical. It should not be just a term or a theory. So, we have to be practical in the church life, participating in

some definite function in the local church like Sister Phoebe did in the local church at Cenchrea. We were sinners under God's condemnation in chapter one. Through the process in chapters three through fifteen, in chapter sixteen, we are the saints composing the local churches. Praise God for His redeeming, sanctifying, transforming, and building work! This is the masterpiece of His work.

IV. THE STATIONS IN ROMANS

In the book of Romans we see several stations. Many Christians have stopped at the station of justification in Romans 4. Some have gone further to the station of sanctification in Romans 8. Other seeking Christians have gone as far as chapter twelve and talk about the Body, although they lack the genuine experience of the Body. Thus, Romans 12 becomes a station, which we may describe as the station of the Body talkers. If you are content to remain in Romans 12, you will not have the Body actually and practically, because the Body is fully realized in the local churches. If you are not in a local church, you cannot touch the Body. The word, "Body," will simply remain an empty term as far as you are concerned. If you want to be in the Body, you must be in a local church. Hence, our station is in chapter sixteen, the last station in the book of Romans. Where are you? We have passed through the station of justification, sanctification, and the stage of talking about the Body. Praise the Lord that we are abiding in the last station, in the local churches, where we realize the genuine Body life. When you are resting in this station, you can join Paul in his concluding melody of praise.

V. THE WARNING CONCERNING DIVISION

Nevertheless, in Romans 16, a chapter which unveils the ultimate consummation of God's work, Paul speaks of

something negative because God's enemy, Satan, is still working here. "Now I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them. For such men do not serve as slaves our Lord Christ, but their own appetites; and by smooth and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (vv. 17-18). While we are enjoying the local church life, we must be watchful for those who cause divisions. In verse 17 Paul refers to "the teaching." What teaching is this? It is the teaching of the Apostle, such as in the book of Romans. Any discussion or dissension contrary to the Apostle's teaching is divisive, and we must keep a watchful, discerning eye over it. According to verse 17, we must turn away from those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to this teaching. Even in Paul's time there was the problem of division caused by the dissenting ones. Therefore, we also must be on the alert. Otherwise, our church life may be damaged by the "smooth and flattering speech" of the dissenters who are out to deceive the simple. Most "churching" people are simple. We must be simple in order to be in the church life. However, some may come to you with smooth, flattering, eloquent talk, seeking to divide the church and to cause you to fall. Do not think that you cannot be deceived. Be on the alert.

How can we discern the talk of those who come to us with flattering words? There is just one way. We must ask: Does it cause division? Do not accept any talk that causes division, regardless of how smooth and flattering the words may be. We must reject any talk that is contrary to the teaching of the book of Romans. We must renounce it strongly. Furthermore, we must turn away from those who speak in such a way. If Paul faced that kind of difficulty in his time, surely it will also occur in our time because of the subtlety of the enemy. Thus, while we are happy, excited, and praising the Lord for the church life, we must keep a watchful eye over those who cause divisions. We should not be deceived by men's

smooth words, but should ask ourselves the question: Is this talk contrary to the Apostle's teaching and is it divisive? We must heed the warning given to us by Paul in the last chapter of Romans.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

THE BASIC CONCEPT OF ROMANS

We have covered the book of Romans in a general way in the thirty-one foregoing messages. But there are still a number of crucial points concerning the matter of life that need to be covered in detail. Beginning with this message, we shall consider these points one by one, not taking care of the sequence of the chapters of the book of Romans, but of the important aspects of life. In this message we shall cover some basic points from Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Before we come to these basic points, however, I wish to say a word about the basic concept of this book. Romans is quite a long book, having sixteen chapters. Undoubtedly, Paul did his best to condense into these chapters all the things related to God's salvation. In every kind of writing there is the basic thought upon which the entire writing depends. This is also true of the book of Romans. Since Romans is a long book and covers many points, it is quite difficult for most readers to find the basic thought.

THE BASIC THOUGHT OF ROMANS

Many Christians say that the basic thought of Romans is justification by faith, and others say that it is the salvation of God. These viewpoints are not incorrect, but they are not adequate. The basic thought of this book is that God is making sons out of sinners to form a body for Christ that He may be expressed. We sinners are the basic material which God is using to produce many sons for Himself. Paul received a revelation of God's eternal plan, God's eternal purpose. God's eternal plan is to produce many sons for Himself by means of Himself as their life. This means that God intends to work Himself as life into many sinners and that these sinners will become His

many sons, after they have been redeemed and saved and have His life. Every sinner who has been born of God and has received God's life has become one of His sons (John 1:12-13). This, however, is still not the ultimate goal of God's purpose. The ultimate goal of His purpose is to build all these sons together into one Body to express Christ. God is making sons out of sinners to form the Body to express Christ. This is a full statement of the underlying concept of the book of Romans. This thought was deep in Paul's heart and in his spirit when he composed this book. His writing of this Epistle was based upon this. Having this concept as the basic content of Romans, Paul covered so many details relating to it in sixteen chapters. When we get into this book, we see that it reveals that God is working to make sons out of sinners to form the Body to express Christ.

THE MAJOR SECTIONS

Now we need to consider the major sections of the book of Romans. None of the other books in the Bible is as well organized as Romans. Therefore, it is easy to subdivide it. This book is subdivided into three main sections. Chapters one through eight compose the first section, chapters nine through eleven, the second section, and chapters twelve through sixteen, the third section. In this message we shall temporarily set aside the middle section and consider only the first and last sections.

PERSONAL SALVATION

The first section deals with the personal salvation of the individuals who believe in Christ. In other words, it is a section on personal salvation. We do not see the Body in this section. We have the many brothers of Christ, but not yet the many members of the Body. In chapter eight we read of the many brothers of the Firstborn (v. 29). Although the many brothers are undoubtedly the members of the Body of Christ, chapter eight does not refer to them as members, but as brothers of the firstborn

Son. In chapter eight the concept has not gone so far as to reach the Body. It is still a matter of the divine life producing the many sons. So the many sons are called not the many members of the Body of Christ, but the many brothers of the firstborn Son.

In the New Testament the Son of God is related to life. If you have the Son of God, you have life (1 John 5:11-12). If you do not have the Son, you do not have life. Because we have the divine life, we have become brothers of the firstborn Son. Now God not only has the unique Son, the only begotten Son, but also the many sons, the brothers of the Firstborn.

THE BODY, THE EXPRESSION OF CHRIST

The last section of Romans, chapters twelve through sixteen, covers the Body, the church life. The many brothers in chapter eight become the members of the Body in chapter twelve. This is not a matter of life--life is fully covered in the first section--but a matter of function. Being a son is a matter of life, but being a member of the Body is a matter of function. We all must function together as the Body to express Christ.

This Body must be expressed practically in all the local churches. In other words, the local churches are the practical expression of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the expression of Christ, and Christ is the expression of God. God is expressed in Christ, Christ is expressed in the Body, and the Body is expressed in the local churches. Therefore, in chapter sixteen, we have the churches: the church at Cenchrea (v. 1); the church in Rome, which met in the house of Prisca and Aquila (vv. 3, 5); the churches of the nations (v. 4); and the churches of Christ (v. 16). We are now in the churches. Hallelujah! The Body is in the churches, Christ is in the Body, and God is in Christ. How wonderful this is! If we see this, then we see the basic concept of this book.

This matter is worthy of our full attention. The first section of Romans covers personal salvation, and the last

section covers the Body, which is not a matter of individual salvation, but of corporate function. The first section is on individual salvation, and the last section is on corporate function. This corporate function is the Body, which is expressed in hundreds and even thousands of localities as local churches. This is the reason that Paul wrote chapter sixteen in such a wonderful way, not in the way of doctrine, but in the way of practical experience, in the way of greetings. Through his greetings, Paul opened a window through which we may look at the churches of the first century. Romans 16 is a window. Praise the Lord for this window! Without this chapter, we could never be so clear what was taking place in the churches at that time.

OUR DEEDS EXPOSED

Let us now consider some of the matters found in the first section. In this section, Paul firstly exposed us in our doings. I do not have the words to express how dirty, evil, dark, and ugly are the things exposed by Paul in the opening chapters of this book. It is not the persons that are exposed in these chapters, but their doings. We should observe this principle in preaching the gospel. Do not quickly expose what people are. You need to first expose what they do--their deeds, behavior, and activities. For instance, as you preach the gospel, you may ask a person what he was doing last night at ten o'clock. We have done this many times. Once, while preaching the gospel in the presence of the Holy Spirit, I pointed to a certain young student and said, "Do you know what you did? You stole chalk from school and brought it home." When I pointed my finger at him and said those words, he said within himself, "That doesn't mean anything." Immediately I responded, "Are you saying that this doesn't mean anything?" That frightened him. Then I said, "You brought the chalk home and drew circles on the floor." That was exactly what he had done. After the message, he was the first to stand up and accept Christ. With trembling he said, "Brother Lee pointed out exactly what I did. I stole chalk from school and I brought it home. When he told me

that I was saying that it didn't mean anything, that was just what I was saying. And I did draw the circles, just like he said." This young man was exposed in his deeds. Do you believe that you can stand God's exposing? If God were to expose all we have done in the past, we would not be able to stand it, for what we did was dirty, ugly, evil, and dark.

CONSTITUTED SINNERS

Beginning in 5:12, Paul exposes not what we have done, but what we are. We are constituted sinners (5:19). Before we ever sinned, we had already been constituted as sinners. Take an apple tree as an example. Before it bears apples, it is an apple tree already. It bears apples because it is an apple tree. If it were not an apple tree, it would not be able to bear apples. Likewise, we commit sins because we are sinners. Do not think that we became sinners by committing sins. No, we commit sins because we are sinners, just as the apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree. Do not say, "I am not a sinner, for I don't do evil things. I am always very good." Although you may be good, you are still a sinner, for you were born a sinner. You were constituted a sinner before you were even born. When we came into the world, we came as sinners. Do not think that you became a sinner after you were born. No, you were constituted a sinner in Adam long before you were born. This is Paul's concept. Thus, in our behavior we are sinful, and in our being we are constituted sinners.

Furthermore, we also are short of God's glory (3:23). The thought of coming short of God's glory may sound strange to many. No human concept takes account of this. People can understand us when we tell them that their deeds are sinful, and they can be convinced that they have been constituted sinners. But if we tell them that, as constituted sinners who do evil things, they are short of God's glory, they will say, "What do you mean? What is God's glory?" God's glory is God Himself expressed. Whenever God is expressed, glory is seen. We were made

by God in His image that we might express His glory. But we have sinned. Now instead of expressing God, we express sin and our sinful self. Hence, we are short of God's glory. We are sinful in what we do, we are constituted sinners in what we are, and we are short of God's glory. This is our situation, our condition.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS RECKONED TO US

How can God make sons out of such sinners? He can do it only by three things--by His righteousness, holiness, and glory. In Romans Paul tells us that God has put His righteousness upon us and that He has reckoned His righteousness to be ours (4:22-24). This means that God has given us His righteousness. Because we are clothed with God's righteousness, we can say, "I am righteous because I am in God's righteousness. I have been completely covered with His righteousness." How is this accomplished? How can God's righteousness be accounted as ours? It is through the redeeming death of Christ. Since God's righteousness has been reckoned to us through the death of Christ, our sinful deeds have been erased from the account, and God's righteousness covers our whole being. This is God's righteousness given to us as our covering through the redeeming death of Christ. Christ died on the cross that we might obtain the righteousness of God. God has put His righteousness upon us just as the father put the best robe on the prodigal son who returned. In that parable in Luke 15 the father told his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him" (v. 22). This robe signifies the righteousness of God, which is Christ. Praise the Lord that the righteousness of God has been put on us! God's righteousness deals with all we have done. Through the redeeming death of Christ, this has been fully accomplished.

GOD'S HOLINESS WORKED INTO US

In addition to this, God is now working His holiness into us. God's holiness is not upon us; it is being worked into us. This is not a matter of merely an outward

covering, but an inward imparting. As we have seen, holiness is God's nature. God works His holiness into us by imparting His nature into us. He does this by coming into us to be our life. God comes into us as life so that He may saturate all the inward parts of our being with what He is. Even now God is saturating every part of our being with His element. In this way, God makes us holy. This is not outward righteousness; it is inward holiness. It makes us holy not only positionally, but also dispositionally. This is sanctification.

God's righteousness has been reckoned to us through the redeeming death of Christ, and now God's holiness is being wrought into us through Christ's living in us. Christ died on the cross so that God's righteousness might be put upon us, and Christ lives within us so that God's holiness might be wrought into us. I praise the Lord that I can stand here and strongly testify, "Through Christ's redeeming death, God's righteousness has been put upon me. I can stand before God without any fear. I am fully at peace in the presence of God because His righteousness is upon me." I can also testify that God's holiness is being wrought into me by Christ's living in me. Today Christ is living in the depths of my being to saturate me with all that God is. I am constantly under this process of saturation. Whenever I talk to my wife or children, Christ is working to saturate and permeate me completely and absolutely. Day by day, the divine nature is being infused into me to make me holy dispositionally. I must confess, however, that although this work has been going on quite well, it still is not finished, for certain parts of my being have not yet been saturated with the nature of God. The divine infusion is still taking place.

At times it may seem that this infusion is temporary, that it does not deeply penetrate our being. It may seem like a rainbow that appears in the sky for a few minutes: if you try to locate it, it disappears. Our holiness is sometimes like this. We may be holy and separated, but only for several minutes. For example, a certain sister may be very saintly right after morning watch. But a few minutes later she may act like the Devil himself. However

temporary our holiness may seem to be, it is nevertheless a fact that we are under God's infusing, God's permeating. His saturating work continues to go on. Do not be disappointed. Sooner or later, your devilish behavior will be gone. The time will come when you will not be able to act like the Devil, even if you try your best to do so. You will be one who has been fully sanctified with the nature of God.

GLORIFICATION WITH GOD'S GLORY

But there is even more than this. We may be fully permeated with God's holiness and yet still not be in glory. Remember, the last step of God's working in us is glorification. One day, we all shall be glorified (8:30). We have been justified with His righteousness, we are being sanctified with His holiness, and we shall be glorified with His glory. We all shall be brought into glory. As the glorified sons of God, we shall shine with the glory of God. This is the full salvation for all who believe in Christ. Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus will eventually become a glorified son of God bearing the righteousness of God outwardly, being saturated with the holiness of God inwardly, and shining in the realm of His full glory as one of His sons. The day of our glorification will be the time of the revelation of the sons of God (8:19). At that time, we shall all enter into the freedom of the glory of God (8:21). Then there will be no more bondage, limitation, depression, or suppression. Instead, we shall enjoy full liberation and shine with God's glory. That will be full salvation.

THE HEART OF GOD

As we pointed out in a previous message, after Paul shows us the working of God's righteousness, the saturating of His holiness, and the glorifying of His glory, he brings us into the heart of God (8:31-39). God does so much for us simply because he loves us. He loved us eternally. From eternity in the past, God loved us, and He

still loves us today. His heart is our stay, our security, and His love is our safeguard. Do not have any doubt about your personal salvation. God loves you, and He assures you that He will accomplish everything on your behalf. If you cooperate with Him, He will accomplish this smoothly. If you do not cooperate with Him, He will encounter some difficulties, but eventually He will get through. Although you may afford Him some hardship, you cannot frustrate Him. That hardship does not mean very much to Him. Sooner or later, you will say, "Father, I worship You because You love me. You selected me, predestinated me, called me, and justified me. Praise You, Lord, that You have sanctified me and even glorified me. Here I am in glory." One day we all shall pray in this way. No longer shall we praise the Lord for things such as cars and houses. Instead, we shall praise Him for the righteousness of God, the holiness of God, the glory of God, and the love of God. This is the structure of the first eight chapters of the book of Romans.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

THE BASIC POINTS IN CHAPTERS FIVE THROUGH EIGHT

In this message we shall consider some of the basic points in Romans 5 through 8.

TWO FACTS AND TWO EXPERIENCES

The last part of chapter five deals with the fact that we have been in Adam. It is a fact that we once were in Adam; no one can deny this. Every human being either is in Adam or was in him. Chapter six deals with the fact that we are now in Christ. Thus, we may entitle Romans 5, "In Adam," and Romans 6, "In Christ." Remember, these two things are facts, one past and the other present. We were in Adam, but now we are in Christ. How much better is this present fact!

Chapter seven deals with the experience in the flesh. This is not merely a fact, but an experience. Hence, over chapter seven we may write, "In the flesh."

Chapter eight deals with our experience in the spirit. It is difficult to determine whether this is the Holy Spirit or our human spirit because it refers to the mingled spirit. Therefore, over chapter eight we may write, "In the spirit."

In chapters five and six we have two facts, the facts of being in Adam and in Christ. In chapters seven and eight we have two kinds of experiences, the experience in the flesh and the experience in the spirit. The experience in the flesh is the experience of the fact of being in Adam. The fact of being in Adam revealed in chapter five is experienced in the flesh as described in chapter seven. If we had only chapter five without chapter seven, we would have the fact that we were so dead, but not the experience. Likewise, the experience in the spirit in

chapter eight is the experience of the fact of being in Christ revealed in chapter six. In other words, the fact of being in Christ can be experienced only in the spirit.

IN ADAM

In Adam there are three main things: sin, death, and being constituted sinners (5:19). In Adam, we inherited sin, were under the reign of death (5:12,14), and were constituted sinners. Of course, we were also under God's condemnation. Whether we were good or evil means nothing. Even if we were the best person, in Adam we were still sinners under God's condemnation. In Adam we inherited sin, were under the reign of death, and were constituted sinners under God's condemnation. These are facts. We all were condemned even before we were born. This was our case.

IN CHRIST

Praise the Lord that we have the second fact, the fact of being in Christ! As a result of being in Christ, we have grace with righteousness (5:17). In Adam we had sin; in Christ we have grace with righteousness. What we have is not righteousness alone or grace alone but grace with righteousness. Grace with righteousness is versus sin. In Adam, we inherited sin. In Christ we have received grace with the gift of righteousness. Grace and righteousness work together because grace works through righteousness. Furthermore, in Christ we have eternal life instead of death. We can even reign in this eternal life (5:17). Although death once reigned over us (5:14), now we can reign in life. Moreover, in Christ we are not under God's condemnation; we are under His justification. In Christ we all have been justified.

Perhaps you are asking how you can be in Christ. We have no doubt about our being in Adam. But how can we be in Christ? It is by being baptized into Him (6:3), and by believing into Him (John 3:15). Being baptized into Christ includes believing into Him. Hence, we are in Christ by believing and by being baptized. When you believe in

Christ, you actually believe yourself into Him. Likewise being baptized into the water is a sign indicating that we are being baptized into Christ. God has put us into Christ (1 Cor. 1:30), and we all must believe this fact and reckon on it. Hallelujah, we are in Christ! We have been transferred out of Adam into Christ. Today I can testify boldly that I am no longer in Adam--I am in Christ. Because I am in Christ, His death, His resurrection, and all that He is have become mine. Whatever He has done is mine because I am in Him.

Consider the example of Noah's ark. The ark with the eight persons aboard passed through many things. Whatever the ark passed through was also the experience of those eight persons, because they were in the ark. This is a clear type of our being in Christ. Christ is our ark, and we, the resurrected people, are in Him. (The number eight signifies resurrection.) Whatever Christ has obtained and attained and whatever He is now is ours. His death is ours, His resurrection is ours, and His life is ours. Christ's death has terminated every negative thing in the universe, and His death is ours. Nothing terminates a person like death. If someone asks whether or not you are dead, you should strongly reply, "Yes, I died two thousand years ago (6:6). Christ's death on the cross cleared up everything for me and terminated me absolutely. I am dead." Praise the Lord that we all are dead! Having died with Christ on the one hand, on the other hand we are resurrected with Him (6:8, 11). We are resurrected, we are living, and we are growing together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection (6:5). We all must believe these facts, recognize them, and reckon ourselves according to them.

If we stand on these facts, we may present ourselves to God as slaves and present our members as weapons of righteousness unto sanctification (6:13, 19). When we reckon upon the fact that our old man has been crucified and that we are alive to God in Christ Jesus and when we present ourselves with all of our members as weapons of righteousness to God, the way is open for the divine life to

work within our being in a free way. This divine life will transfuse all that God is into our being. This is sanctification. This is not the objective redemption on the cross; it is God's subjective, sanctifying work in our very being.

IN THE FLESH

After we realize that we have died with Christ, we must also see that we no longer have anything to do with the law. Because we are dead, we are freed, discharged, from the law (7:6). Do not go back to the law. To go back to the law means to make up your mind to do good. Whenever you make up your mind to do good, you are returning to the law. If you pray, "O God, help me to be humble from now on," you are going back to the law. Although you are praying to God, you are not going to God; you are going to the law. Consider a husband who repents for not loving his wife. He makes up his mind to love his wife from now on and asks the Lord to help him love his wife. This prayer indicates that he is going back to the law. I can assure you that he will not be able to love her. The more he tries to love her, the more he will fail to love her. He will find himself in Romans 7, in the situation of not doing what he wills to do, but of doing what he does not will to do (7:19). Although you may will to love your wife, you cannot do it. You may will never to lose your temper, but eventually you lose your temper more than ever. Why? Because by going to the law you are going to the wrong source. You have not yet realized that you are an utterly hopeless and helpless case. We need to reject ourselves and say to the self, "Self, I don't trust in you. Self, don't make up your mind to do anything. You are not able to do anything." Whenever a husband is tempted to make up his mind to love his wife, he should immediately say, "Satan, get away from me. I will never try this. Instead, I shall reject the self. My self must go."

Do not make up your mind to do good. Paul said, "To will is present with me, but to do the good is not" (7:18). Paul went on to say, "For the good which I will, I do not;

but the evil I do not will, this I practice" (7:19). Therefore, in the next verse he concluded, "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me" (7:20). As we pointed out, this was Paul's experience before he was saved, but nearly all Christians pass through it after they are saved. If we do not have such an experience, we shall not be exposed to the uttermost and shall not realize how hopeless we are.

Perhaps even today you have made up your mind to do good. It is so natural, so easy, to will. When you were somewhat cold toward the Lord, you did not make up your mind to do good for Him. But after you are revived and come back to the Lord, you immediately make up your mind to do good. Every time you make up your mind to do good, you make a commandment, a self-made law, for yourself. These are not the laws given by Moses; they are the laws enacted by the self. Nevertheless, the principle is the same. Whether it is a law given by Moses or a law made by the self, you will end up being exposed.

Many years ago I used to pray, "O Lord, I don't want to lose my temper with my wife. I want to be a good husband and love my wife all the time. Lord, help me to love her." According to my experience, I have never received an answer to such a prayer. In fact, the more I prayed about losing my temper, the more I lost it. If you do not pray in this way, you may not lose your temper for a week or two. But if you pray about it, you will lose your temper very soon afterward. In the past years many sisters have come to me and said that they prayed about having a good attitude towards their husbands and children, but that on the very day they prayed, their attitudes were worse than ever. When people asked me such questions in the early years of my ministry, I was the same as they were. Speaking doctrinally, I told them that this was to help them to know what they are. This is merely doctrine to us until one day we are forced to realize that we are absolutely no good. Once we see this, we shall never again make up our mind to do good. Instead, we shall go to Romans 8.

IN THE SPIRIT

In Romans 8 we find something very simple. Forget about making up your mind to do good. The mind should be a submissive wife, but it presumes to be the husband. In chapter seven Paul said clearly, "With the mind I myself serve as a slave the law of God" (v. 25). Such a mind is too independent. The mind should be a female, but it presumes to be a male. In chapter eight we see that we should simply walk according to the spirit (8:4). But what about our mind? The mind must be set upon the spirit (8:6). We need to walk according to the spirit and set our mind upon the spirit. This is sufficient. Do not make up your mind to do good or pray that the Lord will help you to do good. Forget all such religious concepts. We need to walk, behave, and have our being according to the spirit and continually set our mind upon the spirit. Then we shall have freedom, and the indwelling Christ will impart life into every part of our being, even into the weak members of our mortal body (8:11). Our whole being will then be infused with the divine life. This is not a matter of doing good, of keeping the law, or of fulfilling the requirements of the law. It is a matter of life lived out of our spirit. This life will do even more than fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. When we behave, walk, and have our being according to the mingled spirit and when we set our mind upon the spirit, not allowing the mind to act on its own to do anything, we enjoy the imparting of life by the indwelling Christ. We enjoy the salvation of God and the sanctification that comes from being saturated with His life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

BEING FREED FROM SIN, THE LAW, AND THE FLESH

In the previous message we saw that the central thought of the book of Romans is that God is transforming sinners into sons to form the Body of Christ. This--not justification by faith--is the basic concept of this book. If we do not have this view, we shall have a very superficial understanding of Romans. Ultimately, this book is not merely for our personal salvation; it is for the formation of the Body of Christ.

FOUR STATIONS

In the book of Romans there are four stations: justification, sanctification, the Body, and the churches. All Christians may be classified according to these four stations. Many real Christians have stopped at the station of justification. They have been redeemed, justified, reconciled, and saved, but they have stopped their journey at justification. It seems that they are satisfied and do not want to hear anything further. In the past I have talked to many Christians about seeking the Lord and going on with Him. But some have said, "Isn't it good enough to be saved? I have been saved, the blood of Jesus has redeemed me, I have been regenerated, and I am now a child of God. One day I shall go to heaven. Please don't bother me with anything else." A great part of genuine Christians go no farther than this station.

By the Lord's grace, other Christians seek for what is called the deeper life or the inner life. They are not satisfied merely with justification, but pursue something

further, higher, richer, and deeper. These Christians eventually reach the station of sanctification in Romans 8.

After the end of World War II, some of the saints in the second station began to talk very much about the Body. According to the book of Romans, chapter twelve is the station of the proper Body life. But according to the experience of many Christians today, it is not actually the station of the Body, but the station of Body-talk. Thus, we may call these Christians the Body-talkers. When I came to this country, I was surprised at all the talk about the Body ministry. Later I learned that what was meant by Body ministry was several preaching one by one instead of only one preaching. Although Christians talk so much about the Body, where is the Body? The more they talk about the Body, the more divisions they cause. Before 1945 there were not so many divisions in the United States as there are today. But from that time, hundreds of little groups began to form, nearly all of which were talking about the Body.

We do not have the Body simply by talking about the Body. The Body can be realized only in the local churches. If you do not have the church life, how can you have the Body? Thus, along with the third category of Christians, the Body-talkers, there is the fourth category: those who practice the church life. This is the fourth station in Romans.

Where are you in relation to these four stations? I have the full assurance that I am in station four. God has been and still is working to transform sinners into sons of God. These sons of God are the members forming the Body of Christ to express Christ. As we have seen, God is in Christ, Christ is in His Body, and His Body is in the local churches. This is the basic concept and central thought of this book. If we do not see this, we are short-sighted.

TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE AND WHAT WE ARE

In order to accomplish the task of making sons out of

sinners to form the Body of Christ, God firstly had to take care of our past deeds. Do you still remember the things you did before you were saved? If you were to ask me this question, I would say, "Please don't remind me of this. What I did in the past was too dirty, evil, and ugly. I don't want to talk about it." If you think that your past deeds were not bad, let me ask if you have ever stolen anything. When people tell me how good they are, I check with them about stealing. None of us can boast of our past. Since God cannot accept us as His sons with such an evil history, He had to take care of it.

God has dealt with not only what we have done, but also with what we are. Even after being saved, we are still not so good. We are all a problem to others. The wives are a problem to the husbands, and the husbands are a problem to the wives. The children are a problem to the parents, and the parents are a problem to the children. I am a problem to my neighbors, to my in-laws, and to my dear wife and children. Thank God that He takes care of what we are!

Christ's death on the cross deals with what we have done, and the resurrected Christ living in us deals with what we are. Through His death we have obtained righteousness, and we are therefore justified in the presence of God. By this, the problem of our past has been solved. Now Christ is living in us, working God's holiness into our being to accomplish for us a subjective sanctification. His death brought the righteousness of God to us, but His dwelling in us works God's holiness into our very being. In this way He takes care of what we are. By taking care of our past through His death and by taking care of what we are by His living in us, He is transforming sinners into God's very sons.

As wonderful as this is, it is still not the end of the process. At His coming, the Lord will glorify us. He will bring our mortal body into the glory of God, transfiguring our deadened body into a body of glory. At that time we shall be brought into full sonship. His death has gained the righteousness of God for us, His living is working the

holiness of God into our being, and His coming back will bring us into the divine glory so that we may have the full sonship.

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING IN ADAM AND IN CHRIST

In the last message we pointed out that in Romans 5 we are in Adam, in Romans 6 we are in Christ, in Romans 7 we are in the flesh, and in Romans 8 we are in the spirit. If we are in the flesh, we experience Adam, and if we are in the spirit, we experience Christ. The Adam in chapter five can be experienced only in the flesh in chapter seven, and the Christ in chapter six can be experienced only in the spirit in chapter eight. Without chapter seven we do not have the experience of being in Adam. A newborn child certainly is in Adam. But with that little child you do not see the experience of being in Adam. However, the older we are, the more we have the experience of being in the flesh. Whatever we have inherited in Adam is experienced by us in a practical way in the flesh. When we live in the flesh, we experience all the riches of Adam. Mothers, although you love your little baby, that infant is a great storehouse of the riches of Adam. If you do not believe this, I ask you to wait for twenty years. During these years, the stored-up riches of Adam will be gradually shown to you. Then you will say, "Brother Lee was right. Twenty years ago he said that this little one was a storehouse of the riches of Adam. At that time I did not believe him, but now, after twenty years of experience, I am convinced. All the riches of Adam were in fact stored in that little child." What we have in Adam is experienced by being in the flesh.

In the same principle, the fact of being in Christ can be experienced only by being in the spirit. When we walk according to the spirit, we experience all the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are far greater than those of Adam. But to experience them we must walk according to the spirit.

PUT INTO CHRIST

Romans 5:19 says, "Through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners." You may think that because you are saved, you are no longer a sinner. In a sense, I agree with you. Nevertheless, we still have the sinful element of our old constitution. We are sinners constituted with sin. We are not sinners because we have sinned. No, we are sinners because we have been constituted with sin. Even before you were born, you were already a sinner. Whether we are good or evil, we have all been constituted sinners.

Romans 6:3 says that we "have been baptized into Christ Jesus." This means that we have been put into Christ. We were born in Adam, but we have been put into Christ. We were born in the realm, sphere, and element of Adam, but we have been transferred into the realm, sphere, and element of Christ. This is a fact, and it does not depend upon our feelings. When I say that you were born in Adam, you may reply, "I don't feel like I was born in Adam." Whether you feel it or not, it is a fact nonetheless. For example, it is a fact that I am in the United States, although I may feel like I am in Taiwan. By this we can see that our feeling may be a lie. I may feel like I am a king, but I am actually a small man. I may feel that I am very good, but actually I may be very poor. Regarding the spiritual facts, we should not depend on our feelings.

In Romans 6 there is the fact that we have all been put into Christ. Are you now in Christ? Some may answer, "It may be that I am in Christ, but I don't feel that I am in Christ. How can I say that I am in Christ when I lost my temper just an hour ago? If my behavior was that poor an hour ago, how can I be in Christ now?" But based upon the fact in Romans 6, we must declare, "Amen, I am in Christ!" In Romans 6 we have the fact that we have been put into Christ. Whether we like it or not, and whether we feel it or not, does not matter. The fact remains the fact. We are in Christ.

OUR OLD MAN HAVING BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him that the body of sin might be made of none effect, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." Through the death of Christ, our old man has been terminated. He has even had a funeral. Do you know that our old man was crucified with Christ and buried? If we believe that we are in Christ, then we must also believe that our old man has been crucified with Him. Whether or not we feel that this is so, it is a fact that our old man is dead and buried. Therefore, Paul says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him." In Christ, our old man has been put away.

THE BODY OF SIN BEING MADE OF NONE EFFECT

Since our old man has been crucified and buried, "the body of sin" has been "made of none effect" (6:6). Because of the fall, our body is a body of sin. As such a fallen body, it is good only for committing sins. In this body there is nothing but sin. Therefore, in 7:19 and 20 Paul says, "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil I do not will, this I practice. But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me." The sin dwelling in our body makes it "the body of sin." However tired we may be, our body is very active when there is opportunity for sinning. For example, some people may gamble for three days and nights without sleeping or eating properly. But not one employee could work for seventy-two hours without sleeping. On the contrary, an employee would complain if he were compelled to do this. But no one at a gambling table complains of tiredness, for everyone is full of energy because the body is a body of sin. I have never heard a gambler say that he was tired and wanted to go home. Even if a man's wife would plead for him to come home, he would stay at the gambling table for

several more hours. This indicates that the body is never tired of sinning, although it may easily tire of other things. When parents charge their children to do their homework, the children often say, "Oh, I'm too tired. Besides, I am not feeling well." But when it comes to doing something sinful, the body is full of energy.

Because our old man has been buried with Christ, the body of sin has lost its job. It has become of none effect because the sinning person, the old man, has been crucified. The body is not the sinning person; it is the sinning instrument, the means by which a person does sinful things. But now that the person has been buried, the body of sin is unemployed. This means that we are freed from sin. Since our old man has been crucified and buried with Christ, we are freed from sin. This is the main point of Romans 6.

THE PROBLEM OF THE LAW

At the time of the fall, sin came into man. However, man did not realize how sinful he was. This made it necessary for God to give man the law that man's sinfulness might be exposed. Although the law should not have been a problem, it nevertheless became a problem. God's intention in giving man the law was to expose him and to convince him of his sinfulness. But even though man was exposed by the requirements of the law, he still refused to admit that he was sinful. Instead, he used the law in an improper way, as if to say, "The law is excellent. I'll fulfill all its requirements." God's intention was to use the law to expose man, but man thought that he could keep the law. Nevertheless, God's purpose in giving the law has been fulfilled. The more man tried to keep the law, the more he broke it; and the more he broke the law, the more he was exposed. Therefore, we have not only the problem of sin, but also the problem of the law.

As we have seen, the problem of sin is solved in Romans 6. But how can the problem of the law be solved? In Romans 7 we have the way to be freed from the law.

The way to be released from the law, like the way to be freed from sin, is through the death of the old man. In chapter six, our old man is the sinning person, but in chapter seven our old man is the self-assuming husband. The old man should not have been the husband; rather, he should have been the wife. The old man, however, has not kept his position, but has assumed the position of the husband. Praise the Lord that the old man as the sinning person and as the self-assuming husband has been crucified and buried! Now we are freed from sin and from the law. This covers the first part of Romans 7.

THE PROBLEM OF THE FLESH

In the second part of this chapter we have another problem--the flesh. Sin has caused our body to become a body of sinful flesh. Thus, along with the problem of sin, we have the problem of the fallen body, the sinful flesh. Our fallen body is absolutely no good; it has become the flesh. In 7:18 Paul says, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells." Standing absolutely on the side of the law of God, Paul sincerely wanted to do good and to keep the law, but he found that his flesh, which opposed his desire, was a great frustration. In 7:22 and 23 he says, "I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive in the law of sin which is in my members." In 7:25 he says, "With the mind I myself serve as a slave the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." We all need to be freed from sin, the law, and the flesh, all of which came as a result of our fall.

FREED FROM THE FLESH BY WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

As we have seen, Romans 5 says that we were constituted sinners. As such sinners, we have the problems of sin, the law, and the flesh. We are freed from sin by having our old man as the sinning person crucified. We are freed from the law by having our old man as the self-

assuming husband crucified. The way to be freed from the flesh is found in Romans 8, where we see that we are freed from the flesh by walking according to the spirit. When we walk according to the spirit, we are spontaneously freed from the flesh. If we do not walk according to the spirit, we are still in the flesh, although we may be free from both sin and the law. The only way to be freed from the flesh is to be in the spirit and to walk according to the spirit.

In chapters five through eight, we have four main points. The main point in chapter five is that we were constituted sinners. The main point in chapter six is that our old man has been crucified and that we have been freed from sin. The main point in chapter seven is that our old husband has been crucified and that we have been freed from the law. The main point in chapter eight is that when we are in the spirit and walk according to the spirit, we are freed from the flesh and no longer obligated to it. "We are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh" (8:12).

We need to apply this in our daily living. Suppose I offend a brother as I am working with him. On the one hand, I truly love him; on the other hand, I cannot keep from offending him. After offending him, my conscience is bothered, and I go to the Lord, confess, receive forgiveness, and am cleansed by the blood. Immediately following that, I may make up my mind and say, "I will never do that again. From now on, I will not speak to my brother in such a way." Then I kneel down and pray, "O Lord, You have forgiven me. Lord, I pray that from now on You will help me never to do that again." Shortly after praying in this way, I come to work with this brother again. For some reason, working with him this time is so difficult that I cannot stand it. After a few minutes, I lose my temper and again have a big failure. Again I repent, confess, ask for forgiveness, and apply the blood. But now I am ashamed to make up my mind, because I have begun to feel that this does not work very well. Nevertheless, later in the day I make up my mind to try again and ask the Lord to help me once more.

Romans 7:18 says, "To will is present with me, but to do the good is not." Willing to do good and to not lose our temper is always with us. However, to do what we will is not present. In 7:19 Paul says, "The good which I will, I do not." My dealing with the brother in the example mentioned above was half spiritual and half unspiritual; it was half of mercy and grace and half of the law. I made a confession, applied the blood, and asked the Lord for forgiveness. All that was of grace. But then I made up my mind to do good and prayed that I might succeed. This was according to the law. In confessing and applying the blood, I went to Romans 3 and 4. That was correct. But when I made up my mind to will, I went to Romans 7. Every Christian makes this mistake, perhaps hundreds and even thousands of times. When I was young, I repeated this mistake more than fifty times a day. As one who truly sought holiness, I discovered that I often had unholy thoughts. For example, I might speak kindly to a brother outwardly, but inwardly I disliked or even despised him. That was sinful, and I later prayed, "O God, my Father, forgive me for despising my brother in my heart. Cleanse me with the blood. From now on help me not to do this." Then I spoke with another brother, and the same thing happened again. When I did not pray this way, however, I was not troubled. Even if I tried to despise a brother, I could not do it. But after praying about it, I began to despise the brothers. This situation continued for years. One day I discovered that I had been living in Romans 7. To will was present with me, but to do what I had willed was not.

What then should we do? We should not will any more. However, it is not easy to stop. Nevertheless, whenever you are tempted to will, you must say, "Devil, get away from me. I won't be cheated by you and I won't listen to you." Instead of willing, we should set our mind upon the spirit. This is the key. We must practice just one thing: setting our mind upon the spirit and walking according to the spirit. Do not think about what will happen if a certain brother irritates you. If you keep on exercising

your will, you will fail. But if your mind and your whole being are set upon the spirit and you act according to the spirit, you will be freed from the flesh in a practical way. What a difference there will be in your daily living! We need to practice this. We do not need to stay in Romans 5, 6, or 7, but in Romans 8, setting our mind upon the spirit and living, walking, and behaving according to our spirit. Then we shall experience a full release from sin, the law, and the flesh.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

BEING FREED FROM DEATH

(1)

As we have seen, the focal point of the revelation in this book is that God is transforming sinners into sons to form the Body of Christ. God is expressed in the Son, the Son is expressed in the Body, and the Body is expressed in the local churches. Before we became sons, we were constituted sinners (5:19), not only in name and in position, but in constitution. We were constituted sinners because sin had entered into us.

SIN ENTERING INTO OUR BEING

In order for a substance to be constituted in a certain way, a particular element must be added into it. By God's creation, we were good, righteous men. However, due to the fall of Adam, sin was injected into our being. When man fell, he not only made a mistake and did something wrong. If man had only made a mistake, his fall would not have been that serious. However, in the fall something more serious than a mistake occurred: sin was injected into man's being.

Suppose a mother has a bottle of poison at home. She keeps it in a specific place and tells her little boy never to touch that bottle. One day, while the mother is outside, the little boy, wondering what is in the bottle, takes it, opens it, and drinks some of the poison. When the mother finds out what happened, she is not concerned about the mistake her son has made. She is worried about the poison that has gotten into him. Most Christians think that man merely disobeyed God and made a mistake in

taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Not many realize that by man's eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, something evil and even satanic entered into man. Through the fall an evil, satanic element was injected into him. The Bible calls this element sin. Sin is not merely a matter of lying or stealing. Such things are the fruit of sin, not sin itself. Sin is the very nature of Satan, the evil one.

In Romans 5 through 8 there are many indications that sin is like a living person: it entered (5:12), it reigns (5:21), it can lord it over us (6:14), it deceives us (7:11), it kills us (7:11), and it dwells in us (7:17). Once sin, the evil element of Satan, was injected into man, man was constituted a sinner. Now instead of being proper men, we are sinners by our very constitution. The amount of good or evil we have done makes no difference because sin is now in our being. Although our deeds may not be sinful outwardly, we have a sinful nature inwardly.

THE RESULTS OF SIN

Sin results in a number of things. It has brought in both the flesh and the law. Hence, we have the problems of sin, the flesh, and the law. But we have still another problem, the ultimate issue of sin, which is death. Where there is sin, there is death. In 5:12 Paul says, "As through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men because all have sinned." Death comes in through sin and reigns because of sin. Therefore, sin issues in three things: the law, the flesh, and death.

FREED FROM SIN, THE LAW, AND THE FLESH

Romans 5 reveals that we have been constituted sinners, and Romans 6 reveals that "the body of sin" has been "made of none effect" (6:6) since our old man has been crucified with Christ. Through the death of the old man, we are freed from sin. As we pointed out in a previous message, in Romans 6 we are freed from sin, in Romans 7 we are freed from the law, and in Romans 8 we are freed from the flesh. We are free from sin because our

old man has been crucified. The death of the old man has caused the body of sin to be unemployed, to be made of none effect. Because the body of sin has lost its job, we no longer need to serve sin as slaves. This means that we have been freed from sin. Likewise, we have been freed from the law because the old husband has died and has been given a funeral. At the time of this funeral, we were married to our new husband. By losing our old husband and marrying our new husband, we are freed from the law. As Romans 8 reveals, we are freed from the flesh by walking according to the spirit. We are freed from sin by having our old man crucified and our body of sin made of none effect; we are freed from the law by burying our old husband and by marrying another; and we are freed from the flesh by walking according to the spirit.

THE WORKING OF DEATH

But now we must face another problem, the problem of how we can be freed from death. If we would know this, we need to understand what death is. Everyone is under the reign of death and under its working. Within every living person is something which the Bible calls the working of death. Suppose a certain brother loves the Lord. One morning in his fellowship with the Lord he decides that from now on he will always honor and obey his parents, love his wife, and be kind to his children. This is the desire of his heart. He has also made up his mind never to lose his temper. However, soon afterward a difficult situation arises, and he loses his temper again. You may say that this is the result of the working of sin. I agree. But the effect of sin is death; it is death working in us. After being stung by death, we become so weak that no matter how hard we try to honor our parents or love our wives, we simply cannot do it.

In 7:7 and 8 Paul said, "I had not known coveting except the law had said, You shall not covet. But sin, taking occasion through the commandment, wrought in me coveting of every kind." Covetousness is not an outward matter; it is an inward desire. One day a missionary in

China was telling his cook that everyone was sinful. Arguing with him, the cook said that he was honest and never stole from others. Upon further questioning, it came out that even while they were discussing sinfulness and honesty, the cook was thinking about the missionary's horse and how he could get the horse. Then the missionary told him, "This is covetousness, and covetousness is sinful." In Romans 7 Paul also uses covetousness as an illustration. How difficult for us to control covetousness! The more we try not to be covetous, the more covetous we are. The Apostle Paul was trying to be righteous, holy, and perfect. To some extent at least, he was successful. He kept himself from stealing, but he could not keep himself from covetousness. In fact, he learned that it was impossible for him to control his covetousness. Therefore, he cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24).

"THIS DEATH"

What did Paul mean by "this death"? He meant the death that, in the form of covetousness, was constantly killing him. In like manner, something within us is killing us every minute of the day. If we are loose or careless, we shall not realize this. But if we try to be upright, holy, spiritual, and perfect, we shall find that instead of being perfect, we are constantly being killed by death. To experience death, there is no need for us to wait until we are old and about to die physically. Even with physical death there is the matter of dying gradually. Every day we die a little more, even as we are living. The older we become, the more we die. Suppose you have seventy dollars. If you spend five dollars, you have sixty-five dollars left. If you spend sixty-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents, you will have only a penny left. In like manner, we are spending our lifespan. Whether we are old or young, we are gradually dying. I am an old man with many grandchildren. When they tell me how old they are, I sometimes think, "You are not living. You are all dying."

Death is a profound matter. It kills our body, soul, and spirit. Right now it is killing your body, mind, will, and emotion. It is killing your heart and especially your spirit. This is the reason so many come to the church meetings in a dead way. They sit in their chairs without praying or functioning because they are dead and buried. It is impossible for such a dead one to shout, "Praise the Lord!" Some brothers are dead in the meetings because they have lost their temper with their wife. Even if you are unhappy with your wife without losing your temper outwardly, your spirit will be killed. Sometimes the leading brothers ask me why so many brothers and sisters do not function in the meetings. I tell them that the reason is that these saints are dead and in a coffin. How can you expect a dead one to function? Do not exhort them or give them regulations. Instead, do something to cause them to be resurrected from their graves. Then they will speak in the meetings. My point is that we all have something within that the Bible calls death. Do not think that death will come only in the future. No, it may prevail within you today. Although its name is death, it is very active and strong, much more powerful than you are. By yourself, you cannot defeat it.

Many times in the meetings you have probably had the feeling to praise the Lord or to give a testimony. Immediately, however, you began to consider and deliberate, thinking that you should not utter anything carelessly. If you are careful like this, it indicates that you are under the influence of death. If you are summoned to appear on the witness stand before a judge, then you must be careful. But when you come to the church meeting, there is no need for you to be so careful. You need to lose your carefulness, release your spirit, and say, "Praise the Lord! Amen! I want to testify that Christ is my life." Any consideration will deaden you. Do you know why you are careful in the meetings? It is because you want to glorify yourself and not lose your face. This kind of consideration kills your spirit.

We have seen that because of the element of sin in us, we have been constituted sinners. The issue of sin is

death, which kills and deadens us. Today we have not only the problem of sin, but also the problem of death. The fact that sin and death go together is proved by Romans 8:2: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." The law of sin and of death does not refer to two laws, but one law with two elements--sin and death. Where the law of sin is, there the law of death is also.

THE BODY OF SIN AND THE BODY OF DEATH

Romans 6:6 speaks of "the body of sin" and 7:24, of "the body of this death." The body of sin is very active and energetic in doing sinful things. In doing the things of God we often feel tired, sleepy, and in need of rest. But when there is the opportunity to do something sinful, the tiredness disappears because the body of sin is so powerful. Although the body of sin is strong, the body of death is weak. In going to worldly amusements the body of sin is active, but in going to the church meeting the body of death is weak. The body of death may cause us to say, "I can't go to the meeting. I don't feel well, and my child kept me awake last night. I'm so weak and tired. I need to stay home and rest." Depending on what it is related to, the same body may be either the body of sin or the body of death. In relation to sin, it is strong; in relation to God, it is weak. When our spirit is quickened, living, and exercised, our body is not tired. But when our spirit is cold, or even lukewarm, we may not desire to go to the meeting, but prefer to stay home and rest. Some sisters may say, "I have been so busy for the last three days that I am exhausted. I can't go to the meeting; I need to rest." Although this appears to be a fact, it is actually a false excuse.

LIFE FOR OUR MORTAL BODIES

As we have seen, in 7:24 Paul cried, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" The way to be free from this death is found in 8:2.

It is by the Spirit of life. We need to turn to our spirit and walk according to our spirit. Do not believe your feelings of tiredness. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, such feelings are a lie. When it is time to go to a meeting, do not say that you are tired. That is a lie, and you should not believe it. Neither should you try to make up your mind to do something, for that will not work. What we need to do is actually very simple: Turn to the spirit, stay in the spirit, and act, behave, and walk according to the spirit. If we do this, the Spirit of life in our spirit will give life even to our mortal bodies. Those who are burdened by the Lord to fast may go for days without eating and feel neither hungry nor tired, because they are living not by their physical strength but by the strength which comes from within their spirit. The spirit within becomes the source of the power for their living. If unbelievers fast in this way, they may be deadened after just one or two days. But if we, the believers, are led of the Lord to fast and if we fast in the spirit, we may go for many days without any problem. During that time we are living not by our physical strength but by the strength which comes from our spirit. From within our spirit the indwelling Spirit gives life to our physical body. It is in the same principle that we are freed from death.

If we are silent in the meetings, it is a sign that we are under the killing, the deadening, of death. At such times we must turn to our spirit and praise the Lord. If we are tired of attending the meetings, praying, or fellowshipping with the saints, this also is a sign that we are under the killing and weakening of death. If we want to be free from this, we must turn to our spirit and say, "Praise the Lord! Lord Jesus! Hallelujah! Amen!" Immediately you will sense that power and strength from the fountain in your spirit are being transmitted into your mortal body.

CHRIST MAKING HIS HOME IN US

Romans 8 is a deep chapter, not only in doctrine but also in experience. The more we experience it, the deeper

it seems to become. As far as doctrine is concerned, it is very easy to recite the verses in this chapter. But the experience contained in it is unfathomably profound. It is impossible, for example, to exhaust the experience in verse 11: "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 reveals that the indwelling Spirit gives life to our mortal body. We must take this verse along with the preceding verse, which says, "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." Because Christ is in us, our spirit is life, although our body is dead because of sin. Verse 11 says that this Christ, who is the Spirit, must not only be in us, but also indwell us. To have Christ in us is one thing, but to have Christ indwell us is another. In verse 10 we have the word "in"; however, in verse 11 it is no longer just a matter of "in," but of indwelling. Is Christ merely in you, or is He dwelling in you? We need the indwelling of Christ. For this, we must give Him the ground in our being. Christ is in you, but He may not be dwelling in you because He does not have the ground, the room, in you. If you allow Christ to dwell in you, the indwelling Christ, who is the indwelling Spirit, will impart life from your spirit into your mortal body. This means that the indwelling Spirit will spread Himself from your spirit into the members of your body.

After the indwelling Christ enlivens your spirit, He wants to quicken the members of your deadened body. I have the confidence that you have Christ in your spirit and that your spirit is life, but I am concerned that Christ has not been able to impart life into the members of your deadened, mortal body. On the one hand, our body is a deadened body; on the other hand, it is a mortal body. Praise the Lord that in 8:11 we see the way life can be supplied to our deadened body! The way is to allow Christ to dwell in us, to make His home in us. The Greek word translated "dwells in" is not the word for abide. It is from

the same root as the word used in Ephesians 3:17 for Christ making His home in our heart. This root means house or home. Hence, it is not the ordinary word for abiding, but a weighty word related to Christ making His home in us.

GIVING CHRIST THE GROUND

Christ wants to gain more ground in us and to make His home in us. But He may not be free to settle down in us. Undoubtedly, our spirit is life, but we may not have life in our body. We may have Christ in our spirit, but not express Him. Some have said that shouting and praising are vain. But if they are vain, why is it some can say, "Praise the Lord!" and others cannot? Many pastors cannot say this because, in a sense, they have been killed. A few years ago a young man stood up in a conference and said that he did not agree with calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. But as he was speaking, he spontaneously called, "O Lord Jesus!" There have been many cases like this.

Many do not praise the Lord because their spirit is weak and their body, which has not been enlivened by the indwelling Christ, has been deadened by the indwelling death. However, if we allow Christ to gain even an inch of ground within us, life will be ministered to our mortal body. It will spread out of our spirit into our deadened members, and we shall begin to praise the Lord. The more we praise the Lord, the more our whole being is empowered.

BEING LIBERATED PEOPLE

We cannot deny that the elements of sin and death are in us. How we thank the Lord that we also have the element called "the Spirit of life." Furthermore, we have the element of the indwelling Christ. Having all these elements within us, the question is which we shall use in our "cooking." A sister has many elements in her kitchen, but everything depends on which elements she chooses to cook with. We need always to turn to our spirit and to live according to our spirit. If we do this, the indwelling Christ

will be real to us, and we shall see how unlimited He is. Eventually, He will spread Himself from our spirit into our deadened, mortal body. In this way we shall be completely freed from death.

When we are freed from sin, the law, the flesh, and death, we are truly liberated people. As such persons, we are no longer under sin, the law, the flesh, and death. The way to be free from all these things is to have our old man crucified, to have our old husband buried, and to turn to the spirit, set our mind on the spirit, and walk according to the spirit. If we do this, we shall eventually be freed completely. This word may be rather simple and brief, but if we practice and experience it, we shall see that it is unlimited, unfathomable, deep, and profound.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

BEING FREED FROM DEATH

(2)

In this message we need to consider several verses in chapters five through eight of Romans that cover the matter of death.

DEATH ENTERING AND REIGNING

Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men because all have sinned." For sin to enter into the world means that it has entered into humanity. Through one man, Adam, sin entered into mankind. Furthermore, through sin death entered. Sin came first and death followed. Wherever there is sin, there is death.

Romans 5:17 says, "By the offense of the one, death reigned through the one." Death has not only entered the world; it reigns. Even today death reigns like a king.

DEATH, THE WAGES OF SIN

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Wages are something we receive in payment for work we have done. If you do the work of sin, you will receive the wages of death. This means that death is the pay received for your work of sin. For example, you may lose your temper. This is a work of sin, and the payment for doing this work is death. When people work overtime, they receive higher wages. Likewise, if you sin a little, you receive little pay, but if you sin a great deal, you will receive extra pay.

SIN KILLING US THROUGH THE COMMANDMENT

In 7:11 Paul says, "For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me." According to this verse, sin does two things: it deceives us and it kills us. To kill something is to put it to death. Thus, to say that sin kills us means that sin puts us to death. This happens through the law, for sin takes occasion through the commandment. In a sense, sin takes advantage of the law to kill us.

Before you were saved or before you were stirred up in spirit to seek the Lord, you might have lost your temper frequently without being aware of any killing. The reason for this is that you had not made up your mind not to lose your temper any more. But after you were saved or were stirred up to seek the Lord, you prayed, "O Lord, I know that as one who is seeking You, I should not lose my temper. This damages my testimony for You among my family and friends. Therefore, I am making up my mind that from now on I will never lose my temper again." In praying this way you make a strict law for yourself regarding losing your temper. This new law is your eleventh commandment. Moses gave ten commandments, but you make another commandment, the commandment about not losing your temper. However, when you lose your temper after making such a law, your temper kills you. It takes advantage of your self-made law to put you to death. If you lose your temper in the morning, you may be killed for the whole day. But when you lost your temper in the past, you did not sense the killing because you had not made a law about losing your temper.

This illustration shows that we need to be careful about making laws for ourselves. The more laws we make, the more we shall be killed. Remember, sin always takes advantage of the commandment to put us to death.

THE BODY OF THIS DEATH

In Romans 7:24 Paul declares, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" In

this verse Paul speaks of "this death," which is the very death defined in Romans 7. It is important to know what is the death revealed and explained in this chapter. Whenever we make up our mind to keep the law, something in our flesh rises up, fights against the law of good in our mind, defeats us, captures us, and kills us. If we do not make up our mind to keep the commandments, this element in our flesh remains dormant. But whenever we make up our mind to do good in order to please God, this element is stirred up and seems to say, "What! Do you intend to do good to please God? Let me show you that you can't do it. I'll defeat you and kill you." Thus, sin in the flesh rises up, defeats us, captures us, and slays us. This causes us to suffer what Paul calls "this death."

In Romans 7 the problem is not hell or the Devil; it is "the body of this death." We have a body which has in it an awful thing called "this death." In order to exist, we need a body. Yet our body is no longer a pure body, but a terrible body, a body of this death. Whenever we decide to do good in order to please God, something in this body rises up to kill us.

THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH

From 7:24 we go on to the matter of the law of sin and of death in 8:2. Although it is difficult to find terminology to express what this law is, it is easy to understand it according to experience. For example, it is easy to apply electricity in using household appliances, but it is difficult to define electricity. Instead of attempting to define the law of sin and death, we shall talk about it from the standpoint of experience.

None of us likes to lose our temper. We realize that it is very unbecoming to do so. But suppose you are stirred up to love the Lord and you make up your mind not to lose your temper again. One morning you pray about this and decide never again to lose your temper. Immediately afterward, your wife gives you a difficult time and makes you angry. Although you try to suppress your anger,

eventually you lose your temper. It seems that the more you try to hold in your temper, the stronger it is when it is released. You had no intention or desire to lose your temper, but you lost it anyway. This comes from the working of the law of sin within you. Suppressing your temper is like pressing down a rubber ball: the more you press it down, the higher it rises. This is a law. When sin works by the law, death follows immediately. As soon as you lose your temper, death comes in to kill you. Thus, by losing your temper you are killed by the law of death. Because the law of death has killed you, you cannot pray, fellowship, or testify. If you should try to do any of these things, you feel that you are hollow and empty and that your words are lifeless. This is the result of the working of the law of sin and of death.

Sin and death are two items, but they have just one law. The law of sin is the law of death, and the law of death is the law of sin. This is the reason that 8:2 speaks of the law of sin and of death. Sin works to bring in death, and death works to follow sin. These two always go together. Every sin, even a little weakness, brings in death.

SETTING THE MIND ON THE FLESH

Romans 8:6 says, "The mind set on the flesh is death." To set the mind on the flesh means to exercise the mind to consider the things of the flesh. For example, to set your mind on worldly fashions or advertisements in the newspaper is to set it on things of the flesh. Likewise, to consider the weaknesses of your wife or husband is to set the mind on the flesh. The result of this is death.

The death caused by setting the mind on the flesh is not, of course, the kind of death that causes you to die physically and be buried in the grave. No, this death has other symptoms, such as darkness and uneasiness. When you feel uneasiness and unrest within, that is a sign of death. Dissatisfaction is another symptom. Perhaps in your time with the Lord in the morning you are very satisfied with the Lord, but after breakfast you set your mind on the advertisements in the newspaper. The more

you consider them, the more dissatisfaction you are conscious of within. This dissatisfaction is a sign of death. Weakness is another sign. As we all know, the ultimate point of weakness is death. When someone is weak to the extent that he can no longer breathe, he dies. That is the consummation of weakness. Hence, weakness is an expression of death. Another sign of death is dryness. When you feel dry within, with no sense of being watered, you are in death. All these items--darkness, uneasiness, dissatisfaction, weakness, and dryness--are signs of inward spiritual death. Whenever you set your mind upon fleshly things, you will be conscious of one or more of these signs of death. To be filled with such things is to be filled with death.

Whenever you are suffering from inward death, those in the spirit will be able to sense it. They will realize immediately that you are filled with death. Your prayers indicate this. You may pray, but there will be no life in your prayers; instead, there will be death. Instead of watering, there will be dryness.

THE SPIRIT MAKING HOME IN US

Romans 8:9 says, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." As we have pointed out, the Greek word rendered "dwells" is not the usual word for "abide." The Greek word here has the same root as the word for house. It conveys the thought, not of staying in a place for a certain time, but of making your home in a place, of settling down there. If the Spirit is making home in you, you are no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit.

OUR BODY BEING DEAD, BUT OUR SPIRIT BEING LIFE

In Romans 8:10 Paul says, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." Because Christ, who is life, is in our spirit, our spirit is life. However, because Christ is confined in our spirit, our body remains dead. The sphere of life is limited to our spirit. Life has not yet spread into

our body; therefore, the body remains dead. According to Ephesians 2 and John 5, a fallen person is dead. Ephesians 2:5 indicates that before we were saved, we were not only sinful, but also dead. John 5:25 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live." This verse does not refer to those who are physically dead and buried; it refers to the living dead, to those dead in spirit. If you read John 5, you will see that verse 28 refers to those who are physically dead and buried in the tomb. But in verse 25 the Lord is speaking of people who are spiritually dead, yet physically alive. In this message we are concerned with the living dead, not with those who are physically dead and buried. All the unsaved people are dead. Because their body has been poisoned by the serpent, their body has been deadened. Satan, the old serpent, has injected his poison into our body and has caused it to become deadened. This deadened body has also deadened our soul and our spirit. Therefore, the unsaved people are dead in body, soul, and spirit. Every part of their being is dead.

As I was traveling through the interior of China in 1937, I stopped by a creek which was full of dried leaves that were carried along by the current. Among the leaves some little fish were swimming upward against the current. Unlike the dried leaves that were being carried aimlessly downstream, the fish, full of life, were swimming upstream with a definite purpose. When I saw that, I was so impressed that I even shouted, "Here is life and death." All the unsaved people are like the dried leaves: they are being carried aimlessly along by the current of the age. Like those leaves, they are confused and without order. But we, the believers in Christ, are like the fish swimming against the current of the age with a definite purpose. Moreover, we are not in confusion, but in a good order. The more life we have, the more we are in order and regulated. But the more death we have, the

more confused we become. The reason today's society is such a confusion is that it is filled with dead people, with those who are dead in body, soul, and spirit. We need to sound out the gospel and give them an opportunity to hear the voice of the Lord.

When we heard the gospel and called on the name of the Lord Jesus, immediately the Holy Spirit came into our spirit and enlivened it. In this way our deadened spirit was made alive. Now that Christ is in our spirit, our spirit is life.

But what about our body and mind? Both our body and mind may still be in death. Many have a mind of death because they do not allow the indwelling Christ in their spirit to spread into their mind. When I read a newspaper, I am very careful to read only the news about international affairs. If I read other news items, I set my mind upon the flesh, and my mind is death immediately. We need to allow the indwelling Christ to spread from our spirit into our mind. If we allow Him to spread in this way, eventually life will be imparted even into our mortal body. Then the spirit and the mind will be life, and the body also will be enlivened. Romans 8:11 indicates this: "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."

THE FLESH OF SIN

By entering into our body, sin has caused it to become the fallen flesh. Therefore, in 6:6 the body is called "the body of sin." It is also called "the flesh of sin" (8:3) because it has been corrupted by sin. Both the body of sin and the flesh of sin refer to the same thing. In the corrupted body, the flesh of sin, are so many lusts. In 7:17 Paul says, "So now it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." To be specific, sin dwells in our flesh, thereby causing it to become the flesh of sin.

This indwelling sin is the cause of death. Wherever sin is, there death is also. The death described in Romans 5 through 8 is not mainly the death that causes people to die physically, but the death that kills them today. This death is doing a deadening work upon us. The reason so many are weak in prayer and low in functioning in the meetings is the working of death. Some brothers and sisters are not one. This lack of oneness comes from death. If you cannot open your mouth to testify in a living way, it is because of the deadening, the working, of death. If you were not under death, you would be bubbling, praying, praising, functioning, and testifying all the time. Furthermore, you would be one with all the saints. As long as you are not like this, you are dead, even though you may be good, right, and scriptural.

As we have pointed out, Romans 8:6 says that the mind set on the flesh is death. The kind of death here is not that which causes people to die physically and to be buried; it is the death that deadens them all day long. In doing many things, you may be full of energy, but in praying you are low and lifeless. This means that the death in your body has spread its influence and deadening power into your mind and spirit.

Once while Brother Nee was speaking, he asked the sisters to tell him how many chapters there are in the Gospel of Matthew. They had difficulty giving the correct number. Immediately Brother Nee said, "You cannot tell me how many chapters there are in Matthew. But if I ask you how many long gowns you have, you are able to give me the exact number. Not only can you tell me the number, but also the color and the style." Many Christians find it difficult to remember verses in the Bible, but they can easily remember so many details about their possessions. This indicates that their minds have been deadened. When the mind has been deadened, it is good for fleshly and worldly things, but not for spiritual things.

We need to allow the indwelling Christ to spread from

our spirit to all the inward parts of our being. We should pray, "Lord Jesus, I will let You spread in me. I want You to have a free course within me." If you do this, your mind will become sober and your memory keen. Spontaneously it will be easy for you to remember verses in the Bible.

Death is working in an inward direction from our body to our spirit, but life works in an outward direction from our spirit to our body. The direction of death's work is from the circumference to the center, whereas the direction of life's work is from the center to the circumference. Therefore, death and life work in opposite directions. As death works from the circumference to the center, it deadens our mind and spirit.

THE WAY TO BE FREED FROM DEATH

We have seen how to be freed from sin, from the law, and from the flesh. Now we must find out how to be freed from death. Death's base in us is the flesh. The only way to escape from death and to be freed from it is to take refuge in our spirit. Our flesh is the base of death, and our spirit is our refuge. We need to flee into this refuge and escape from death. Death is versus life, and life is versus death. Death is in our flesh, and life is in our spirit. Nothing can chase death away or swallow it up, just as nothing can drive darkness away. However, when light comes, darkness vanishes. There is no need to expend effort to drive darkness away or to command it to disappear. Simply allow the light to come in. The more the light comes in, the more the darkness disappears. The same principle applies to the matter of life versus death. By our effort we cannot drive death away or swallow it up. Only life can swallow death, and life is in our spirit. Whenever life comes in, death vanishes.

Death is Satan and life is Christ. Do not let yourself be associated with Satan in the flesh, but always stay in your spirit with Christ as life. Then you will see that Christ, who is your life, will have a free course within you to spread into every part of your being. Eventually, He will

saturate every part of you. This is the enlivening, the quickening, of life. Life will enliven your mind, emotion, and will and even be imparted into your mortal body. Thus, every part of your being will be life. The spirit is life, the mind will be life, and the body also will be life. When this happens, death, the last enemy, will be swallowed up.

DEATH BEING THE LAST ENEMY

Death is not only God's last enemy; it is our last enemy too. The last enemy is not sin, the law, or the flesh; it is death. In the eyes of God nothing is as abominable as death. Not even sin is as abominable as death. God hates death even more than sin. Sin is against what God does, but death insults what God is. Sin opposes God's righteousness, but death insults God's very being. Suppose a little boy plays in the mud and becomes very dirty. No matter how dirty he may be, we still will love him and be willing to play with him. However, suppose the little boy dies and is laid out in a coffin. Although he may be fully clean, we will not want to be with him. Instead, we will flee, not because he is dirty, but because he is dead.

I am troubled by the fact that so many Christians fear uncleanness, but are not concerned about deadness. But, to repeat, God hates death more than sin. In typology, if a person was contaminated by an unclean thing, he could be cleansed rather easily and in a short period of time. But if he touched any dead thing, it took him a longer period of time, at least seven days, to be made clean. This indicates that in the eyes of God death is more serious than sin.

CARING FOR LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

It is better to make a mistake in functioning in the meetings than to be dead and not make any mistakes at all. To be wrong is not as serious as to be dead. If you do not function, you may be right, but you are right in a dead way. I would rather see you livingly wrong than dead

right. I do not encourage you to make mistakes. But sometimes it is better to be more concerned about being living than about your being right. We need to recognize the symptoms of deadness to know whether we are dead or alive.

In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus does not give yes-or-no answers to the questions addressed to Him. For example, the Samaritan woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship" (John 4:20). She was asking the Lord Jesus concerning the proper place of worship. Was it in the mountain in Samaria or in Jerusalem? The Lord Jesus answered, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and reality; for the Father seeks such to worship Him" (John 4:23). The Lord Jesus seemed to be saying, "Worshipping God is a matter of life, and life is in the spirit. It is not a question of worshipping God on this mountain or in Jerusalem. The hour has come to worship God in the spirit."

We find another example in John 9. Seeing a man blind from birth, the Lord's disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John 9:2). The Lord replied, "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him" (v. 3). In John, the book of life, there are no yes-or-no answers; instead, there is life.

In John 7 the Lord's brothers in the flesh suggested that He go up to Jerusalem (vv. 3-4). The Lord said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.... You go up to the feast; I am not going up to this feast, because My time has not yet fully come" (vv. 6, 8). However, verse 10 says, "But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up, not publicly, but as in secret." Here we see that the Lord answered and acted according to life.

We are all familiar with the record of Lazarus in John 11. When Lazarus' sisters sent the Lord the news that Lazarus was ill and asked Him to come, He refused. Having heard that Lazarus was sick, "He remained then

two days in the place where He was" (v. 6). When the disciples expected the Lord Jesus to go to Lazarus, He did not go. But when they had made up their minds not to go, the Lord said, "Let us go into Judea again" (v. 7). In all these cases we see that what the Lord Jesus did was always a matter of life.

In Genesis 2 there are two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Good and evil are also a matter of yes or no. Yes and no, right and wrong, good and evil, these come from the source of the tree of knowledge. We need to forget about the concept of yes or no and stay in our spirit. This is the way to be freed from death. The way to be freed from death is not a matter of doing certain things; it is to stay in the spirit. If we stay in the spirit, we shall walk and behave according to the spirit. We shall have our whole being according to the spirit, and we shall think, express ourselves, and do everything in the spirit. Then there will be no death. This is the way to be freed from death and to overcome the last enemy.

Any death that still remains in our being is an abomination in the eyes of God, and we must eliminate it. We must escape from the base of death in the flesh into our spirit, where Christ, our life, is. We need to stay in the spirit and behave according to the spirit. If we do this, we shall be free from death.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

LAW IN ROMANS SEVEN AND EIGHT

Three crucial words in Romans 7 and 8 are law, life, and death. It is difficult even for scientists to define life and death. In the Bible, death is spoken of in a very definite way. First Corinthians 15:26 says that death is the last enemy, and Revelation 20:14, that death will be cast into the lake of fire. In order for death to be cast into the lake of fire, death must be concrete and tangible. In Revelation 20 death is related to Satan on the one hand and to Hades on the other, both of which are to be cast into the lake of fire. This proves that Satan is an actual person and that Hades is a definite place. Therefore, death must also be something concrete. Nevertheless, no one can adequately explain what death is.

FOUR LAWS

The matter of law is profound. Many Bible students have been troubled by Paul's use of the word "law" in Romans 7. This word firstly denotes the law of God, that is, the ten commandments (7:22). Then in 7:23 Paul speaks of "the law of my mind," and in 8:2, of "the law of sin and of death" and of the "law of the Spirit of life." It is difficult to understand the words "law" and "life" and even more difficult to understand the term "the law of the Spirit of life." Therefore, in chapters seven and eight the word "law" is used in different ways: for the law of God, for the law of the mind, for the law of sin and of death, and for the law of the Spirit of life.

ANOTHER LAW

In chapter seven, however, there is still another law: "I find then the law that, at my willing to do the good, the

evil is present with me" (v. 21). Before we can know the law covered in this verse, we need to understand the law of God, the law of the mind, the law of sin and death (which is the law of sin in our members), and the law of the Spirit of life. Learning these four laws is like learning the basic principles of mathematics. The law in verse 21 is neither the law of the mind nor the law of sin in our members. We may call it "the law that." There is a law, a principle, that whenever we will to do good, the evil is present with us. The law in 7:21 refers to this principle.

Paul discovered the principle that whenever he tried to do good, evil was present with him. Have you ever realized that there is such a law? If we do not try to do good, it seems that evil is not present. But it is a law that whenever we try to do good, the evil is present. For example, if you do not try to be humble, pride will not seem to be present. But if you make up your mind to be humble, pride will be present with you. Likewise, if you do not make up your mind not to lose your temper, your temper is not present. But whenever you determine never to lose your temper again, your temper is present immediately. This is "the law that." This law has no commandments, only the principle that whenever we will to do good, evil is present.

Not many Christians, including the seeking Christians, know that there is such a law. However, we all have been troubled by the fact that whenever we purpose to be patient, we fail. Instead of being patient, we become angry. In like manner, whenever we make up our mind to be humble, we end up being proud. Before we were saved or when we were not diligent in seeking the Lord, we seemed to be doing rather well. Later, we learned that we should be a new person. I was taught in this way. But the more I tried to live like a new person, the more the old person was present with me. Then I was taught to reckon myself dead, and I practiced this teaching. However, the more I reckoned myself dead, the more living I became. The more I tried to do good, the worse I was.

I believe that we all have experienced this. When we

were careless, we apparently were all right. But when we desired to do good to please the Lord, it seemed that our behavior became worse. For example, a brother may say, "As a Christian who loves the Lord, I should not lose my temper with my wife or mistreat her. I will ask the Lord to help me in this matter." However, shortly afterward, this brother loses his temper with his wife.

I was bothered by matters like this for eight years, from 1925 until 1933. During those years, there were many times when I could not eat or sleep well because I was troubled about my Christian life. Some with this problem have even thought to stop being Christians and have said to themselves, "I don't want to be a Christian any longer. I was told that if I became a Christian, I would be happy. But now I am troubled every day. I want to be humble, but instead I am proud." Through this kind of experience I was exposed, unable to believe how evil I was. Through reading the Bible and through my experience in the Christian life, I have found that there is a law operating in human beings that when we try to do good, evil is present. When I discovered this law, I realized that I should not be so foolish as to keep on trying to do good. Trying to do good is like pushing the button that causes evil to be present. If you do not push the button, evil is not here. But if you push it, evil comes immediately, eager to work. It was in 1933 that I first stopped pushing this button. I found it difficult, however, to keep from pushing it, for I had been pushing it all my life. Although I know better than to push this button, I must confess that sometimes I push it even now. Probably you have pushed this button already today. Maybe we shall not stop this completely until we are raptured or until we are in the New Jerusalem.

Perhaps you have read Romans 7 again and again without seeing this fifth law. In addition to the four laws, there is the law that operates whenever we will to do good. We need to ask the Lord to keep us from pushing this button, for whenever we push it, evil is present. If we try to be patient, we push the button, and we are angry

instead. If we try to be humble, we push the button again, and we are proud. Christians have often prayed that the Lord would help them to do good, to do such things as love their wives or submit to their husbands. But we need to pray that the Lord would keep us from trying to do these things. Regarding this, we need a revelation, a vision, that will keep us from pushing the button that causes evil to be present with us.

THREE PERSONS AND THREE LIVES

Now we need to consider the law of good in our mind, the law of sin in our members, and the law of life in our spirit. In the garden of Eden there were two trees--the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. In these two trees we see good, evil, and life. With each of these there is a law: the law of good, the law of evil, and the law of life. We are a miniature garden of Eden because the triangular situation involving God, man, and Satan is now within us. Furthermore, the law of good, the law of evil, and the law of life are all in us.

As far as persons are concerned, there are just three beings in the universe: the divine person, God; the evil person, Satan; and the human person, man. Each of these persons has a life. The divine person has the divine life, the human person has the human life, and the evil person has the evil life. Our human life does not come merely from our parents; it comes from God's creation. Our human life was created when Adam was created, not when we were born of our parents.

After his creation, man fell. At the time of the fall, an evil life was injected into man's body. As we have pointed out, in the fall not only did man do something wrong, but something evil entered into him. For example, if a child drinks poison, not only does he do something wrong, but something gets into him. By the fall the evil life of Satan came into man's body, and now this evil life is in our flesh. Therefore, everyone, no matter whether he is a gentleman or a robber, has the human life, which is good, and the satanic life, which is evil. This is the reason that people

can be both good and evil, both kind and devilish. No one likes to do evil things. But within us there is a person with a life that likes to do evil. Therefore, Paul said, "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil I do not will, this I practice" (7:19). This means that it is no longer we who do certain things; rather, it is an evil person with an evil life within us who does those things.

Every human being is not only a son of Adam, but also a child of the Devil. In John 8:44 the Lord Jesus told the Jews, "You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to do the desires of your father." Everyone has two fathers, a human father and Satan as a father. One day after I had given a message on this matter in Shanghai, a brother asked me to stop saying that we are children of Satan. Telling him that this did not originate with me, I referred him to 1 John 3:10, which speaks of "the children of the devil." Since we are children of the Devil, then certainly the Devil must be our father. This was the reason the Lord Jesus said that the Jews were of their father the Devil. Therefore, all fallen human beings have two fathers, each with a different life, the human father with the human life and Satan as their father with the satanic life.

Praise the Lord that our history does not stop with the creation and the fall! We have been saved and regenerated, born again. When Nicodemus thought that being born again was to enter into his mother's womb and to be born, the Lord Jesus answered that to be born again is to be born of the Spirit: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Thus, to be born again means to be born of God (John 1:13). Hallelujah, a third person, even God Himself, has been born in us! With this divine person we have the divine life.

The first person, the human person, is our being, our self. This person is in our soul, which is represented by our mind. The life of this person is primarily in the mind. The second person, the satanic person, is in our body, that

is, in our flesh. But praise the Lord that the third person, the divine person, is in our spirit! As we all know, man has three parts: a spirit, a soul, and a body. In our soul we have the human person, in our body we have the satanic person, and in our spirit we have the divine person. How wonderful!

Christians are complicated. When I was young, I was taught that believers have two natures, an old nature and a new nature. Later I learned that this understanding is not adequate. Every genuine Christian has three persons with three lives. God, Satan, and the self are all in us. Sometimes these three persons fight with one another. It is impossible for them to be in harmony or have any fellowship.

EVERY LIFE HAVING A LAW

Every kind of life has a law. A law denotes a natural power with a certain tendency and activity. For example, we breathe because we are alive. As long as we have life, the law of this life causes us to breathe. We may use digestion as another example. After we eat a meal, there is no need for us to try to digest our food. Digestion is a matter of law. Whenever we eat, the law of our physical life functions to digest the food.

The same is true of animal life. Birds fly because it is the law of the life of a bird to fly. A bird is not taught to fly; it is born with the life to fly. Hence, it is natural for a bird to fly. You may frustrate the function of this law by putting a bird in a cage. But once the door of the cage is open, the bird will fly away. On the contrary, a cat can never fly. No matter how much you command a cat to fly, even threatening to punish it, it will still not be able to fly because it does not have a life with a law of flying. However, because a cat has a mouse-catching life, it naturally chases mice. Dogs bark because they have a barking life with a barking law. There is no need to teach a dog to bark; a dog barks naturally and spontaneously because its life is filled with the tendency and activity of barking.

Turning from animal life to plant life, we may take fruit trees as another illustration of the fact that every life has a law. I am not very good at distinguishing one kind of fruit tree from another. However, it is easy to discern a tree by its fruit. An apple tree will, of course, bear apples, and an orange tree will bear oranges. What nonsense it would be to command the apple tree to bear oranges and the orange tree to bear apples! No one would ever be foolish enough to do this. An orange tree bears oranges, and an apple tree bears apples. An orange tree has the life of an orange tree, in which there is the law that functions in the bearing of oranges.

In like manner, there is no need to teach a carnation to bear carnation blossoms instead of cherry blossoms. In fact, there is no need even to teach it to blossom. If someone tried to teach a carnation to blossom and a carnation could speak, it would say, "Don't waste your time teaching me to blossom. Simply leave me alone and let me grow. Eventually, I will blossom." Blossoming comes from the law of the carnation life. All these examples show that every life has a law.

THREE LIVES AND THREE LAWS

Because we Christians have three lives, we also have three laws. We have the human life, which is good. With this good life we have the law of good. Because of this law, everyone naturally desires to do good; there is no need for anyone to be taught. We were born with the desire to do good, and every child has a human life with its law of good. However, as we have seen, man has not only the human life, but also the satanic life with its law of evil. Because of this satanic life in man, a child tells lies spontaneously, without being taught. In fact, Christian parents always teach their children not to lie. I taught my children not to lie, but they lied anyway. For example, I instructed my children not to play with the water that was used for washing. One day I came in and found one of the

children playing with the water. Immediately he put his hands behind his back. Instead of rebuking him or punishing him, I said to myself, "This is fallen man. What good does it do to rebuke him?" You may command a bush not to produce thorns, but it will bear thorns nonetheless. This is the law of the life of a thorn bush. In like manner, children lie without being taught to lie because the life of Satan with its law of lying is in them. When they tell lies, children are simply living according to this law of lying. We may need to be taught how to read but not how to lie. In principle, for fallen people to lie is the same as for cats to chase mice. Both are the activity of the law of the life that is in them. Now we can understand why we do the opposite when we will to do good. We have two lives in us, the human life and the satanic life, and each life has its law. But the law of the satanic life is stronger than the law of the human life.

Praise the Lord that we also have the divine life! Of the three lives in us, the divine life is the strongest, and the human life is the weakest.

LIVING BY THE LAW OF LIFE

What we do in our daily living depends upon the law we are living by. To do good is a law, to do evil is another law, and to live by life is still another law. Do not think that you can do anything without a law. Everything we do as Christians in our daily living is a function of one of the laws. Suppose I become angry at a brother. I may try to suppress my anger and say to myself, "Although you are angry with this brother, you must not show it. If you lose your temper, you will also lose your face and cause a problem." Such behavior is not genuine; it is political. Furthermore, it cannot last very long. Some who suppress their anger develop stomach trouble as a result. Although we may be political in this way, eventually the law of the satanic life will cause us to lose our temper. To suppress our temper is to play politics; to lose it is to live according

to the law of sin. If we are genuine, real, and frank, whatever we do or say will be a function of one of these laws.

Everything is determined by the law we live by each day. If we live by the human life, the law of the human life will function. However, the human life is weak, and its law is fragile because of the presence of the law of the satanic life, which is much stronger. Hallelujah, we have the strongest law in us, the law of the Spirit of life! We should live not by our human life but by the divine life.

In Romans 8 Paul says that we should walk according to spirit. To walk according to spirit is to live by the divine life. When we live by the divine life, the law of this life, the strongest law, works within us. No law can defeat the law of the divine life. By this law we are freed from every difficulty. Do not be concerned about your problems. As long as you walk according to the spirit and live by the law of the divine life, this law will work for you spontaneously.

We all need to be reminded to push the right button, not the button which causes "the law that" to function. Do not teach me to love my wife, for in my human life I simply cannot do so. Instead, teach me to put my finger on the right button, the law of the Spirit of life. If I do this, I shall love my wife spontaneously. Likewise, do not teach the sisters to submit to their husbands. The more you teach them to do this, the less they will be able to submit. Rather, teach them to press the right button, and they will submit to their husbands automatically.

The right button is in our spirit. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit (8:16), and the button is the Spirit of God Himself. Day by day and hour by hour, we must keep our finger on this button. To do this is to have our mind set on the spirit and to walk according to the spirit. Never take your finger off the button of the Spirit. If you keep your finger on the button, you will be in the spirit, the Spirit will be life to you, and every negative thing will be put to death.

The secret to keeping our finger on the right button is to know that we have a human spirit and that the Spirit of life is in our spirit. We need to turn our mind, our whole

being, to the spirit and to set our mind there. Then we shall walk according to the spirit. When we do this, all the negative things are spontaneously put to death, and we enjoy the divine life. As we do this, the desire for good by the human life with its law of good is satisfied, and the requirements of the law of God are fulfilled. Furthermore, the evil law of the satanic life is defeated. All is a matter of law. Do not try to love or to do good. Instead, turn your being to your spirit and keep your finger on the right button, that is, on the Lord Himself, who is everything to us as the Spirit of life. In this way you will enjoy Him, and you will live by the law of the Spirit of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

LIFE AND DEATH IN ROMANS FIVE THROUGH EIGHT

In Romans 5 through 8, which we may call the kernel of the Bible, two key words are used repeatedly. These words are life and death. In Genesis 2 life is represented by the tree of life, and death, by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 9). The issue of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is actually death, not knowledge. Therefore, we may call these trees the tree of life and the tree of death.

KNOWLEDGE, GOOD, AND EVIL

The tree of death is very subtle. Although it brings forth death, it is not called the tree of death; instead, it is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There are three related things concerning this tree--knowledge, good, and evil. Although we all appreciate knowledge and good, we do not like evil. We consider good and evil to be in two distinct categories. The concept of good and evil in the Bible, however, is different; the Bible puts both good and evil in the same category. This indicates that we should be for life, not for good or evil. According to Genesis 2, knowledge and good are put together with evil. Belonging to one family, they are three "sisters" who work together to bring forth death, which is, of course, the opposite of life.

THE LINE OF LIFE AND THE LINE OF DEATH

Some Christians say that we should no longer be concerned about the tree of life and the tree of knowledge spoken of in Genesis 2. But most of the items found in Genesis are seeds of spiritual truths developed elsewhere in the Bible, and we should not neglect them. In Genesis 2

we have the seed of life and the seed of death. But at the end of the book of Revelation we see the consummation of these seeds. Death, the last enemy, is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). Life abounds in the New Jerusalem, for there we see the river of water of life with the tree of life growing in it (Rev. 22:1-2). From center to circumference, the New Jerusalem is a city of life. The seed of life sown in the beginning of the Bible consummates in the harvest of life, and the seed of death consummates in the harvest of death. Because the seeds of life and of death grow throughout the Bible, we can trace in the Bible both the line of life and the line of death. In this message we shall consider these two lines as they appear in Romans 5 through 8.

In Genesis 2 there is a triangular situation involving God, man, and Satan. In this chapter man faces two sources: God as the source of life and Satan as the source of death. In Romans 5 through 8 there is the continuation of this triangular situation. Eventually, this triangular situation will result in a twofold consummation. The negative things will, along with death, be swept into the lake of fire, but the positive things will, with those who have been redeemed, flow into the city of living water. Today we are all heading toward this ultimate consummation, the believers to the New Jerusalem and the unbelievers to the lake of fire. In their everyday experience many Christians have one foot on the line of life and the other on the line of death. Other Christians vacillate between the two. Perhaps yesterday you were on the line of death, but today, by the Lord's mercy and grace, you are once again on the line of life.

THE REIGN OF LIFE AND THE REIGN OF DEATH

Let us now trace these two lines through Romans 5 through 8. Romans 5:12 says, "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men because all have sinned." Here we see the entering in of sin and death. Verse 14 says, "Death reigned from Adam until Moses." In these two verses we

see the line of death. In verse 17 we find the line of life: "For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." In verse 21 Paul declares, "As sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sin has brought in death, but grace through righteousness brings in life. Therefore, in chapter five we see both the reign of death and the reign of life with grace.

NEWNESS OF LIFE

Romans 6:4 says, "Even so we also should walk in newness of life." Instead of remaining under the reign of death, we should walk in newness of life and stay on the line of life. The next verse says, "For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." As we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, that is, in the baptism mentioned in verse 4, so we shall also grow together with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, that is, in the newness of life as mentioned in verse 4. To grow together in the likeness of Christ's resurrection is to be in newness of life. Then verse 11 tells us to reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. These verses indicate that in chapter six also there are both the line of life and the line of death.

"THIS DEATH"

Now we come to chapter seven, a chapter that many Christians do not like very much. Here, instead of life, we find killing and death. Verse 11 says, "For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me." Sin is a murderer that uses the law as its weapon to kill us. This should warn us not to turn to the law. If we do, sin will rise up as if to say, "How good

that you have turned to the law! You have just given me an excellent opportunity to use the law to kill you." As one who had been killed in this way, Paul cried out in verse 24, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" "This death" refers to the death caused by sin through the weapon of the law.

A FOURFOLD LIFE

As we go on from chapter seven to chapter eight, we find that in this chapter life is primary, not death. Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." Hallelujah for the law of the Spirit of life! Verse 10 continues, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." According to verse 6, if our mind is set on the Spirit, our mind also will be life. Furthermore, if the life-giving Spirit dwells in us, that is, makes His home in us, He will even impart the divine life into our mortal bodies (v. 11). Therefore, not only our spirit and mind are life, but even our mortal bodies can be enlivened. According to Romans 8, all three parts of our being, our spirit, soul, and body, can receive life. Our spirit is life because Jesus Christ has entered into our spirit. Our mind can be life because the indwelling Christ is spreading from our spirit into our mind. Furthermore, this spreading of the divine life will even reach our mortal body and enliven it. Praise the Lord for the life in Romans 8!

As we have pointed out, in this chapter there is a fourfold life: life in the divine Spirit, life in our human spirit, life in our mind, and life in our mortal body. But although there is such a fourfold life in Romans 8, death is still present. Not until we come to Revelation 20 will there be only life and no death. At that time, death, the last enemy, will be cast out of humanity and into the lake of fire. Therefore, in the New Jerusalem there will be only the element of life, not the element of death. However, within

us today we have both the element of life and the element of death.

CARING FOR LIFE

All married brothers and sisters know that the husbands should love their wives and that the wives should submit to their husbands. However, in Genesis 2 we read nothing about husbands loving wives or wives submitting to husbands. Nevertheless, such things are included in the word "good" in verse 17. For a husband to love his wife or for a wife to submit to her husband is to do good. On the contrary, for a husband to hate his wife or for a wife to rebel against her husband is to do evil. At the end of the Bible we again find the words "life" and "death," but not the words "love" and "submission." Therefore, both in the beginning of the Bible and at the end, both in Genesis and in Revelation, we have life and death. It is the same in Romans 5 through 8. In these chapters Paul says nothing about husbands loving wives or wives submitting to husbands. He speaks elsewhere about these matters but not here. Instead, in these chapters he lays great emphasis on life and death and seems not to care about love or hate, submission or rebellion.

It is possible to be very loving or submissive and yet be dead. In His economy God does not mainly care whether we are good or evil, submissive or rebellious; He cares only whether we are living or dead. Every wife who is dead and buried in a cemetery is submissive; she never expresses her opinion. But God does not want a dead submission. He desires that we all be living. This is the reason that in Romans 5 through 8 Paul does not speak about submission or rebellion but about life and death. Romans 8:6 does not say that the mind set upon the spirit is submission and that the mind set upon the flesh is rebellion. When Paul wrote this portion of the Word, he was fully in the Spirit of God and in God's economy; he did not care for either good or evil but only for life and death.

Good and evil belong to the tree of knowledge, which is

the tree of death. Right and wrong also belong to this tree. Thus, we should not be concerned about right and wrong but about life and death. In God's economy it is not sufficient merely to be good. We may be good and yet still be dead. God's economy requires that we be in life. It is possible to be dead right and livingly wrong. A kindergarten is filled with noisy boys and girls, but these children are very living. Although kindergarten children may be noisy and sometimes naughty, I prefer their situation over the quiet and orderliness of a cemetery. All those buried in a cemetery are lawful and well regulated, but they are dead. Do you prefer to be livingly wrong or dead right? I prefer to be living.

LIFE IN OUR SPIRIT AND DEATH IN OUR FLESH

It is easy to move from death to life or from life to death. In other words it is difficult not to move from one realm to another. For example, we can just as easily switch on an electric light as we can switch it off. It is the same with death and life. We can switch on to the spirit and be in life, or we can switch off and be in death.

Electricity is an excellent illustration of the Spirit of life. Electricity is invisible and cannot be thoroughly understood. The Spirit of life is the same. In order for us to apply electricity, it must be first installed in our home, and then we need to use a switch. Thank the Lord that the divine Spirit as the heavenly electricity has been installed in our spirit. No matter how we feel, both the Spirit, that is, the divine electricity, and the switch are in our spirit.

Life is in our spirit, and death is in our flesh. When Adam was in the garden, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge were both outside of him. But today these two trees are within us, the tree of life in our spirit and the tree of death in our flesh. In the Bible the term "flesh" denotes not only our corrupted body but also our entire fallen being. For this reason, the Bible calls a fallen person flesh (Rom. 3:20).

SETTING OUR MIND ON THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:6 says, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." To set our mind on what we are is to set it on the flesh. To set our mind on the flesh does not mean merely to set it on our body; it means to set it on our being, our self. For example, someone may feel that in the past he was evil and now he may endeavor to be good. This is to set the mind on the flesh, on the hopeless self. Some Christians think that if they set their mind on worldly entertainments, they are minding the flesh. Certainly to set the mind on such things is to set it on the flesh. But this is not the only way to mind the flesh. Even in making up your mind to love your wife, you are setting your mind on the flesh in a subtle way. When we are tempted to make up our mind to do good, we need to pray, "Lord Jesus, be merciful to me. I can do nothing apart from You." By praying in this way, we set our mind on the spirit, not on our poor self.

Furthermore, we should not set our mind on what might happen in the future. Let us leave the future with the Lord. Suppose, after he had been called by God, Abraham had asked the Lord to tell him where he should go the next day. The Lord might have said, "Abraham, be at peace and enjoy Me. Leave tomorrow with Me." To rest in the Lord today and leave tomorrow with Him is to set the mind on the spirit.

Because many Christians do not see this, they often admonish others or advise them as to what they should do. This encourages people to set their mind on the flesh, and the result is death. In my early ministry, I not only advised others but also admonished myself. As a result, I was killed and so were the others.

DEVELOPING A NEW HABIT

Praise the Lord that the God of life is in our spirit! Although we may know this, we still need to learn how to

live by the indwelling life-giving Spirit. The important thing is not how much knowledge we have but how much we live by Christ.

Let me tell you a story that helps to illustrate this. When I was young, most people in my hometown still used oil lamps; they did not have electricity. As a child, I used to clean the lamps, fill them with oil, and light them. Even after electricity had been installed in our home, I was still in the habit of using an oil lamp. Sometimes the others laughed at me when I began to light a lamp and then reminded me to simply use the light switch. Although something new, electricity, had been installed, I was not yet in the habit of using it.

The principle is the same in the Christian life. We have been raised and trained to live by ourselves. This is our habit. Even after the Lord Jesus has been installed in us, we continue the habit of living by ourselves. However, we need to develop a new habit, the habit of living by Christ. Because many saved ones do not have this new habit, Romans 7 is necessary. We need to see a vision that Christ as life is living in our spirit. Because He lives in us, we must drop not only the sinful things but also our old way of living. We need to turn from living by ourselves to living by Christ. This requires that we stay in the spirit and walk according to the spirit.

As soon as we lose touch with the spirit, we are cut off from life and are immediately in death. There is no need for death to enter in. For example, as soon as we turn off the lights in a room, we are in darkness. There is no need for darkness to come in. Just as switching off the lights puts us in darkness, so being separated from the spirit brings us into death. Even a thin strip of insulation can cut off the flow of electricity. In like manner, even something small can cut us off from the life in our spirit. Because we are in a triangular situation involving God as life in our spirit and Satan as death in our flesh, we need to develop the habit of staying in the spirit. Instead of making up our mind to do good, we should simply turn to

our spirit and stay there with the living One. This habit is not easily developed, but it can be done.

DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE TO GOD

Romans 6:11 tells us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. However, the experience of this is in the spirit in Romans 8. When we are in our spirit with the Lord, we are automatically dead to sin and alive to God. If you try this reckoning without being in the spirit, you will find that the more you reckon, the more you are in death.

We have seen that to be cut off from the spirit is to be in death. For example, the reason you lose your temper is that there is already some insulation between you and your spirit. It is not that you lose your temper and then are cut off from the spirit; it is that you are cut off from the spirit and therefore lose your temper. If there is no insulation around your spirit, no negative thing will be able to overcome you. On the contrary, the divine life in your spirit will swallow up all death. Our experience confirms this. When we are in the spirit, the divine life within swallows up every negative thing. But when we are insulated and thereby cut off from the spirit, we are in death and cannot handle even the smallest problem.

A UNIVERSAL BATTLE

God's economy is not a matter of good or evil, right or wrong. Moreover, it is not a matter of ethics. According to ethical standards, we should do good and not evil. God's economy, however, is altogether a matter of life or death. To be in life is to live out God, and to be in death is to live out Satan. We are a battlefield, and the universal battle between God and Satan is raging within us. The outcome of this battle is determined by where we set our mind. If we set our mind on the self and thereby are cut off from the spirit, Satan gains ground. But if we stay in the spirit and set our mind on the spirit, God gains the victory.

This is precisely what is portrayed in 8:13, where Paul

says, "For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." By the indwelling Spirit we must put to death the deeds of the old person. To do this is to live. Let us pray about this, practice it, and develop the habit of staying in the spirit. The more we develop this habit, the more living we shall be and the further we shall be from death.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

ABIDING IN CHRIST BY MINDING THE SPIRIT

Romans 8 is the kernel not only of the book of Romans but also of the whole Bible. For this reason, the experience in this portion of the Word must become our daily life.

THE SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8

In this chapter the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of life and the Spirit of Christ, terms not used in the Old Testament, the Gospels, nor the Acts. The term the Spirit of God, however, was used many times before Romans, but Romans 8 reveals that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of life and the Spirit of Christ. In verses 9 and 10 the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ are used interchangeably. This indicates that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ and that the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself. Today Christ as the Spirit of life indwells our spirit. We experience this as we walk not according to flesh but according to spirit.

LIFE AND DEATH

Verse 6 says, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." Here we see that the result of minding the flesh is death and that the result of minding the spirit is life and peace. In the very beginning of the Bible life is signified by the tree of life, and death, by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees represent two different sources with two opposite results. The tree of life brings us into life, and the tree of knowledge brings us into death.

Furthermore, the Bible concludes with two consummations: the lake of fire, which is the second death, and the New Jerusalem, which is the city of life. Therefore the Bible ends as it begins, with death and life.

Romans 8 is on the way between the beginning in Genesis and the consummation in Revelation. Between the two sources and the two consummations there are two lines: the line of life and the line of death. As we pointed out in the last message, sometimes we may have one foot on the line of life and the other on the line of death. At other times we may be altogether on one line or the other. Romans 8 deals with these two lines from the aspect of our experience.

THREE QUESTIONS CONCERNING ABIDING IN CHRIST

In John 15 the Lord Jesus reveals that He is the vine and we are the branches. He also says that we need to abide in Him and that, if we do, He will abide in us. What a wonderful life this mutual abiding is! Although John 15 tells us to abide in Christ, it does not present the way to abide. As we shall see, the way to abide in Christ is found in Romans 8, which is a progression from John 15.

For more than fifty years, I have been considering how we can abide in Christ. Christ is far away in the third heaven, and we are on earth. How can we abide in Him? Years ago, the Bible teachers under whom I studied could not answer this question adequately. They could only tell me that we abide in Christ through the Holy Spirit. But in John 15 Christ does not say to abide in Him through the Spirit. As a young man who desired to know the Bible in a logical way, not according to superstition or tradition, I thought it was not logical to say that we abide in Christ through the Spirit. How can you abide in one person through another person? Thus, concerning the abiding in Christ, we first need to seek the answer to this question: Where is the Christ in whom we must abide?

The second question is this: What is the "Me" spoken of in verses 4 and 5 of John 15? To answer we must know not only *who* Christ is but also *what* Christ is. If we would abide in Christ as the vine, we must be able to answer this question. How can we abide in something if we do not know what we are to abide in? How can Christ be the One in whom we abide? We can understand the meaning of the words "Follow Me," but it is not easy to understand the words "Abide in Me." To follow the Lord means that He goes ahead of us and that we walk behind Him. But what does it mean to abide in Him? We can easily understand what it means to abide *with* Christ, but not what it means to abide *in* Him.

The third question is this: How can we abide in Him? Even if we know where Christ is and what the "Me" is in whom we must abide, we still need to know how to remain in Him. The words "Abide in Me" certainly are mysterious and perplexing. Like many other sayings in the Gospel of John, these words are simple, but their meaning is profound.

In order to answer all these questions we have raised regarding abiding in Christ, we need to come again to Romans 8. The divine revelation in the holy Word is progressive; therefore, to understand this matter of abiding in Christ we need to proceed from John 15 to Romans 8. Suppose your father wrote you a long letter of many pages. In order to understand your father's thought as revealed in the letter, you would need to read the whole letter, not just the first few pages. The thought in his letter would be revealed progressively. Likewise, as we go on from John 15 to Romans 8, we see a progression in the matter of abiding in Christ.

CHRIST IN US

Firstly, in Romans 8 we find the answer to the question concerning where Christ is today. This chapter reveals that Christ is not only in the heavens but also in us. Verse 34 says that Christ is at the right hand of God,

whereas verse 10 reveals that Christ is in us. The very Christ who is seated in the third heaven is now living in us. How wonderful! Thus, through Romans 8, we know where Christ is.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Now we come to the question concerning the "Me" in John 15:5. This involves the matter of what Christ is. Most Christians know Christ merely according to an objective doctrine of the Trinity. We definitely believe that God is triune. As the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, God is three-in-one. This is a heavenly, divine, spiritual mystery which no one can explain adequately. We do not even have a thorough understanding of ourselves, much less of the Triune God. In the Bible, the Triune God is not for us to analyze in a doctrinal way, but for the dispensing of Himself into us.

The Gospel of John reveals that God the Father is embodied in God the Son and is made known through the Son. John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." When Philip asked the Lord Jesus to show the disciples the Father, the Lord was apparently surprised at such a question, and He said to him, "Am I so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The Lord answered Philip in a mysterious way, telling him that as long as he had seen the Lord Himself, he had seen the Father. In John 14:10 the Lord went further: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father Who abides in Me, He does His works." Here we see that the Father is embodied in the Son and seen in the Son.

John 14 reveals even more of the Triune God. In verses 16 and 17 the Lord Jesus speaks of another Comforter, the Spirit of reality. If we consider carefully verses 17 and 18, we see that the Spirit of reality is actually the Lord Jesus Himself. The Spirit of reality is the very realization of the

Son. The Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 15:45 Paul can say, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (Gk.). The last Adam, Jesus in the flesh, was transfigured through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit. For this reason, 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit." In experiencing the Triune God, we all need to know that God the Father is embodied in God the Son and that God the Son is realized as the Spirit who gives life. For this reason, Romans 8:2 speaks of the Spirit of life, who is Christ the Son of God realized as the Spirit.

Because the Spirit is the realization of the Son, we get the Spirit whenever we call on the name of the Lord Jesus. If I call a certain brother by name, that brother responds because he, the person, is the reality of his name. In like manner, when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, we get the Spirit because the Spirit is the reality of the name of Jesus. This is our experience. You may say, "Lord Jesus, I believe in You, I receive You, and I love You." Whenever you pray in this way, you receive the Spirit. We call on the name of Jesus, but we experience the Spirit as the realization of Christ. This indicates that the life-giving Spirit is the reality of Christ.

We have seen that the Son is the embodiment of the Father and that the Spirit is the reality of the Son. The Spirit today is in our spirit. Therefore, the totality of the wonderful Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is in our spirit for us to experience. This wonderful One is all we need: our life, our food, our living water, our light, our strength, our comfort, our holiness, our victory, our wisdom, our peace, our humility, our submission, our love, our everything. This is not a doctrine; neither is it a method nor a system. It is the enjoyment and experience of the living Triune God who dwells within us. After accomplishing creation and passing through incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, this living One reaches us and even dwells within us, in our spirit. This

living One, Christ as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, is the very "Me" in whom we are to abide.

MINDING THE SPIRIT

How can we abide in Him? Romans 8:6 points the way: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." Because the divine Spirit is mingled with our spirit, it is difficult to say whether the spirit in this verse refers to our spirit or to the divine Spirit. The spirit here is the mingled spirit. As verse 16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit."

Opposed to this wonderful mingled spirit is the flesh, our corrupted body. In the body originally created by God there was no sinful element; on the contrary, the human body was pure and sinless. Through the fall, however, Satan, the evil one, injected himself as sin into man's body. This happened when man took into him the fruit of the tree of knowledge. After Satan entered into man's body, the body was contaminated and polluted and thereby became the flesh. Therefore, our spirit is mingled with the Triune God, and our body, which has become the flesh, is mixed with the sinful element of Satan.

This makes the Christian a miniature garden of Eden. In the garden man faced the tree of life on the one hand and the tree of knowledge on the other. Now, as those who were represented by Adam in Genesis 2, we have the tree of life in our spirit and the tree of knowledge in our flesh. We need to decide whether we shall set our mind on the flesh and suffer death or whether we shall set our mind on the spirit and enjoy life and peace. By setting our mind on the spirit we abide in Christ who as the life-giving Spirit dwells in our spirit.

No doctrine, method, nor system can subdue the satanic element in our flesh. In the whole universe only God is more powerful than Satan; no doctrine can prevail against him. Do you think you can defeat Satan by sound teachings, by correct methods, or by the knowledge of the Scripture in letters? How absurd! Praise the Lord that the

very Triune God who is now within us has already conquered Satan. Instead of following certain methods, we should simply depend upon the Lord constantly. The Lord's word in John 15:5 applies here: "Apart from Me you can do nothing." We simply need to abide in Him by setting our mind on the spirit.

Now we have the answers to the three questions we have raised concerning abiding in Christ. Where is Christ? He is in our spirit. What is Christ? He is the life-giving Spirit who dwells in us. How can we abide in Christ? We abide in Him by setting our mind on the spirit. The setting of the mind on the spirit actually is the abiding. Day by day and even moment by moment, we need to set our mind, which represents our whole being, on the mingled spirit. The result is always life and peace.

Romans 8 surely is a progression from John 15 regarding the abiding in Christ. If we did not have Romans 8, we would still be groping to find the practical way to abide in Christ. Praise the Lord that we are no longer groping in the darkness searching for the way! Instead, we have learned from Romans 8 that all we need to do is turn our being to the living One who indwells our spirit and stay one with Him. When we turn to Him and set our mind on Him, we have life, peace, light, comfort, strength, and all we need. Our thirst is quenched and our hunger is satisfied.

SETTING THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT BY PRAYER

In order to set our being on the mingled spirit, we need to pray. How easily we are distracted from the divine Spirit in our spirit! Our mind is so quickly drawn to other things. Therefore, we need to pray, not mainly to ask the Lord to do things for us, but to keep our mind set on the spirit. Be assured, the Lord will take care of you and do everything for you. Hence, in prayer you need not be occupied with your needs. Instead, pray to keep in touch with the living One in your spirit. The more you keep in contact with Him, the more you will enjoy Him. Do not pray about your need for love or patience. Our experience

proves that the more we pray about such things, the more we are distracted from the mingled spirit and the less we abide in Christ. We should simply praise the Lord that He is our love, our patience, and our everything. If we praise Him in this way, declaring how good the Lord is, spontaneously love and patience will flow out of us, whether we are conscious of it or not. Others will be surprised at the change in us. They will not see the temporary results of our own efforts, but they will see Christ as the life-giving Spirit being lived out of us. The more we set our mind on the living One in our spirit, the more He lives Himself out of us. This is the Christian life. This is the way to a life of holiness and victory. Let us forget systems and methods and instead turn to the living Person within us and set our mind on Him. He is waiting for us to do this. This is the way to abide in Him.

SATAN AS SIN DWELLING IN OUR FLESH

In order to be deeply impressed with the need to abide in Christ by minding the spirit, we need to see even more clearly just what dwells in our flesh and what dwells in our spirit. The word "dwells" is used in 7:17, 18, and 20. In verses 17 and 20 Paul says that sin dwells in him, and in verse 18 he says that in him, that is, in his flesh, nothing good dwells. In Romans 5 through 8 sin is revealed as being the personification of Satan. In a sense, the sin that dwells in our flesh, the fallen body poisoned by the nature of the evil one, is Satan incarnated. Satan as sin is in our flesh. In 7:21 Paul says, "I find then the law that, at my willing to do the good, the evil is present with me." The word "evil" in this verse denotes the evil nature of Satan. Therefore, Romans 7 reveals that Satan as sin dwells in our flesh.

The Greek word rendered "dwells" in these verses is not the word elsewhere rendered "abide." Rather, it is a word whose root meaning is "house." The same word is used in Ephesians 3:17 concerning Christ making His home in our heart. Hence, the meaning here is that sin is making its home in our flesh. We, however, may be blind to this fact. Through experience, Paul discovered that

there was something evil, the evil nature of Satan, living and dwelling in his flesh. If the fact of indwelling sin is unveiled to us, we shall see that we have such a terrible thing, the very personification of Satan as sin, making its home in our flesh. How we praise the Lord for revealing this to us!

OUR SPIRIT BEING LIFE

In contrast to Romans 7 which exposes sin dwelling in our flesh, Romans 8 reveals that something wonderful dwells in our spirit. Verses 10 and 11 say, "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness. 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." If Christ is in us, the spirit is life because of righteousness, even though the fallen body remains dead because of sin. Thus, in verse 10 we have two facts: the first that our body is still dead, and the second that our spirit is life. As long as Christ is in us, our spirit is life. There are no other conditions or qualifications. Nevertheless, our body remains dead because of indwelling sin.

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT GIVING LIFE TO OUR MORTAL BODIES

The word "but" at the beginning of verse 11 is very significant; it indicates that something better is coming. This verse speaks about the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwelling in us. Firstly, Christ is in us. This is the initial stage, the beginning. But for Christ as the Spirit to dwell in us, that is, to make His home in us, is the continuation. Because Christ is in us, our spirit is life, although our body remains dead. But if the Christ who is in us is also making His home in us, the indwelling Spirit will give life to our mortal body.

Our body is enlivened by the indwelling Spirit. Whether or not our mortal body is enlivened depends on whether or not we allow the Spirit to make His home in

us. Yes, Christ as the Spirit is in you; this causes your spirit to be life. But whether or not the Spirit can make His home in you depends on your attitude. Are you willing for Him to make His home in you, or will you confine Him to a certain corner of your being? Suppose I am invited to the home of a particular brother and sister. However, after I come into their home, they limit me to a small corner of the house; they do not allow me to move freely about and to make myself at home. This means that I do not have the liberty to do anything in their home. Likewise, Christ may be in our spirit, but we may not give Him the liberty to move throughout our being. As a result, the inner circle of our being, our spirit, is life, but the outer circle, our body, is still dead. In order for our mortal body to be enlivened, the indwelling Christ must have free course to spread Himself throughout our being. He must have the liberty to settle Himself in all of our inward parts and to thereby make His home within us. If we allow Him to do this, life will be imparted not only to our spirit but also to our body.

THE PLACE OF THE MIND

In Romans 7 and 8 we see that two things indwell the believers. In chapter seven we have the indwelling sin, the evil nature of Satan, and in chapter eight we have the indwelling Spirit who is Christ Himself. Sin is the personified nature of Satan indwelling our flesh, and the Spirit is Christ indwelling our spirit. Between the indwelling sin and the indwelling Spirit stands our mind, which represents ourselves. Romans 7:25 says, "So then with the mind I myself serve as a slave the law of God." Please pay careful attention to the words "... with the mind I myself...." These words indicate that the mind is our representative; it is our very self. When Paul said that with the mind he was serving the law of God, he meant that he himself was trying to keep the law, endeavoring to please God by obeying the law. In attempting to fulfill the requirements of the law, the mind was doing something good, but it was acting independently.

Romans 8:6 gives us another view of the mind: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." We have seen clearly that Satan as sin dwells in our flesh and that Christ as the life-giving Spirit dwells in our spirit. If we make up our mind to do good, the indwelling sin in our flesh will be activated and will defeat us. The law of sin will war against the law of our mind and make us captive in the law of sin in our members (7:23). Thus, we need the revelation of sin in our flesh and of Christ in our spirit. Then we need to see that as independent persons we cannot deal with the sin in our flesh. In order to deal with this, we need to call on the very Lord Jesus who dwells in our spirit and keep our mind set on the spirit. This is not a matter of following a method but of touching a living Person. Time and time again we need to say, "Amen, Lord Jesus, I love You." When we do this, the indwelling sin is subdued, and Christ becomes everything to us. The Lord Jesus is then wrought into our being to permeate and saturate us with Himself. This is what it means to be sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of Christ. This is the experience of abiding in Christ. by minding the mingled spirit, as revealed in Romans 8.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY

SAVED IN LIFE FROM SIN AND WORLDLINESS

With this message we begin a series of messages on the saving life of Christ. Romans 5:10 says, "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life." Christians have devoted a great deal of attention to the death of Christ, but not much attention to Christ's life. We may know the term the life of Christ, and we may be familiar with the verses in the Gospel of John where the Lord says that He is life and that He has come that we might have life more abundantly (John 11:25; 10:10). Nevertheless, we must admit that we are short of the genuine experience of life.

THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF LIFE

The divine revelation in the holy Word is progressive. Hence, although the Gospel of John is wonderful, it does not contain the ultimate revelation. After John and the Acts, we have the Epistles, which are a progression from the Gospels. The seeds sown in the Old Testament sprout in the Gospels, but they grow and develop further in the Epistles. The harvest of all the seeds, of course, is in the book of Revelation. The seed of life is sown in Genesis 2, in the word regarding the tree of life. Life there refers neither to the physical life (bios) nor to the soulish or psychological life (psuche) but to the divine life, the life of God (zoe). If we had only the second chapter of Genesis, it would be difficult to understand what life is. Psalms 36:9 reveals more concerning life: "For with thee is the fountain of life." This indicates that God, the Triune God, is the fountain of life. Chapter one of John reveals that life is in the Word, that is, in Christ (John 1:1, 4). When the

Lord Jesus came forth to minister, He said clearly that He is life (John 11:25; 14:6). According to the revelation of John's Gospel, life is a living person, Christ, who is the very embodiment of God. Thus, the book of John is a book of life. Life sprouts in this Gospel.

We see the growth of the sprout in Romans. In John 15 the Lord Jesus tells us to abide in Him. However, as we pointed out in the foregoing message, the way to abide in Christ is found not in John 15 but in Romans 8. Romans 8 reveals that Christ today is the Spirit of life. As the Spirit of life, He is in our spirit. Hence, the spirit in this chapter is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with the human spirit. In order to abide in Him, we need to set our mind, which represents our whole being, on the mingled spirit. The result is life and peace. Therefore, Romans 8 is necessary in order to have the realization of John 15 in a practical way. To have John 15 without Romans 8 is to have the sprout without the growth.

In the same principle, many other wonderful aspects of life found in the Gospel of John are developed in the book of Romans. In John we have a vision of life; however, this Gospel does not give us the definite way to experience this life. For this, we need the book of Romans. In Romans life is unveiled in such a way that we can not only know life but also experience it.

JUSTIFICATION AND LIFE

In 1:16 Paul says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes. Then in the next verse he says, "For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith: as it is written, But the just shall live by faith." God's salvation is by justification out of faith. Although all Christians have heard this, most have missed the ultimate point in this chapter. This matter is not salvation nor justification nor faith. It is life. Notice that 1:17 says that the just shall live by faith. This verse can also be translated, "The just shall have life by faith." Therefore, the best way to grasp the full meaning here is to say, "The just shall have life and live by faith."

God has saved us and justified us so that we may have life. Justification results in life. Hence, in 5:18 Paul speaks of the "justification of life." God's justification of us in Christ is of life. Justification results in life. God's purpose in justifying us is to enable us to enjoy His life. Adam in Genesis 2 did not need justification because at that time sin had not come in. Man lived in innocence before God. Because of Adam's fall and his involvement with sin, the way to the tree of life was closed (Gen. 3:24) until the Lord Jesus died on the cross to fulfill God's righteous requirements. Christ is our righteousness. When we believe in Him, He becomes righteousness to us, and we are justified by God. Through this justification we are brought back to the tree of life. Therefore, justification is of life, for life, and results in life.

Many Christians concentrate on the matter of justification but neglect the matter of life. Therefore, we need to emphasize one phrase in 5:18--justification of life. The key word here is "life." Justification is not an end in itself; justification is for life. Have you been justified by faith in Christ? If you have, then you should strongly proclaim that your justification is for life. The just shall have life and live by faith.

SAVED IN HIS LIFE

In 5:10 Paul says that "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." The death of Christ is for redemption, justification, and reconciliation. But all this is for life. As Paul goes on to say in this verse, "Much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life." We have enjoyed the benefits of Christ's death; now we need to enjoy His life. He who died on the cross for our sins is now living within us and for us as our life. Just as we participate in the death of Christ, so we also need to experience the life of Christ. The life of Christ is Christ Himself living within us.

This life saves us from all kinds of negative things. It is not the life of Christ, however, that saves us from hell or from God's judgment, because we have already been saved from these things through the death of Christ on

the cross for our sins. Although we were sinful and destined to be eternally condemned by God, Christ's death has solved this problem. Therefore, by the death of Christ we have been saved from hell and from the eternal judgment of God. This salvation has been accomplished once for all. Nevertheless, Paul says that "we shall be saved in His life," indicating that we still need to experience the saving life of Christ.

From what are we saved? If we would answer this question fully and in detail, we would need to mention hundreds of items, including temper, disposition, self-pride, and jealousy. Everyone has a problem with temper or with the natural disposition or with self-pride or with jealousy. You may even feel jealous of someone who gives a good testimony in the meeting. How much we need to be saved in the life of Christ! Although we need to be saved from hundreds of items, in the book of Romans the Apostle Paul deals with just a number of major things from which we need to be saved, including sin, worldliness, naturalness, individualism, and divisiveness.

SAVED IN LIFE FROM THE LAW OF SIN

Let us first consider being saved in life from the law of sin. Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." This verse speaks not merely of sin, but of the law of sin. All negative things such as temper and self-pride are related to this law. The reason you cannot overcome your temper is that your temper is involved with the law of sin. There is a certain law that causes you to lose your temper, to be proud, and to be jealous. For example, if I throw a ball into the air, there is no need to pray that it will fall to the ground. The law of gravity will automatically cause the ball to fall. Likewise, we need no help in losing our temper, for we lose it spontaneously according to the working of the law of sin within us. Furthermore, there is no need for us to try to be proud or jealous, because the law of sin produces pride and jealousy in us. The speaking of lies is also an issue of the law of sin.

Christians know that they should not tell lies, but in one way or another nearly all Christians have lied, even if it was just in putting on a false appearance or expression. Lying, like all other sinful things, is not something we are taught to do; it comes from the law of sin within us.

In order to impress you with this fact, I would like to use the word "law" as a verb. The law of sin "laws" us; we all have been "lawed" by this law. We simply cannot escape the "lawing" of the law of sin within us. According to 8:2, this law of sin is also the law of death. When this law "laws" us, we are involved not only with sin but also with death. Only in the life of Christ can we be saved from this dreadful law.

Many great philosophers, especially the Chinese ethical thinkers, have tried to conquer this law. Certain Chinese philosophers spoke of the war between the principle and the lust. This is just what Paul refers to in Romans 7:23: "But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me captive in the law of sin which is in my members." What the Chinese ethical thinkers have referred to as the principle is the law of good, and what they have referred to as the lust is the law of sin that brings us into death. By our own efforts we are unable to conquer the law of sin. The only way to be free from this law is the way revealed in 8:2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death."

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Romans 8:2 speaks of the law of the Spirit of life. God is not only the Spirit, but life also. The very God who is the Spirit is life in us. Because this life is the Spirit, the Spirit is called the Spirit of life. Every life has a law, and the Spirit of life also has its law. The law of the bird life is to fly, the law of the dog life is to bark, the law of the cat life is to catch mice, the law of the chicken life is to lay eggs, and the law of the apple tree life is to produce apples. There is no need to teach an apple tree to produce apples, for in the life of an apple tree is a law that "laws" it to

produce fruit of its own kind. Our fallen life also has a law, the law of sin and death. As believers in Christ, we have the eternal life, the divine life, the life which is actually God Himself. Because this life is the highest life, its law is the highest law. The law of the Spirit of life is the spontaneous function of the divine life. Therefore, we have the highest life with the highest law and the highest function.

The Gospel of John speaks of the Spirit and also of life, but it says nothing of the law of the Spirit of life. In this matter Romans 8 is a progression from the Gospel of John. In Romans 8 the concept of law, the spontaneous function of life, is added to the Spirit and life. Because the Gospel of John does not speak of the function of life, this book does not give us the way to apply life. But with the law of the Spirit of life spoken of in Romans 8:2, we have the way to apply the divine life.

The law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and of death. The way to cooperate with this divine law is to set our mind on the spirit. When your temper or any other negative thing rises up in you, do not attempt to suppress it. Instead, turn your mind, your being, to the mingled spirit and call on the name of the Lord Jesus. The mind set on the spirit is life. This life has a law, a spontaneous function, that sets us free from the law of sin and of death. By setting our being on the spirit, we spontaneously apply the divine life within us to our situation, and we are set free. When we are freed from the law of sin in this way, we have the sense that we are in the heavens and that sin is under our feet.

However, we are naturally inclined to try to deal with the negative elements ourselves. Sometimes even little children are so stubborn that they refuse the help of the mother and try to solve their problems alone. It is much better for a child to simply enjoy what his mother can do for him. Likewise, the way to be saved from the law of sin is to set our being on the spirit and to enjoy the spontaneous working of the divine life.

Philosophers have exhausted themselves in their efforts to deal with sin, but they have not been able to find

the way. As we have seen, the way is found in Romans 8. Praise the Lord for the divine life in our spirit! Our spirit today is mingled with and indwelt by the divine Spirit, and we can set our mind upon this mingled spirit. By doing this we have the way to be set free from the law of sin and of death. Our responsibility is simply to cooperate by setting our mind on the spirit. Whenever we set our mind on the spirit, the law of sin and of death is overruled.

SANCTIFICATION IN LIFE

In the life of Christ we are saved not only from sin but also from worldliness. Romans 6:22 says, "But now, having been freed from sin and having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life." In this verse we have the matter of sanctification. None of the books I have read on sanctification relates sanctification to life. On the contrary, most of them merely say that sanctification is a change of position through the blood of Christ. However, 6:22 shows that sanctification is related to life and that it is a matter of life.

The sanctification revealed in these chapters of Romans is not outward positional sanctification but inward dispositional sanctification. To be sanctified is to be saved from being common or worldly. By nature we all are common and worldly. Not only our outward conduct and behavior must be separated from the world, but even our disposition, our very being, must be separated also. In buying a pair of shoes, you may be careful not to purchase a worldly style. However, if you consider only the style, you may be sanctified in buying shoes, but this is not the inward sanctification by life. In order to be sanctified inwardly by life in buying shoes, you should set your mind on the spirit, pray to the Lord, and ask Him what kind of shoes He would like to wear. If you contact the Lord in this way, the inward anointing will teach you what shoes to buy. Then you will buy shoes not according to religious instructions or concepts, but according to the inner life. If your daily life is according to the inner life, not according to teachings and regulations, you will not be common or

worldly in buying a pair of shoes. But the main point is not buying the proper shoes; it is that even in the process of buying a pair of shoes you are sanctified inwardly by life. Neither your shoes nor your being will be common. Sanctification is not merely outward behavior; it is altogether a matter of our inward being, which is governed by the law of the Spirit of life.

The inward anointing will also affect the way we style our hair. Concerning the length or style of our hair, we should pray, "Lord Jesus, what about my hair? Lord, I care for You and for the law of the Spirit of Your life. Lord, You are living within me. In the matter of my hair, I want to cooperate with the law of the Spirit of life." If you pray in this way, you will be dispositionally sanctified and you will know how your hair should be cut. Do not be concerned about either the praise of others or their criticism. Instead, simply care for the law of the Spirit of life within you.

THE BEST WAY TO GROW IN LIFE

Dispositional sanctification is not only a matter of life; it also brings more life to us. The best way to grow in life is to be dispositionally sanctified by life. The more we are sanctified within by life, the more life will be imparted to us. The more you cooperate with the process of inward sanctification, the more life you will enjoy. For this reason 6:22 speaks of "fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life." Sanctification is brought about by life and it also brings in life. It is wholly a matter by life and for life. The more we set our being upon the spirit, the more we are separated from the world and all that is common. Such a sanctification issues in more life for our growth in life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

SAVED IN LIFE FROM NATURALNESS

The book of Romans may be summarized in three words: redemption, life, and building. The first chapters cover redemption, the middle portion covers life, and the last part deals with the building, which is the issue of redemption and life. In the foregoing message we saw that after being saved, justified, and reconciled to God, we still need to be saved in Christ's life (5:10). Redemption, justification, and reconciliation have been accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross. Through Christ's death, the problems between us and God on the negative side have been solved. But God's purpose on the positive side must still be fulfilled. God's purpose is not merely to save us from hell or from His judgment; His purpose in the universe is to build up the Body as the corporate expression of His Son. For this reason, the book of Romans does not stop with redemption or justification, but proceeds onward to reach the goal of God's eternal purpose.

The unique way God uses to fulfill His purpose is life. In chapter five the matter of life is introduced in an experiential way. In 5:10 Paul says, "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life." Notice the tense here: we *shall* be saved in His life. After reconciliation, there is still the need for us to be saved in life. Although we have been saved already, we still need to be saved. On the one hand, we have been saved from hell and from the judgment of God. This was accomplished once for all through the death of Christ on the cross. But, on the other hand, we still need to be saved from so many present problems. Many

Christians are waiting to go to heaven. However, if they were suddenly transported to heaven, upon arriving there they might feel that they are not suitable for the glory of heaven. Heaven is glorious, but in many respects we still are so low. Are you pleased with the way you are today? Are you satisfied with yourself? I am glad that I am still in the process of Christ's ongoing salvation. I need to be saved because I am still too much in my natural life. Although I do not want to be in the natural man and earnestly endeavor to be free from my natural man, I must confess that I am still natural. Therefore, I need to be saved daily and even hourly in the life of Christ from my natural man.

SAVED IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST

According to 5:10, we need to be saved *in* Christ's life. We are saved not only *by* His life, but also *in* His life. Life is the Person of Christ Himself. In the Gospel of John the Lord said definitely and emphatically, "I am... the life" (14:6). Therefore, to be saved in His life is actually to be saved in the Person of Christ Himself.

The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark is a type of our being saved in Christ. Noah and his family were saved not *by* the ark but *in* the ark. Today, as believers in Christ, we are in Him as today's ark. Christ is our life, and we are in Him. In Him we are being saved. As long as we are in Him, we are in the process of being saved in His life.

We have seen that we are saved in Christ's life from the law of sin. The law of sin works in us spontaneously and automatically. There is no need for us to strive in order to tell lies or to lose our temper. The telling of lies and the losing of temper are an automatic product of the spontaneous working of the law of sin. Nevertheless, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus frees us from the law of sin and of death (8:2). As long as we are in Christ as life, we are spontaneously freed by the law of His life from the law of sin and of death.

We are also saved in Christ's life from worldliness. This means that in His life we are sanctified, separated

from the world. We all were born into a worldly situation and were then trained to be worldly. The tendency to be worldly is in our nature. Therefore, we need to be in the divine life in order to be delivered from worldliness. This divine life separates us from worldliness and sanctifies us both positionally and dispositionally. We cannot be saved from worldliness by following certain religious instructions or regulations such as those found among certain religious groups. At most, adherence to such rules can produce only an outward, positional sanctification. The sanctification spoken of in Romans, however, is not merely positional; it is also dispositional, an inward matter that affects the depths of our being. In the life of Christ we are being sanctified inwardly.

A METABOLIC CHANGE

Along with being saved from sin and from worldliness, we need to be saved in life from naturalness. This means that we need to be transformed. We need not only an outward change, but also an inward change. This inward change is called transformation. Transformation involves a metabolic change in our being. A new element, a divine, holy, heavenly element, must be added to our natural element to produce a metabolic, organic change. The result of such a change is transformation.

Suppose a person with a pale complexion puts makeup on his face in order to improve his color. Such a change is outward; it is definitely not the result of inward transformation. God's way is different. Firstly, He washes away our sins in order to fulfill His righteous requirements. Then, in transforming us, He is not primarily concerned with our outward appearance, but with what we are organically. To continue the illustration of makeup, the best way to improve our facial color is not to put on makeup but to eat nourishing food. This food will cause an organic change that will eventually improve our color. This change is transformation. By inward transformation our outward appearance will change.

TRANSFORMED FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY

This organic transformation has very much to do with the building up of the Body. Although we have been reconciled to God through the death of Christ, we still are very natural. In the church life we have believers of many different nationalities: Americans, Chinese, Mexicans, Japanese, Filipinos, British, French, Germans, Koreans, Ghanians. However, if we remain in our natural status, we cannot be the Body of Christ. How can the Chinese be built up with the Japanese, or the Westerners with the Easterners? Nevertheless, in the Body of Christ we must be one and be built up together. For this, we need to be transformed.

By nature, we all are either male or female. However, even this natural distinction causes problems in the church life. A brother who uplifts his male status will cause problems to the sisters in the church life. Therefore, even with respect to being male and female, we need to be transformed for the building up of the Body. If we remain in our natural life, we simply cannot be built up with others. If we are natural, the brothers cannot be built up with the sisters, nor the sisters with the brothers. Furthermore, if the sisters are not transformed, they cannot be built up with one another. In our natural status, whether male or female, we are not capable of being built up as the Body. Again we see that we need to be transformed, to be saved in the life of Christ from our naturalness.

In speaking with the saints or in answering their questions, I am afraid of being natural. I do not want to be in my natural disposition. Do you know what disposition is? It is simply our natural expression, our natural being. Our disposition is what we are by nature. How can the church be built up if we remain in our natural disposition? How can those who differ in their disposition be built into one? Without transformation, it is impossible. Some who have realized this have become so disappointed that they have thought it hopeless to have the church life in a practical way. At such times, they have even considered

giving up the church life. However, there is no way for us to go back. The "train" on which we are riding goes only in one direction; it never goes backward. Even when we are disappointed, the "train" of the church life carries us onward. We have no choice but to go on. This is our destiny. We were born for this and even predestinated for it. We simply have to go along with what the Lord is doing in the church life today.

ALL THINGS WORKING FOR OUR TRANSFORMATION

Some have told me that they were tired of being Christians and no longer wanted to be Christians. But once you have become a Christian, it is impossible to stop being a Christian. The universe is not under our control. We are creatures, and certain decisions concerning us were made before we were born. It was not we who decided to be born into this world. This matter was of God. This is His universe and His earth, and we are His people. According to God's economy, as typical human beings, we must be Christians. As Christians, we have seen that we must be in the church life. Since we have no choice in this matter, let us simply place ourselves into the transforming hand of God and allow Him to do His transforming work within us. Those of us who are married have just the wife or husband we need. Furthermore, in the church life we have the very brothers and sisters we need. All the dear ones in the church are necessary for our transformation. The Lord is sovereign, and we must worship Him for His sovereignty. He is never wrong. Sometimes I am tempted to be impatient with the slowness of certain brothers or with mistakes they have made under the Lord's sovereignty. At such a time the indwelling Spirit reminds me that all this is for my transformation. At other times I am reminded, perhaps by my wife, that God causes all things to work together for our good. All things work together for good in the way of transformation. We need this transformation in order to be saved from our naturalness.

THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

Romans 12:2 tells us to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The source of our trouble is our mind, which has been saturated and permeated with all kinds of natural concepts. This mind filled with natural concepts is the cause of the trouble in the building up of the Body. The brothers, the sisters, the old, and the young all have their concepts. Furthermore, those born in the Orient have their concepts, and those born in the West have theirs. How can we be built up together if we hold on to our differing concepts? For the building of the Body, we need the renewing of our mind. We need to drop not only non-Christian concepts, but also Christian concepts, the concepts we took in when we were in the denominations. Denominations are divisions formed according to various concepts. Now that the Lord, in His mercy, has brought us together for the church life, we need the renewing of the mind. We need to be inwardly unloaded of our concepts. This is related to the growth in life. The more we grow in life, the more we shall be saturated by life. Then this life will transform our mind organically. Spontaneously the concepts will be swallowed up by the growth of the life within.

We have learned not to argue with the saints regarding their concepts. Instead, we should pray for them and minister life to them so that they may grow. As the saints grow, they experience transformation in the soul by the renewing of the mind. By growing together in this way in the life of Christ, we eventually come to have one mind. Then we are one, not according to concept, but according to the inner life.

MINISTERING LIFE

If a brother or sister holds a dissenting concept, you should not try to convince that one to change it. The more you attempt to convince him, the stronger the dissenting concept will be. The best way to help such a one is to allow the inner life to solve his problem. Suppose you cut your

arm. After applying medicine to the wound, leave the wound alone and let it heal itself. However, if you tamper with the injury, you will only delay the healing. The life in the body will eventually take care of the wound. Likewise, the best way to care for a dissenting one is to do nothing. If the problem is left alone, he will sooner or later become dissatisfied with his dissenting. Instead of correcting him or trying to change him, minister life to him. What the brothers and sisters need is the inward, organic supply of life. You can minister life to someone without even saying much to him. Simply by looking at him you can transfuse the life into him. Do not speak to others according to the tree of knowledge. Instead, exercise your spirit to transfuse life from your spirit into them. This life, which is the living Christ Himself, will work within them to transform them inwardly. Eventually, the inner life will renew their minds and they will be transformed. Then the dissenting concepts will be swallowed up.

Today, for the building up of the church, we need to experience this kind of transformation. The more we are transformed, the more we are saved in the life of Christ. May we all pray that the Lord will grant us a genuine inner, organic transformation. This is our need today.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

SAVED IN LIFE FROM INDIVIDUALISM

Romans 5:10 is a key verse, for it concludes one section and opens another. This verse covers both the reconciling death of Christ and the saving life of Christ. Reconciliation includes redemption and justification. Christ died on the cross for our redemption; through redemption we have been justified by God and reconciled to Him. Now there is nothing between us and God. However, we still have a number of subjective problems. For this reason, even after we have been reconciled to God, we still need to be saved in Christ's life. Because reconciliation through the death of Christ is an accomplished fact, in 5:10 Paul used the past tense with respect to reconciliation. But because we are still in the process of being saved in life, Paul used the future tense when speaking about being saved in the life of Christ. In this message we shall consider the matter of being saved in life from individualism.

SEVEN NEGATIVE THINGS

In the book of Romans Paul dealt with seven negative things from which we need to be saved. As we have seen, the first item is the law of sin. Within our flesh, our fallen body, the law of sin works spontaneously and automatically. This law of sin is the power of evil that operates spontaneously within us.

The second negative item is worldliness. We were born into a worldly environment and then raised to be worldly. Worldliness is in our very being; hence, it also is a subjective matter, a matter of our constitution. There is no need to teach a child to love the world, for there is

something in his nature that causes him to love it. The love of the world is an element of our fallen constitution.

The third item is naturalness. We all have a natural life and a natural disposition. Our very constitution is natural. All these natural elements are enemies to God. God has nothing to do with our natural being, our natural life, our natural strength, our natural disposition, or our natural power. These natural elements are deep within our being, much deeper than the law of sin. The law of sin is related mainly to our flesh, but our natural being is our self. For the sake of God's purpose, we need to be saved in the life of Christ from our naturalness.

We also need to be saved from our individualism, that is, from being individualistic. Because we all have the tendency to be individualistic, none of us naturally like to be one with others. Our married life exposes how individualistic we are. Because we are individualistic, a wife does not like to be dependent on her husband, and a husband does not like to be dependent on his wife. God's intention is not to have a group of individualistic believers. On the contrary, it is to build up the Body for the fulfillment of His purpose. In order for this purpose to be carried out, we need to be saved from individualism.

The life of Christ also saves us from divisiveness. Although we talk a great deal about oneness, we actually do not like to be one. To be one is to be restricted, bound, and eventually put to death. Where is the oneness in today's Christianity? Throughout the centuries, there has been a shortage of oneness among Christians. Instead of oneness, there has been division upon division. All divisions come from the element of divisiveness in our fallen nature.

The sixth negative item from which we need to be saved is self-likeness. By self-likeness we mean the appearance and expression of the natural self. We need to be saved from self-likeness by being conformed to the image of the Son of God. In so many respects we do not yet have the likeness of Christ. Instead, we bear the likeness

of the self. Therefore, we need to be saved in life from self-likeness and conformed to the likeness of the glorious Christ.

Finally, we need to be saved from our natural body. Eventually, in God's full salvation, our body will be glorified. The day is coming when our physical body will be transfigured.

JUSTIFICATION, LIFE, AND BUILDING

As a complete sketch of the Christian life and the church life, the book of Romans firstly reveals the matter of justification. Because justification issues in life, the section after the section on justification deals with life. Life leads to the building, which is covered in the last part of Romans. Therefore, the book of Romans may be summarized in three words: justification, life, and building.

Neither justification nor life is God's goal. God's goal is the building up of the church as the Body for Christ's expression and as the house for God's dwelling. For this reason, the book of Romans begins with justification, goes on to life, and concludes with the building. As those who have been saved, redeemed, justified, and reconciled, we are not idly waiting for the Lord to come back. We are being built up in the church life for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Beginning with justification, we must go on to the experience of life in order to reach the goal of the building. Unless we experience life and have the building, the Lord Jesus does not have a way to come back.

THE GREATEST HINDRANCE TO THE BUILDING

Do you realize that we ourselves are the greatest hindrance to the building? This is the reason Paul does not speak of the Body until chapter twelve, after he has covered redemption, justification, sanctification, and transformation. The building up of the Body comes after all this. Justification is in chapters one through four; sanctification, in chapters five through eight; and transformation, in chapter twelve. Then, beginning with

12:4, Paul begins to deal with the building up of the Body. Those who are still worldly or natural cannot be built up with others. In order to be built up together, we need to be justified, sanctified. and transformed.

We all have problems with our mind, emotion, and will. If we remain in our natural mind, emotion, and will, we cannot be one. The peculiar thoughts, concepts, and imaginations we have in our minds keep us from being built up together. Our emotion is even more difficult to control, and our stubborn will causes many difficulties. Due to these problems, the church has not yet been built up, although it has been in existence for more than nineteen hundred years.

The Lord Jesus has not come back because He does not yet have the building. Revelation 19 indicates that the Lord will come back for the Bride, a corporate entity. Eventually, the Lord will have the building and Bride. If we do not cooperate with Him in this matter, He will find others who will cooperate with Him. Through my many years of experience in the church life, I know the difficulties, even the human impossibility, in having the building up of the Body. Nevertheless, I have the full assurance that the Lord is able to get the building. One day, the Lord will have the building He desires. I believe that many of us are willing to allow the Lord to complete His work of building the church. Our burden is not to do a great deal of work; it is to see the genuine building up of the saints for the Lord's coming back.

OPENING TO THE LORD

In order to afford the Lord the opportunity to have the building, we should not try to do anything. Instead, we should simply open to the Lord and say, "Lord, we realize that in ourselves we are hopeless. Our mind, emotion, and will are great problems. But, Lord, we believe that You are able. You call things not being as being. Therefore, we open ourselves to You, and we are willing to go along with You. Lord, by Your mercy, we lay ourselves on Your altar.

Do whatever You desire with us. Do whatever is necessary to deal with our mind, emotion, and will."

DEALING WITH THE MIND, EMOTION, AND WILL

Our married life tests how much we have been built up. Are you truly one with your husband or wife? In our married life, we have the opportunity to learn what it means to be built up in the church life. A number of times the Lord has pointed out to me that if I cannot be built up with my wife, I cannot expect to be built up with others. In order to be built up with our husband or wife, or with others in the church, our mind, emotion, and will must be dealt with.

In the Lord's recovery we are for the recovery of Christ and the church for the building up of the Body. The crucial matter with us today is the building. The building depends wholly upon the dealing with the mind, emotion, and will. The problem today is not with our hearts nor with our motives; it is with our mind, emotion, and will. In some areas of the church service, there is no harmony because certain saints differ in their concept or in their feeling. Others are very strong in the will and always want things under their control. Such a strong will is a foreign element in the Body of Christ. Our peculiar concepts and feelings are also foreign elements that damage the Body. Because we all are troubled by our mind, emotion, and will, we need the Lord's mercy and grace to consecrate ourselves to Him that He may deal with us. Many have consecrated themselves to Christ and the church, but they still have a problem with their mind, emotion, and will. This indicates that the problem regarding the building is not outward but inward. The outward environment of the church life is a test of our inward being; it exposes what we are in our mind, emotion, and will.

Married life also exposes us in these matters. Without a wife or husband, we would not know ourselves adequately. We should thank the Lord for the exposure in our married life. Before we got married, we regarded ourselves as rather holy, as Christians who loved the Lord

and who were always seeking Him. But married life exposed us. All our "holiness" was broken to pieces, and we discovered how dreadful our condition was. The church life exposes us even more than married life does because the church life is more intense. Without the church life, we may think that we have no problems and that we are for Christ and the church. However, by being offended by others in the church life, we find out that we have inward problems with our mind, emotion, and will. When we see this, we need to pray to the Lord to save us in His life.

In order to be saved in life from the negative subjective elements within us, we need much of the Lord's grace. We should pray, "Lord, I have no confidence in myself. I look to You for Your mercy. I place myself in Your hands so that You can work in me. Lord, keep me on the altar and keep me open to You. For the sake of Your building, do whatever You desire with my mind, emotion, and will." If we are willing to give ourselves to the Lord in this way, it will be possible for us to be built up with others. In order to be saved from individualism and to be built up in the Body, we must be willing for the Lord to deal with our mind, emotion, and will according to His desire.

ALLOWING CHRIST TO LIVE IN US

If we want Christ's life to save us, we must allow Him to live in us. Yes, we have Christ as life within us, but our mind, emotion, and will are very strong. Most of the time, we do not give Christ the liberty to live in us. This is why we need to lay ourselves on the altar, pray that the Lord will keep us open to Him, and allow Him to deal with the various parts of our being. Then He will have the opportunity to live in us.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ." The "I" spoken of in this verse is in our mind, emotion, and will. The problems in married life and in the church life are caused by this "I." We may know the

doctrine that the "I" has been crucified with Christ and may proclaim this boldly, but we may still remain strong in our mind, emotion, and will. We need to be careful whenever our mind is strong, whenever our emotion is stirred up, and whenever our will is set. As long as we allow the "I" to prevail, the Lord Jesus is dethroned within us and has no opportunity to live in us. If we dethrone the Lord Jesus in this way, the matter of being saved in His life will merely be a doctrine to us. He will not be the one living in us; rather, the "I" will continue to live.

EXPOSED AND SAVED

We have pointed out that married life exposes us. When there are difficulties, the husband tends to blame the wife, the wife tends to blame the husband, and both secretly tend to blame the Lord. But if we did not have the very wife or husband we have, we would not be fully exposed. When some have difficulties in their married life, they think of getting a divorce. Likewise, when some find that the church is not perfect, they consider getting a "divorce" from the church life. Many dream of an ideal church life. But after their church life "honeymoon" comes to an end, they are disappointed. When they face problems in the church, they begin to doubt whether the church really is the church.

The Lord's ordination is never wrong. All marriages are divinely ordained for the fulfillment of His purpose. Whenever we are exposed in our married life, we should thank the Lord. This exposing is for the Lord's saving. The Lord's intention is to expose us in order to save us in His life from our natural being. When we are exposed, the Lord has the opportunity to live in us. Both in the married life and in the church life we are exposed so that the Lord may live in us. Therefore, do not blame your husband or wife, and do not blame the church. Furthermore, do not blame the Lord. Instead, you should say, "Lord, how I thank You for this situation. I love the church, not because it is perfect, but because it exposes me. Lord, lay me on the

altar and deal with my mind, emotion, and will so that You can live in me."

As the Lord lives in us, He saves us. His saving life works only as He has the opportunity to live in us. If He is to live within us, we need to present ourselves to Him. Such a consecration involves the practical dealing with our mind, emotion, and will.

We all need to be saved in the life of Christ. For this, there is the need of a long process of exposure, especially in the matter of our individualism. In order to be built up together, we need to be exposed with respect to our natural mind, emotion, and will. Once we have been exposed, we shall surrender our inner being to the Lord, and He will be free to live within us. Then the divine life will save us from being individualistic. As we are saved in His life, we become the Body and members one of another. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we may see our need to be saved in His life from individualism for the building up of the Body.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

SAVED IN LIFE FROM DIVISIVENESS

Romans 5:10 speaks of both the death of Christ and the life of Christ. Although we have already been redeemed, justified, and reconciled to God through the death of Christ, we still need to be saved in His life from many negative things. These negative things are not objective; they are subjective and are related to our inner being In the foregoing messages we have covered four of the negative things from which we are saved in the life of Christ: the law of sin, which is the spontaneous power of sin in our flesh; worldliness, which includes everything worldly and common; naturalness, which includes our natural life, natural strength, natural wisdom, and natural disposition; and individualism, the attitude and practice of being individualistic. In this message we shall consider the fifth item--divisiveness.

THE ELEMENT OF DIVISIVENESS

In our natural makeup there is an element of divisiveness. Before we were saved, we probably did not realize that such an element existed within our being, that in our natural life there is the tendency to be divisive. Divisiveness is worse than naturalness or individualism. If someone is individualistic, he prefers to be left alone. He does not want others to bother him or to interfere with him. He simply wants to be whatever he is. But to be divisive is to cause division in an active way. In contrast to those who are individualistic, the divisive ones are aggressive to form parties. They contact the saints with the aim of dividing them. They may even travel from place to place with the intention of causing division.

Romans 8 says that the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin, and Romans 6 tells us that the life of Christ is sanctifying us dispositionally. In Romans 12 we are told that we need to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Romans 12 also says that we are one Body and members of one another. To be transformed is to be saved from naturalness, and to be built up into the Body is to be saved from individualism. In chapter twelve we have transformation and building, but when we come to chapters fourteen and fifteen, we see that Christ's life can save us from divisiveness. In these chapters the Apostle Paul deals with our divisive nature.

RECEIVING THE SAINTS

In Romans 14 Paul covers the matter of receiving the saints. We need to be willing to receive all Christians. Even in the first century there were different kinds of Christians. Some ate only vegetables, and others ate all things. Some observed certain days above others, and others regarded every day the same. If you had lived at the time of the Apostle Paul, would you have been able to receive all these types of Christians? We need to receive all those who have the faith in Christ. If a person believes that Jesus is the Son of God incarnated to be a man, that He died on the cross for our sins, that He was resurrected physically and spiritually, and that He is now on the right hand of God, then we must receive him. In fact, we should have the attitude that we have already received him.

However, the problem is that Christians who eat only vegetables may not receive those who eat everything and that those who eat everything may not receive those who eat only vegetables. Likewise, those who regard every day the same may not receive those who observe certain special days, and those who observe certain days may not receive those who regard every day the same. Nevertheless, as long as someone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to receive him, no matter what he eats or whether he observes certain days.

CHRIST AS THE REALITY OF THE SHADOWS

All Christians believe in the Lord Jesus and in the Bible. However, we have different understandings or interpretations of many things in the Bible. In chapter fourteen Paul deals with two of these differences, eating and the observing of days. To eat something is to take it into us so that it becomes part of us, and to observe a day is to follow an outward ritual or regulation. The differences among today's Christians are related mainly to the things they take in and to the outward rituals and regulations they observe. According to Colossians 2:16 and 17, the regulations in the Bible regarding outward observances are types and shadows of Christ. In Colossians 2:16 Paul says, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." Here we see the two categories mentioned previously, eating and the outward observances. In the next verse Paul points out that all these "are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." If I stand in the light, a shadow in the shape of my body will be cast behind me. My body is the reality of my shadow. In like manner, the matters of eating and drinking and of keeping certain days are shadows, but the body, the reality of these shadows, is Christ.

TYPES AND SHADOWS OF CHRIST

In the Old Testament God commanded His people to eat only that which was regarded as clean. They were not to eat anything that was unclean. However, most of God's people did not realize that these dietary regulations were related to Christ. All the clean things in Leviticus 11 signify various aspects of Christ. Christ is unsearchably rich and has innumerable aspects. Such a rich Christ requires thousands of items to typify Him. All the items suitable for God's people to eat, as recorded in Leviticus 11, are types of different aspects of Christ. Furthermore, the things God forbade His people to eat are types of things other than Christ. Anything of Christ is good for us to eat, but anything that is not Christ is not good for our

eating. This brings us back to Genesis 2, where we see that the tree of life is good for food but that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is not. God's concern, however, is not our physical eating; it is Christ. God only cares for Christ.

Regarding the keeping of days, in the eyes of God every day is the same. But in order to portray Christ. God uses certain days as shadows. For example, the Sabbath day is a shadow of Christ as our rest and satisfaction. Because Christ is the completion, the perfection, of everything God has done, Christ is our satisfaction and rest. Thus, Christ is our Sabbath. Likewise, Christ is our new moon, our new beginning. All the days that God's people in the Old Testament were commanded to observe were shadows of Christ. God, however, does not actually care for those days; He cares for Christ. Therefore, we should hold on to everything that is of Christ, but we should cast aside those things that are not of Christ.

According to natural law, our physical body should have one day of rest each week. By resting in this way we can work more effectively the other six days. However, it does not matter whether this day of rest is the seventh day or the first day of the week. If we apply this to Christ, we shall see that to Him every day is the same. This was Paul's realization in his Epistles.

TAKING CARE OF WEAKER BELIEVERS

Nevertheless, Paul knew that we need to take care of the weaker believers. In Romans 14:1 and 2 he said, "Now him who is weak in faith receive, not with a view to passing judgment on reasonings. One believes that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables." Those who are strong must take care of the weaker ones. Although you may regard every day the same and believe that all things are good to eat, others who are weak in faith may observe certain days and eat only vegetables. On the one hand, we need to realize that so many physical things and special days are types and shadows of Christ. If we see this, we shall not be concerned about eating or the

keeping of days. However, on the other hand, many genuine Christians are not strong in their faith concerning these matters. We must remain open to all of them. Otherwise, we shall be divisive.

THE DIVISIVENESS AMONG TODAY'S CHRISTIANS

Christians today are not only divisive but also divided. Instead of judging divisiveness in others, we should judge our own divisive nature. We have seen that all Christians have the same saving faith, believing in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. The faith by which we are saved is the same in all believers. But, as we have pointed out, it is difficult for Christians to agree in their understanding of many things in the Bible. Even we ourselves may change in our view concerning certain matters. Forty years ago, I interpreted a particular verse in one way, but today I interpret it in an altogether different way. How then can we expect all believers in Christ to agree in their interpretation of the Bible? This is impossible. For example, some say that the baptism spoken of by Paul in Romans 6 is spiritual baptism, not baptism in water. But others, just as strong in their conviction, believe that it refers to water baptism. Thus, over this matter there have been strong arguments because of differing opinions. Christians also have different opinions about praising the Lord, calling on the name of Jesus, and pray-reading the Word. We should not expect all Christians to agree in their understanding of all things in the Bible. Perhaps not until we are in the New Jerusalem shall we be the same in every respect.

There is the strong natural tendency in all of us to insist that all believers be the same as we are. Such insisting does far more than expose our lack of wisdom; it exposes the very element of divisiveness rooted deep within our natural being. Because of this element, we have the tendency to divide ourselves from others and to form our own kind of group.

In 1957 the leading brothers in the church in Taipei

were burdened to visit the leaders of the independent Christian groups in that city. Some of these groups, claiming to be nondenominational, said that they were meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we invited them to have fellowship with us. In the course of our fellowship, the leaders of these groups became fully convinced that Christians should be one and that there was no reason to be divided. However, these leaders said that they still wanted to remain by themselves. Although we were willing for them to take over the leadership and to manage all the church properties, they still wanted to hold on to their separate groups. They appreciated our invitation, but they were not willing to be one in a practical way. We were willing to be one, but they preferred to remain in a divisive position.

TAKING THE LORD'S WAY

What a mercy it is to be in the church life! Many say that it is impossible to have the oneness today and that it is idealistic to try to have the church life in genuine oneness. Apart from the Lord's mercy, we cannot be one with others. If the Lord had not been merciful to us in China, we brothers could not have been brought into oneness and kept in oneness. But in His mercy the Lord has opened our eyes and has shown us His way. In order to go on, we must take His way. According to God's economy, as human beings we must believe in the Lord Jesus and be Christians. If we are not Christians, life is vain. As Christians, we must take the Lord's way in the church life. If we do not take His way, we shall have no way to go on. We may argue outwardly. but inwardly we shall know that we are off the mark. We shall have no inward rest, no sense that we have found our home.

OUR STANDING

We all have the element of divisiveness within us. Nevertheless, we should never excuse divisiveness, and we should never take occasion to be divisive. Our destiny is to be one with all genuine Christians. This oneness is also

our standing in the Lord's recovery. Many are offended by our standing because they prefer a different standing. Some Christians even condemn us and accuse us of saying that we alone are the church and that others are not. In response to such an accusation, I have sometimes said, "Suppose a certain woman is married to a man named Jones. As the wife of Mr. Jones. she is Mrs. Jones. But instead of calling herself Mrs. Jones, she calls herself Mrs. Smith. When someone else claims to be Mrs. Jones, she is offended and says, 'Why do you claim to be Mrs. Jones? How can you say that you are Mrs. Jones and that I am not?' If she is Mrs. Jones, why does she call herself Mrs. Smith? Actually, we do not say that we alone are the church. However, if you are the church, why do you take such names as Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Episcopalian? If you are the church here, then why do you call yourself something else? Since you call yourselves by these names. how can you be the church in this locality? If we are not the church in this city, then what are we?"

What a divisive spirit is found among believers today! The various denominations and groups are both divided and divisive. Nevertheless, they want others to be one with them. Certain groups, for example accept only those who have been baptized by them. What divisiveness! Other groups forbid people to call on the name of the Lord Jesus or to praise the Lord with a loud voice. This also is divisive. If we require the believers to either drop or adopt certain practices in order to be accepted by us, we are divisive. We should not care about any practices, but about whether or not the ones who come to us are real Christians. The basis upon which we receive the saints is nothing less and nothing more than Christ Himself. No matter what kind of background a believer may have, as long as he is a Christian, we must receive him as a brother in the Lord.

THE NEED FOR GROWTH IN LIFE

In order to be saved from divisiveness, we need the

growth in life. It is not sufficient merely to understand the teaching concerning oneness. The more we grow in Christ's life, the more we shall be saved in His life. When I was a young Christian, I often asked other Christians what they believed concerning baptism or the rapture. But after I had a certain amount of the growth in life, I stopped questioning other believers in this way. Now when I contact the saints, I do not ask them doctrinal questions. Instead, I appreciate the measure of Christ that is within them. I simply do not care about outward things. If we want to be saved from divisiveness, we need to grow. The greater our measure of Christ, the less divisive we shall be. Because we are still in the old nature with its divisive element, we dare not say that we have been fully delivered from divisiveness. We need to be watchful concerning this divisive element within us. We also need to pray that the Lord will grant us the genuine growth in life so that we may be saved from divisiveness.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

SAVED IN LIFE FROM SELF-LIKENESS

(1)

The key verse in the book of Romans is 5:10; "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life." Reconciliation to God through Christ has been accomplished already, but salvation in His life from so many negative things is still a daily matter.

The death of Christ on the cross has already dealt with all negative things. This is the reason we refer to Christ's death as the all-inclusive death. Since Christ's death has already dealt with the negative things, why do we still need to be saved in His life? We need such a salvation because we need to experience what Christ has accomplished for us. All that Christ has accomplished on the cross is an objective fact. but we need a subjective experience of this fact, an experience in life. Christ died on the cross as our substitute, but furthermore there is the need for us to be identified with Him in His death. The only way Christ's accomplishment in substitution can be applied to us in experience is by our having Christ as our life. This is the identification that brings us into the reality of the fact.

In previous messages we have covered five items from which we need to be saved in Christ's life: the law of sin, worldliness, naturalness, individualism, and divisiveness. In this message we shall cover the sixth item, which is self-likeness.

THE EXPRESSION OF THE SELF

In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus spoke about denying the self immediately after He had said to Peter, "Get behind

Me, Satan. Although Peter was speaking out of his love for the Lord, in the eyes of God Peter was Satan at that moment. According to Matthew 16, Satan is the reality of the self. Self is the incarnation of Satan. As Christ is the embodiment and expression of God, so self is the embodiment and expression of Satan.

Every human being is a self. Not only were we born with the self and in the self, but we were born a self. As long as we are natural, we express the self. Whether we love others or hate them, what we express is the expression of self. A certain person may be very good, but he may be only good in a natural way. Although this one may be full of love, his love is natural. In essence, he is no different from someone who is full of hatred. In the eyes of God, someone who is naturally loving has the same essence as one who is naturally full of hatred. Do not think that your natural love expresses Christ and only your hatred does not. As long as you are natural and in the self, what you express is the self, not Christ. The expression of Christ comes only out of the life of Christ.

When we speak of being saved in the life of Christ from self-likeness, we mean being saved from the self. Self-likeness is the expression, the appearance. of the self. The expression of your self is your self-likeness. We need to be saved in the life of Christ from such a self-expression. When Christ died on the cross, He pronounced the sentence of judgment on the self, but this judgment still needs to be executed. Christ has judged the self objectively; we need to execute this judgment subjectively in our experience.

CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE SON OF GOD

To be saved from the self is to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. This means that to be saved from the self is to be made truly a son of God. Romans 8 speaks

of children of God, sons of God, and heirs of God (vv. 16, 14, and 17). We are children in the initial stage, sons in a more advanced stage, and heirs in the stage of maturity. Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Not until we have the leading of the Spirit of God can we be considered sons of God. Until then, we are simply children, those who can cry "Abba Father" and who have the witness of the Spirit with their spirit. In order to be an heir, we must be both matured and qualified. Our concern in this message is not with the children nor the heirs, but with the sons. Romans 8:29 does not say that we shall be conformed to the image of the children of God or to the image of the heirs of God; it says that we shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

Through this process of conformation, the firstborn Son will have many brothers. As the Son of God, Christ was the unique, only begotten Son. Now through His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, Christ has become the firstborn Son, and the many sons, who are the brothers of Christ, are being conformed to His image. Romans 1:3 and 4 say, "Concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, and was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." In these verses Christ, the Son of God, is the prototype, whereas in 8:29 the many brothers are those who have been "mass-produced" from the prototype. In 1:4 the one Son is designated, but in 8:29 the many sons are conformed. The designation of the one Son is related to the prototype; the conformation of the many sons is the work of "mass production." Having gained the prototype, God is now seeking to have the "mass production" in order to produce many sons in the image of the Firstborn.

Do you look like a son of God? Although you may look like a son of God in some respects, in most respects you probably do not. How much we need to be saved from the self in order to bear the appearance of God's sons! In the church life we are in the process of becoming sons of God.

SANCTIFICATION, TRANSFORMATION, AND GLORIFICATION

We have pointed out in some of the foregoing messages

that the central concept of the book of Romans is not justification be faith, but that God is making sons out of sinners in order to form the Body to express Christ. God's goal is not justification; it is the Body. In the book of Romans there are sections on justification (3:21--5:11) sanctification (5:12--8:13), and glorification (8:14-39). There is also a section on transformation (12:1--15:13). Romans 8:30 says, "And whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." In this verse Paul does not mention redemption or reconciliation. In chapters three. four, and five he does speak of propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation. Propitiation is for redemption, redemption is for justification. and justification issues in reconciliation. The reason Paul does not mention propitiation, redemption, or reconciliation in 8:30 is that they are all included in justification. For this reason, there are not separate sections in this book for propitiation, redemption, nor reconciliation. All are covered in the section on justification. In the same principle in 8:30 Paul does not mention sanctification or transformation because both are included in glorification.

In this verse Paul says that we have been predestinated and called by God. Before the foundation of the world, God, according to His divine foresight, marked us out. He predestinated us in eternity past. Then, in time, He called us. Thus, those whom He foreknew and predestinated, He called. When God called us, He justified us. Through God's justification, our problems with Him have been solved. This does not mean, however, that justification marks the end of God's dealing with us. After justification, we still need to be sanctified, transformed, and ultimately, glorified. Hence, sanctification and transformation are for glorification. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. This proves that transformation is for glorification.

THE PROCESS OF GLORIFICATION

Many Christians hold strictly an objective concept of

glorification. According to them, one day those who have been saved and regenerated will suddenly be glorified. The glorification of the believers, they claim, will take place instantaneously at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Some portions of the Bible seem to indicate this. For example, Colossians 3:4 says that when Christ our life appears, we shall appear with Him in glory. However, 2 Corinthians 3:18 speaks of being transformed from glory to glory, that is, from one degree of glory to another. In 1 Corinthians 15:40 and 41 Paul speaks of different kinds, or degrees, of glory. In this chapter Paul also uses the example of a grain of seed that is "not quickened, except it die" (v. 36). Paul says, "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (vv. 37-38). Take a carnation seed as an example. Before it is sown into the earth, the carnation seed has no glory. But after it is sown, it begins to grow out of the earth as a tender sprout. This is the initial stage of glory. As it grows and develops further, it passes into another stage of glory. Eventually a blossom appears. This is the full glory of the carnation seed. This glory does not appear instantaneously or suddenly. On the contrary, it is a matter of gradual growth from one stage of development to another. It is the same in principle with our glorification. Although our glorification may appear to be a sudden occurrence, it is actually the consummation of a process of gradual growth and development in life.

AN ORGANIC, METABOLIC CHANGE

After we have been justified, we need to be sanctified. Sanctification is mainly related to transformation, which issues in glorification. To be sanctified is to be transformed not only in outward form, but also in inward nature. Transformation denotes an inward, organic, metabolic change.

Christ as the organic seed of divine life has been sown into us. Now this seed must develop within our being. We

were born natural and common. God's concern is not to change us from bad to good, from impatient to patient, from full of hatred to loving. God cares only to make sons out of sinners by putting His Son as the seed into us. Hallelujah, the seed of sonship has been sown into our being! Although our being is natural, this seed will produce an organic and metabolic change within it. Whatever is changed in this way becomes sanctified.

Once again we may use tea as an illustration. Suppose you have a cup of plain water, water that has the natural taste, color, appearance, and essence. The water is natural, not because it is clean or dirty, but simply because it is water. The one who wants to make tea is not satisfied with plain water; rather, he wants tea-water. In order to change natural water into tea-water, tea leaves must be put into the water. Then the essence of the tea will work within the water to "tea-ify" it. Through this process of "tea-ification" the water will eventually have the appearance and taste of tea. In fact, after the water has been permeated with the essence of tea, it will no longer be called water; it will be called tea.

We are the cup of plain, natural water. Whether we are clean or unclean, pure or impure, we are natural because we are "water." But God has put Christ, the heavenly "tea," into us, and the organic element of this "tea" is causing a metabolic change in our natural life. Day by day Christ is transforming us with His essence.

GOD WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD

God not only works on us from within, but He also "causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to the purpose." How I worship God that He is working all things together! Because of His working, eventually we all shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God. Everyone in the New Jerusalem will be in the image of the Son of God. This is God's work, not ours. In order to accomplish this, He causes all things to work together for good.

Verses 29 and 30 indicate that all the work is God's. He foreknew, He predestinated, He called, He justified, and He glorified. Notice that the verbs here are in the past tense. According to verse 30, even glorification has already been accomplished. Although we can easily believe that we have been predestinated, called, and justified, we may have difficulty believing that we have already been glorified. But in the eyes of God there is no time element. In His eyes we have been glorified already.

Whenever I am desperate about today's situation, the Lord comforts me and encourages me to rest, for He is doing all the work. In fact, in a sense, the work has already been finished. According to the book of Revelation, Satan is in the lake of fire, and the New Jerusalem has been built up. The fact that the Apostle John could see Satan in the lake of fire and the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God indicates that in the eyes of God these things have already taken place. Therefore, I have the full assurance to say that whether you are lazy or diligent in seeking the Lord, one day you will be in the image of the Son of God.

We all are being sanctified and transformed, whether or not we feel that anything is taking place within us. If you compare your condition today with the way you were several years ago, you will worship the Lord and thank Him for the sanctifying work He has done in you. Once the Lord has "tea-ified" us, we cannot be the same, even if we decide to leave the church life and go back to the world. You may return to the world, but you will not be able to eradicate the work of sanctification and transformation the Lord has done within you. By contacting Christ and the church something happens within us organically. Day by day the Lord is sanctifying and transforming us.

THE INTERCEDING SPIRIT

Although no one likes to suffer, the more we suffer, the more we are sanctified. As I remember the saints in the presence of the Lord and pray for them, I often pray that they will have peace and joy. Not knowing how to pray for

the saints, I sometimes groan before the Lord, acknowledging that He alone knows their real need. As 8:26 says, "The Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness; for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." In our groaning the interceding Spirit prays for the saints to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

THE GOAL OF GLORIFICATION

Sometimes we may not be happy with the way the Lord deals with us. For example, a brother may not be content with the wife he has; he may think that another brother has a much better wife than he. But we all have the husband or wife who is best for us. Whatever the Father gives us is the best. He knows what we need. Those who suffer are truly under His blessing. Every wife, every husband, and every environment is the best. Everything that happens to us is God's best for us. You should praise the Lord not only when you have an excellent job but also when you are unemployed. There may be times when unemployment is better for you than a good job. The Lord is never mistaken in the way He deals with us. He knows what He is doing.

Praise the Lord that He is now sanctifying and transforming us in order to glorify us! Through the work of transformation, He is conforming us to the image of His Son. Do not separate sanctification, transformation, and conformation; all three are interrelated and are for the goal of glorification. Today we are in the process of glorification. One day, when this process has been completed, we shall all be in glory.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

SAVED IN LIFE FROM SELF-LIKENESS

(2)

Romans 1:4 says that Jesus Christ "was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." Christ's divinity and glory as the Son of God were concealed in His flesh. No one had vision that could penetrate through His flesh to see that He was the glorious Son of God. But after He had passed through the process of death and resurrection, He was designated the Son of God, that is, He was marked out and manifested to be the Son of God.

DESIGNATED ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

This designation was according to the Spirit of holiness. The Spirit of holiness here is in contrast to the flesh in verse 3, which speaks of Christ as the seed of David according to the flesh. As the flesh in verse 3 refers to the human essence of Christ, so the Spirit in this verse does not refer to the Person of the Holy Spirit of God, but to the divine essence of Christ, which is "the fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9). This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself (John 4:24), is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy. Therefore, in the flesh Christ was designated or marked out through resurrection according to this holy and divine essence.

Through His resurrection, Christ became the firstborn Son of God, full of the essence of God's holiness, not only in His spirit, but also in His body. Before His death and resurrection the holiness of God was in Christ's spirit, but

this holy essence had not been manifested in His flesh. In other words, it had not permeated His flesh. It was through death and resurrection that God's holy essence saturated the physical body of the Lord Jesus.

ALL THINGS WORKING TO TRANSFORM US METABOLICALLY

Romans 8:29 says, "Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brothers." The fact that verse 29 begins with the word "because" indicates that it is a continuation of verse 28, which says that God causes all things to work together for good. As we shall see, God causes all things to work together for our designation as sons of God.

We have seen that Christ was designated the Son of God according to the divine essence of holiness through the process of death and resurrection. As saved ones, we have the Son of God in our spirit. At the very moment we were saved, He was sown into us. Once again, the Son of God is concealed in humanity, this time in our human life, in our humanity, in our flesh. There is no doubt that the Son of God as the divine essence of holiness is within every believer. But this holy essence is concealed and confined within our natural man. For this reason, God causes all things to work together for good on our behalf. In this way we are processed, that is, we are transformed metabolically. Our wife or husband, our children, and our environment are all the best for this processing. The Lord Jesus was processed through death and resurrection, and now we are being processed through the working together of all things.

All things are working together to transform us metabolically. Christ as the organic seed, the organic essence, in our spirit must permeate and saturate our whole being. Eventually our humanity will be saturated with this divine essence. This saturation is sanctification and also a type of designation. An organic element is

working within us to transform us by permeating and saturating us with the divine essence of holiness, which is actually the Son of God Himself.

ORGANIC TRANSFORMATION

This is not a mere outward change. The concept of outward change is ethical and religious. The divine concept is not to correct us outwardly; it is to transform us inwardly and organically with Christ Himself as the holy essence. This process of spiritual metabolism involves permeation and saturation. Whether we realize it or not, a metabolic process is taking place within our being. For example. after we eat a meal, our stomach begins to work on the food organically to digest it so that it can then be assimilated. This takes place whether we sense it or not and whether we agree with it or not. In the same principle, we are all undergoing the process of God's sanctification, whether we are conscious of it or not. The longer we stay in the church life and the more we stand one with the church, the more we are sanctified. Eventually, through this sanctifying process, we shall all be in the New Jerusalem.

There is no need to pray desperately that the Lord will transform you. Such a desperate prayer may help your spiritual digestion, but it does not actually affect the process of saturation. Simply stay in the church life, and eventually you will be transformed into precious stone.

CONFORMATION FOR GLORIFICATION

To be saved from our self-likeness, from the expression of the self, we need conformation for glorification. To see this matter clearly we need to join 1:4 with 8:29. As we pointed out in the foregoing message, in 1:4 we have the formation of the prototype, but in 8:29, the work of "mass production." In 1:4 we have the designation of the Son of God individually, whereas in 8:29 we have the saturation sanctification, designation, and conformation of the many sons collectively. The principle in each case is the same.

Concerning the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of holiness was within Him before His death and resurrection. This Spirit of holiness is the divine essence of holiness. Through the process of death and resurrection, this holy essence saturated and permeated the Lord's humanity, including His flesh. As believers in the Lord Jesus, we also have the divine essence of holiness, which is the Spirit of holiness, the very Christ, in our spirit. Because this holy essence is still concealed within our humanity, we need to pass through a process under God's sovereign arrangement that will enable this essence to saturate our entire being. For the completion of this process, we need many things to work together for our good. In the church life we are helping to process one another. You all are part of the process to me, and I am part of the process to you. In order to be processed, we need one another. Apart from the Lord's mercy and grace, it would be difficult for us to bear one another. Praise the Lord that together we are processing one another in order to be designated sons of God!

When I met a certain brother many years ago, he was quite kind and loving in a natural way. Some years later, I noticed that a real change had taken place within him. Today, after many years of being processed, this brother is not only a kind man, but a permeated and saturated man. Such a change has taken place in this brother through his being processed in the church life.

None of us can stay in the church life and remain the same, for in the church we are undergoing the process of sanctification, transformation, and designation. We are being transformed and conformed to the image of the Son of God, not according to teachings, regulations, or forms, but according to the Spirit of holiness. This divine essence, which is the very Son of God Himself, is working within us organically to transform us by permeating and saturating our whole being.

BRINGING MANY SONS INTO GLORY

Hebrews 2:10 says that God is bringing many sons into

glory. This verse indicates that we are on our way to be glorified, for right now the Father is leading us into glory. Verse 11 shows the way the Father is bringing the many sons into glory: "For both He Who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers." He who sanctifies is Christ as the firstborn Son of God, and those who are being sanctified are the believers in Christ as the many sons of God. To say that He and we are all of one refers to the Father as the source. Both the firstborn Son and the many sons of God are born of the same Father in resurrection (Acts 13:33; 1 Pet. 1:3). Therefore, the firstborn Son and the many sons have one source, one life, one nature, and one essence. Because both He, the firstborn Son, and we, the many sons, are the same in the divine life and nature, He is not ashamed to call us brothers. Thus, verse 12, speaking of Christ, says, "I will declare Your name to My brothers. "

The Sanctifier is the One who is bringing the many sons into glory. He is leading us into glory by sanctifying us. Christ does not sanctify us by adjusting us outwardly nor by making us conform to certain external regulations. On the contrary, he is sanctifying us by being the holy essence within us. Christ today is the Spirit of holiness, the very divine essence of holiness working organically within our being. He sanctifies us by saturating us with this holy essence. This involves a process of spiritual metabolism. Through sanctifying us in this way, He is bringing us, the many sons, into glory.

The Sanctifier Himself is the sanctifying element that is working within us. Although we may not be conscious of Christ's working within us, He is nonetheless working to saturate our being with the sanctifying essence. Layer by layer and part by part, He is permeating us with Himself.

GOD'S HOLY ESSENCE IMPOSSIBLE TO ERADICATE

The longer we stay in the church life, the more permeation and saturation we receive. Once this holy

essence has saturated you, it is impossible to eradicate it, for it has permeated your being organically and metabolically. Not even your backsliding can eradicate the holy essence that has permeated you; it is indelible. If you become a backslider after having been saturated with the essence of holiness in the church life, then you will be a backslider who has been somewhat saturated with the holy element of God. You simply cannot undo what God has done within you. By being in the church life for a period of time, you have been in a "clinic" where you have received an "injection." After receiving the "injection," you may regret that the element of holiness has been injected into you. But it is too late for regrets. No matter what you do, the element of God's holy essence that has been injected into you will stay with you. No matter where you may go, this essence, this sanctifying element, will remain in you. Praise the Lord for working within us in such an organic way! Praise Him for the process of sanctification which conforms us for glorification!

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-SIX

REIGNING IN LIFE BY GRACE

In the foregoing messages we have covered a number of negative things from which we need to be saved in the life of Christ: the law of sin, worldliness, naturalness, individualism, divisiveness, and self-likeness. Now we proceed to the matter of reigning in life.

GRACE REIGNING UNTO ETERNAL LIFE

Romans 5:17 says, "For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." This is the only verse in the Bible that speaks of reigning in life. Going along with verse 17, verse 21 says, "That as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Perhaps you have heard that grace abounds, but probably you have not had the concept of grace reigning. But grace is a king reigning over all things. Although in the text verse 21 comes after verse 17, in experience it comes before verse 17. According to verse 21, grace reigns unto eternal life, which means that the reign of grace results in eternal life. It is in this eternal life that we shall reign.

Although there are many Christian books on victory and overcoming, I do not know of any books on reigning in life. A number of books have been written about reigning with Christ in the millennial kingdom. However, reigning in life should not be a matter only for the future. This should be our experience today. I am not content with promises about being a king in the future; I desire to reign in life as a king today. In 5:17 Paul does not refer to the

millennial kingdom. If you consider this verse in its context, you will realize that Paul is speaking about our present daily life. Praise the Lord that even today we can he kings in life!

A CONTINUATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Before we explore further the matter of reigning in life, we need to consider the relationship between the Gospel of John and the book of Romans. Romans is a continuation of John. John 1:4 says, "In Him was life," and verse 14 of the same chapter says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us... full of grace and reality." Verse 16 continues, "For of His fullness we all received, and grace upon grace." Hence, in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we have life and grace. In John 10:10 the Lord Jesus says, "I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly." John 8 speaks of certain negative things, such as sin and death. Verse 24 says, "Unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins." This means that those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus will remain in death. Furthermore, in verse 34 the Lord has a word about being slaves of sin: "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin." In verse 36 the Lord speaks about being set free: "If then the Son shall set you free, you shall be really free." Those under the bondage of sin and in death can be set free by the living Son of God, the One who is the living reality. Therefore, in the Gospel of John we have life, grace, abundance of life, sin, death, slavery, and being set free from sin and death.

All these matters are also found in Romans, where the truth concerning them is developed further. Although both John and Romans cover many of the same subjects and even use a number of the same terms, the Gospel of John does not speak of grace reigning, nor of reigning in life. The use of the word "reign" in Romans with respect to grace and life shows a significant development over what is covered in the Gospel of John. Although the Gospel of John is rich and deep and although it speaks of the abundance of life, it says nothing about the reign of grace

nor about the reign of life. Because Paul was one reigning in grace and in life, he could speak of such things in Romans. In contrast to many Christians today. Paul was not waiting for the millennium in order to reign with Christ.

In Romans 5 we are told that grace reigns and that those who receive abundance of grace can reign in life. Because grace reigns unto life eternal, we also can reign in life.

To reign is to be a king; it is to subdue something and rule over it. To reign also means to have a dominion or a kingdom. Our Christian life today should be not only a victorious and overcoming life; it should also be a kingly life, a reigning life. Day by day we can be kings.

RULING OVER THE THREE MAJOR ENEMIES

As kings reigning in life, we must subdue the enemies and rule over them. Do not regard your wife or husband as an enemy over whom you must rule. According to both the Gospel of John and the book of Romans, our major enemies are sin. death, and Satan. Not even your temper is one of the primary enemies. If sin, death, and Satan are defeated. your temper will also be defeated and even become something of comeliness. Sin is what makes your temper so distasteful. In the same principle, the reason the self is so ugly is that sin, death, and Satan make their abode within us. If these things were subdued, even our self would be beautiful. Therefore, we have just three major enemies--sin, death, and Satan.

Paul deals with these enemies in the book of Romans. In 8:2, which speaks of the law of sin and death, we see two of the enemies, sin and death. Then in 16:20 Paul refers to Satan: "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." Do not expect to be a king over your wife or husband. Husbands, the Lord has appointed you to be the head with respect to your wife, but not to be a king ruling over her. Parents should not be kings over their children. But we are to reign as kings over sin, death, and Satan. With respect to the members of our family and

to the brothers and sisters in the church, we are servants. But with respect to sin, death, and Satan, we are kings.

GOD DISPENSED INTO US TO BE OUR PORTION

If we would know what it means for grace to reign unto eternal life, we must have a proper understanding of grace. Grace is God Himself given to us in Christ and dispensed into our spirit to be our portion. If we have a thorough understanding of the Bible, we shall realize that God has no intention to give us anything other than Himself. All things other than God are vanity. Solomon, the wise king, said, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). In the words of the Apostle Paul, all things apart from Christ are dung (Phil. 3:8). Our unique portion is God Himself, and grace is God as our portion for our participation, experience, and enjoyment.

If we consider John 1:1 and 1:14 in context, we shall see that grace is God coming to us to be dispensed into us for our enjoyment. John 1:16 says, "For of His fullness we all received, and grace upon grace." In Romans 5:17 Paul speaks of receiving not only grace, but the abundance of grace. Because grace is living and growing, it abounds. This abounding grace also reigns. Grace is not a lifeless element; it is a living Person, even God Himself.

TWO KINGS

In Romans 5 both sin and grace are personified. As verse 21 indicates, either sin or grace may reign, grace positively or sin negatively. Sin is the embodiment of the evil nature of Satan in our flesh, and grace is God in Christ embodied in our spirit. Therefore, we have two kings--sin and grace--within us. In our flesh we have the king of sin, and in our spirit we have the king of grace. Within us a warfare is raging between these two kings.

RECEIVING ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

You may be eager to know how you can have the abundance of grace. The only way to have it is to receive it. In receiving we neither labor nor pay a price. We simply

receive. Both John and Romans speak of receiving grace. We have seen that John 1:16 says that of His fullness we have received grace upon grace. In Romans 5:17 Paul speaks of our receiving the abundance of grace. We need to come to the very God who is grace and receive grace again and again until we are filled with grace. Only when we are filled with grace can we experience the reigning of grace. When grace is allowed to fill us, it abounds in us and then reigns in us. The reigning grace always follows the abounding grace.

If we are short of grace, grace cannot reign within us. Only when grace fills us up to the brim and then overflows from us can we experience the reigning of grace. When grace reigns, sin, death, and Satan are subdued and are under our feet, and we become kings in grace. As grace reigns in us, we reign in life.

Do not consider that the experience of reigning in life by grace is an impossibility. I can testify that it is surely possible for us to reign in life. Whenever we are filled with grace, grace overflows and reigns. Then by grace we reign in life over sin, death, and Satan. We are not only set free from the three major enemies, but we reign over them. The principle of reigning in life is revealed in chapter five, but the experience of reigning in life is in chapter eight. Reigning in life is greater and higher than being saved in the life of Christ.

OPENING TO BE FILLED

In this matter doctrine, teaching, and exhortation are of no avail. In a sense, not even our prayer is effectual in enabling us to reign in life by grace. The only thing that works is to come to the divine source and open ourselves from the depths of our being to be filled with God as grace.

In order to be filled, we must ask the Lord to remove all insulation and frustration. We need to pray, "Lord, I am willing for every hindrance to be removed. I want to keep myself directly open to You. Lord, fill me completely with Yourself as grace." Wherever you are, at work, at school, or in your car, stay open to the Lord to be filled with Him as grace. This is what it means to receive the abundance of grace. As you receive grace in this way, you will be filled with grace and eventually grace will overflow from within you. Then you will reign in life by grace over sin, death, and Satan. In your experience these three enemies will be utterly subdued.

Sin, death, and Satan are still working within us. But if we come to the heavenly source and open ourselves thoroughly to be filled with grace, we shall reign over them in life. This is our need today in the church life. Although I appreciate very much all that is in the Gospel of John, we must go on from John to Romans 5:17 and 21 to receive abundance of grace so that grace may reign within us and we may reign in life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-SEVEN

THE MEANING OF REIGNING IN LIFE

God's intention in His creation of man was that man would express Him in His image and represent Him with His dominion or authority. This means that God intends that man enjoy Him as life and reign in this life. According to Genesis 1, man is to reign over the earth and especially over the creeping things, over the serpent in particular. Genesis 1:28 says that God commissioned man to subdue the earth, to conquer it. To conquer something involves defeating an enemy and seizing his possessions. By defeating the enemy and taking his possessions, we reign over him. Therefore, in the beginning, God intended man to be a king in His life over Satan, the creeping one.

GRACE AND SIN

Satan once was God's unique enemy. At a certain point, this enemy injected himself as sin into man in an illegal and evil way. When Satan injected his evil nature into man, Satan became sin. Sin is something originated by Satan. It is actually Satan himself injected into man and incarnated in man.

It is helpful to see the difference between sin and evil, both of which are mentioned in Romans 7. In 7:20 Paul says, "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells in me." In our flesh something called sin is dwelling. In verse 21 Paul says, "I find then the law that, at my willing to do the good, the evil is present with me." In verse 20 Paul speaks of sin, but in verse 21, of evil.

To understand the difference between sin and evil, we need to see that before the creation of man God had a

unique enemy, Satan, the Devil. Then God created man. At the time of creation, man was pure, clean, and innocent. Then Satan injected himself into man and became sin in man. As we have pointed out, sin is Satan incarnated in man.

Romans 5:21 speaks of sin, grace, death, and life: "That as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." According to this verse, sin reigns in death and grace reigns unto eternal life. Here we see a vivid contrast between the reigning of sin and the reigning of grace. There is also a contrast here between death and life. Just as sin is Satan incarnated, so grace is God incarnated. This is proved by John 1:14, which says that the Word, which is God, became flesh, full of grace and reality. Hence, grace is God incarnated in us. Grace is God coming into man. If God remains outside of man, there is no grace. Although other divine attributes exist apart from God's coming into man, there is no grace apart from God's being incarnated in man. When God and man come together in the way of mingling, there is grace. Although it is difficult to find a verse in the Bible which speaks of grace apart from the relationship between God and man, there are many verses in the Bible that show that grace is a matter of God's relationship with man.

In the same principle, when Satan is separate from man, there is no sin. But once Satan comes into us, there is sin in us. Therefore, sin is Satan related to man subjectively. How precious is this understanding of grace and sin!

SIN AND EVIL

If we have this understanding, we shall be able to see the difference between sin and evil. When sin lies dormant within us, it is merely sin. But whenever we make up our mind to do good by keeping the law in order to please God, sin is aroused and becomes evil. Evil is sin acting within us. Whenever the indwelling sin becomes active, sin becomes the evil that is present with us. Sin is the

indwelling one, but evil is the present, active one. Sin is Satan dwelling in us, but evil is Satan acting in us. Therefore, both sin and evil are Satan himself. Dwelling in us, Satan is sin, and acting in us, Satan is evil. Satan, sin, and evil denote one thing in three stages.

GOD'S THREE ENEMIES

Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men because all have sinned." This verse reveals that sin has brought in death. According to Hebrews 2:14, the one who has the power of death is the Devil. These two verses indicate that sin and death are related to Satan. Satan, sin, and death are God's three enemies. First Corinthians 15:26 speaks of death being the last enemy. In Genesis 1 God had a unique enemy, Satan. But after man's fall, sin and death became His enemies also.

When I was a young Christian, I considered death something in the future; I did not regard it as something present today. But as 1 John 3:14 makes clear, we can be in death today: "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." This verse does not say that he who does not love his brother *will* die; it says that he who does not love his brother abides in death even now. If we are not in life, then we are surely in death. Romans 8:6 also proves that we can be in death today: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace."

THE SPIRIT--GOD LIVING IN US

Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." In this verse we have law, sin, and death in contrast to law, Spirit, and life. Life is opposed to death, and the Spirit is opposed to sin. Sin is Satan embodied in us, and the Spirit is God living in us. God embodied in us is grace, but God living in us is the Spirit. Thus, the grace in Romans 5 is the very Spirit in Romans 8. In chapter

five it is a matter of grace versus sin, but in chapter eight, of the Spirit versus sin. Romans 8:2 does not speak of the law of the grace of life, but of the law of the Spirit of life. When God is embodied in us, He is our grace. When He lives in us, He is the Spirit. In Hebrews 10:29 the Spirit is called the Spirit of grace. The Spirit is the very God embodied in us as grace living and acting in us.

THE WORK OF GOD'S ENEMY

In the book of Romans we cannot find that God has any other enemies in addition to Satan, sin, and death. Romans 16:20 says, "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." After speaking of Satan being crushed under our feet by the God of peace, Paul immediately says, in the very same verse, "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." When Satan is crushed, grace is with us.

In a sense, God's enemy, Satan, is prevailing today as sin and as evil to bring people into death and to keep them there. This is the evil work of God's enemy. Satan is not content merely to provoke us in such matters as losing our temper. His intention is to bring us into death. But God is working as life to defeat sin, death, and Satan. The result of God's defeating these three enemies is that we reign in life.

VICTORY AND REIGNING

In chapter five of Romans we have an introduction to the matter of reigning in life. As verse 17 points out, we who receive an abundance of grace shall reign in life. Chapters six through sixteen define for us the meaning of reigning in life. To reign in life is to walk in newness of life (6:4). In chapter seven we see a picture of one troubled by sin and evil and a captive in death. This one cries in desperation, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). But in chapter eight this one is set free from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of life. In chapter seven there is

warfare, but in chapter eight there is both victory and reigning. Even in 6:14 we are told that sin should not lord it over us, for we are not under law but under grace. Because we are under grace, sin should no longer reign as a king over us. Sin should not lord it over us now that God has come into us as grace.

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING KINGS

Today we are in the process of becoming kings. Sanctification is part of this process. This process also includes transformation, conformation, and glorification. Today we are on our way toward kingship. Eventually, the kingship will saturate our entire being and be manifested. At that time, we shall reign in life in a full way.

To reign in life does not mean to exercise control over your wife or children. You may rule over your children, yet you may not be a king. Ruling over others is a human concept of kingship. The proper understanding of reigning in life is that we reign in the divine life over sin, death, and Satan, who eventually will be crushed under our feet. In order to reign in life in this way, we need to be sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified. We have the reigning life within us, but this life has not yet been released in us. Rather, it has been confined in our spirit. Our outer man has not yet been sanctified. In order to be sanctified, we need to be saturated with the reigning life that is now in our spirit. The only way for our soul and our body to be sanctified is for us to be fully saturated with this inner, reigning life. This reigning life not only sanctifies us, but also conforms us to the very image of the firstborn Son of God. This is conformation. Furthermore, as we are being saturated with the reigning life, we are also being transformed. Transformation is another way of speaking about sanctification. Eventually, our vile body will be transfigured, that is, it will be fully saturated and permeated with the glory of God's reigning life. Then our whole being will be saturated and permeated with the reigning life. This reigning life will be fully expressed

when we are manifested as the sons of God. At that time, we shall reign not only by the inward life, but also by the outward glory.

REIGNING IN LIFE RELATED TO ONENESS

Reigning in life is also related to our oneness with the saints. Oneness is not merely a matter of coming together a few times a week and declaring that we are one. The tabernacle in the Old Testament is a picture of the genuine oneness for which the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17. The tabernacle was built with forty-eight boards that were overlaid with gold. These boards were held together by golden bars that ran through golden rings attached to the boards. In this way the forty-eight boards became one. This is the building, the building of humanity in divinity. The wooden boards signify humanity, and the gold overlaying the boards signifies divinity. All the boards were overlaid with gold and connected by gold. This is genuine oneness.

If Christians are to be truly one, they should not only come together, but also be built up together in the divine life. Real oneness is the building. It is something far more than simply loving one another. To be one, we need not only to love one another, but also to be overlaid with gold and held together by golden bars. We all need to be built together in the gold, in the nature of God. This is the oneness for which the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17.

It is also the oneness in Romans 12 through 16. In 12:5 Paul says, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another." The boards in the tabernacle also illustrate how we are members one of another. The width of each board was one and a half cubits. In the Bible three is a basic number in God's building. For example, in the dimensions of the ark built by Noah, the number three is found. The ark had three stories, and it was three hundred cubits long. Since three is a basic unit in God's building, one and a half cubits denotes half a unit. This means that in God's building we are not complete units by ourselves. Each of us is just a

half. This means that you need someone else and that someone else needs you. If we are truly members of one another, then we shall be like the boards joined together. No matter how we may feel at times about a "board" with which we are connected, we should not separate ourselves from him. If we separate ourselves, it indicates that we have never truly been built into the church. If we have been built in, it will not be possible to take ourselves out.

To be one with the saints in the building is an aspect of reigning in life. It is difficult to overcome our temper, but it is much more difficult to overcome our divisive nature. Many years ago I realized that as a man I have to be a Christian and as a Christian I need to be in the church. This is simply the best way for me to go on in the Lord. Therefore, I have made a strong decision that, although I am not always happy with the way things are in the church life, I shall stay in the church life and be one with the saints. To keep the oneness is to reign in life. Only in the divine life, not in our human nature, can we keep the genuine oneness. In the divine life we have grace, God embodied in us, and also the living Spirit. In this Spirit we live and reign in life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-EIGHT

REIGNING IN LIFE OVER DEATH

In the two foregoing messages we have seen that by grace we can reign in life over sin, death, and Satan. In this message we shall consider the matter of reigning in life over death.

Before we do this, however, let us review the difference between sin and evil and that between grace and the Spirit. Sin is the nature of Satan injected into man, and evil is sin in action. When Satan injects himself into man, that is sin. But when sin is present and active in us, that is evil. In the same principle, grace is God coming into man and being embodied in man. But when grace is present and active, it becomes the Spirit.

THE PRESENT WORKING OF DEATH

The Bible reveals that death comes from sin. As 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." This means that death is the result of sin. It is possible that our understanding of death may merely be doctrinal. When I was young, I was taught that there were two deaths: man's physical death and the lake of fire, which is the second death. I did not regard death as something in which I was subjectively involved daily. Gradually, however, I discovered that in the Bible a number of verses indicate that death is presently working in us. Death is like a worm that is constantly eating us. Sin ruins us, but it does not eat us. Death is the "worm" that is devouring us day by day.

Death has a number of aspects, the present aspect and the future aspect, the subjective aspect and the objective aspect. After the millennium, all the unbelieving dead will be raised and will stand before the white throne to be

judged (Rev. 20:12). Those whose names are not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:15). Our burden in this message is not with this future, objective aspect of death; it is with the present, subjective aspect. At this very moment, the element of death is within our being, endeavoring to kill us.

In chapters five through eight of Romans the subject of death is covered in a full way. In Romans 5 we see that death entered the world through sin and then passed to all men. Furthermore, as verse 14 makes clear, death also reigns. In 6:21 and 23 Paul says that the end of the things of which we now are ashamed is death and that death is the wages of sin. Romans 7 is a chapter not only on law, but also on death. In verses 10 and 11 Paul declares, "And the commandment which was unto life, this was found to me to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me." Furthermore, in verse 13 Paul says that sin works "death to me through that which is good." Therefore, in verse 24 he cried out. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" The death that Paul is speaking about in chapter seven is not the death coming in the future; it is the death working within us right now.

Paul's situation in Romans 7 was very different from David's in Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is a psalm of repentance that followed a particular act of sinning. In Romans 7, however, Paul was not repenting because he had sinned. Romans 7 is concerned not with repentance, but with death, with the continual working of death within him. Repentance was of great help to David in Psalm 51, but it would have been no help to Paul in Romans 7. It could not have delivered him from the death in his mortal body.

THE STING OF DEATH

In 1 Corinthians 15:55 and 56 Paul says, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." Death is likened to a scorpion, and sin is likened to the

scorpion's sting. According to Hebrews 2:14, the one who has the power of death is the Devil. Once we are stung by the "scorpion" of death, the Devil exercises his power to kill us. Thus, Satan has the power of death, and sin is the sting of death. Whenever we are stung by sin, the poison of death gets into us. The result is spiritual killing, spiritual death.

A CONTRAST

At this point it may be helpful to see a sharp contrast between the negative side and the positive side. Satan is opposed to God. When Satan injects himself into man, the nature of Satan in man becomes sin. On the contrary, God wrought into man becomes grace. Hence, sin is opposed to grace. When sin is present and active within us, it becomes evil. But when grace is present and active, it becomes the Spirit. The result of the activity of evil is death, whereas the result of the activity of the Spirit is life. Therefore, Satan, sin, evil, and death are opposed to God, grace, Spirit, and life.

THE SPIRIT AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

Romans 8:2, putting the Spirit and life together, speaks of the Spirit of life. In the same principle, we may speak of "the evil of death." Life is God living in us. The very God who lives in us is the Spirit. When God is far from us as the source, He is the Father. But when this very God comes to live in us in a practical way, He is the Spirit. However, if the Spirit is merely in us but does not work within us, we shall not experience life. As believers, we all know that the Spirit is within us. However, not many of us have a rich experience of the divine life. Hence, although we have the Spirit, we still may be short of life. The reason for this is that the Spirit who dwells in us does not have much opportunity to live in us. We have the Spirit within us, but we may not care for Him adequately. Sometimes we are so fully occupied with our jobs that we have no time for anything else. In like manner, we may be so occupied in our being that we have no time nor heart for the Spirit.

It seems that we have hardly any capacity to give ground to the indwelling Spirit. It seems that we say to the Spirit, "I realize that You are very dear to me, but I simply don't have the heart for You."

Many Christians hold the mistaken concept that if they neglect the Spirit, the Spirit will depart from them. According to the Bible, however, the Spirit will never leave us once He has come into us. The Spirit does not regard Himself as a guest within us, but as the Dweller, as the Owner of the dwelling.

Many years ago I read a book in which pictures were used to signify the work of the Spirit. A dove, representing the Spirit, was pictured as coming into people when they believed in the Lord and flying away when they sinned. Because many seeking Chinese Christians received something from this book, we spent a great deal of time to refute the incorrect teaching that the Spirit will leave a believer if he sins. Ephesians 4:30 says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in Whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption." The Spirit may be grieved within us, but He will never leave us. The Spirit remains in us, but He may not be given the opportunity to live in us as He desires. Hence, we have the Spirit, but we may not have life in our experience.

When some hear that we can have the Spirit without experiencing life, they may argue that it is impossible to have the Spirit without life. However, it is a fact that when we do not allow the Spirit to live in us, we do not have the divine life in an actual and practical way, although we may have life in position or in name. For example, do you express the divine life when you lose your temper? At such a time you are in death, not life. Doctrinally speaking, every believer has life. But in reality life is the living Spirit. Thus, only when the Spirit lives in us as well as dwells in us do we have life experientially. Firstly God is grace to us, and then grace is active as the Spirit in us. The result is that we experience life. The principle is the same with Satan, sin, evil, and death. Firstly Satan is sin in us, and then sin is active as evil.

The result is death. This understanding of life and death is based on our experience.

THE SENSE OF DEATH

Satan, the one who holds the power of death, has injected his evil nature into us as sin. Thus, even an infant, who seems to be so innocent and lovely, has the nature of sin. Because a child is born in sin, sin is in his very nature. However, it takes time for sin to come forth in acts. As the years go by and the child grows up, this sinful nature becomes manifest. When sin becomes active in his being, it becomes evil, and the result of evil is death.

As believers in Christ, even we ourselves may be under the killing of death daily. In our experience, sin becomes evil, and evil becomes death. For example, we may easily be killed as a result of gossiping. We can recognize the symptoms of death and know when death is working in us. Some of the symptoms of death are darkness, emptiness, restlessness, and dryness. We who minister the Word know that any deadness within us can hinder us in speaking. If I lose my temper a short while before I am to speak, I may find it very difficult to speak in the meeting. The blood washes and cleanses me, but it takes time for the deadness to be swallowed up. Whenever we sense death within us, we must go to the Lord, deal thoroughly with Him about it, and experience not only the cleansing of the blood but also the anointing, which is the living of the Spirit within us. The result of the anointing is life. Then if we speak according to the living Spirit, our speaking will be full of life.

Many of the sisters are deadened not only by gossiping, but also by shopping. The sisters who overcome in the matter of shopping are truly reigning in life by grace. Shopping is a great test to the sisters. For this reason, it would be very difficult for a sister to stay away from the department stores for three months. But if the sisters do no unnecessary shopping, they will see what a great difference it makes in their experience of life. If the sisters

can overcome the matters of gossiping and shopping, they will be overflowing with life in the church meetings.

objective in giving these examples is not to deal with shopping or gossiping; it is to deal with death. Moses gave the children of Israel many regulations. In contrast, Christ does not give us regulations; He imparts life into us.

COOPERATING WITH THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." In our experience, we may find that the law of the Spirit of life does not always work as effectively as Paul indicates in this verse. The reason for this is that we want the law of life to overcome certain things such as our temper, but we may not give the law of life opportunity to do whatever it chooses in us. Because we hate our temper, we want the law of life to overcome it. Therefore, we assign the law of life to do this task. But we should not assign the law of life to do specific things and then prevent this law from doing other things. On the contrary, we must give this law the opportunity to work in any way it desires. Although the law of the Spirit of life is one, it governs thousands of items. For example, it will govern the way we cut our hair and the way we live at home.

If we do not cooperate with the law of the Spirit of life within us, we shall immediately be deadened. Death is more ugly in the eyes of God than sin is. Death is abominable to God; He hates it. Gossiping may not be sinful, but because it is a matter that brings in death, it is abominable in the eyes of God. It is an insult to the living God. Day after day, we insult the living God who indwells us. Because so many Christians are deadened within, it is impossible for them to have continual experiences of life.

CONTACTING THE THRONE OF GRACE

In order to experience life as the Spirit living in us, we need to come to the source of life, God, the Lord, under the cleansing of the redeeming blood of Christ with an open heart and spirit. If we remain open to Him all the time and

are willing for all the insulation to be removed, the current of the divine electricity will flow within us. In this way we shall receive grace. As Hebrews 4:16 says, we should "come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help." Grace comes from the throne of grace. Therefore, in order to have grace, we must contact the throne of grace. If we do this, grace will flow within us, and we shall be filled with grace. Eventually, grace will be active as the Spirit, and the Spirit will live in us as life. Then we shall reign in life over death.

DEATH SUBDUED AND SWALLOWED UP BY THE UNCREATED LIFE

The only thing that can subdue death is the uncreated life of God. Our life, the created life, cannot withstand death. However, death cannot hold the divine life signified by the Lord's bones, which were not broken when He was on the cross. The fact that the soldiers did not break the Lord's legs indicates that His uncreated life cannot be broken. Any form of created life, vegetable, animal. or human, can be damaged by death. But the unique uncreated life cannot be damaged by it.

Just as light swallows darkness, so the uncreated life swallows death. Darkness can only be overcome by light. We should not try to cast out darkness, but we should simply turn on the light. As soon as the light comes on, darkness vanishes. In the same principle, whenever the uncreated life comes in, death disappears. Death is afraid of the uncreated life. In order to reign in life, we need the abundance of grace and the living Spirit. As long as we have the divine life, every trace of death will vanish.

We should not try to overcome our temper, our shopping, nor our gossiping. Rather, we should simply open our being to God and allow His grace to flow through us and to fill us. This flowing grace will be active as the

Spirit who will be life in us. This life will then subdue death and swallow it up. This is what it means to reign in life over death.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FORTY-NINE

REIGNING IN LIFE OVER SATAN

To reign in life is to subdue three main enemies: Satan, sin, and death. In this message we shall consider the matter of reigning in life over Satan.

SATAN, SIN, AND THE FLESH

Satan is the source of sin. As we have pointed out a number of times, sin is the nature of Satan injected into man. According to the revelation of the Bible, Satan as sin is in our flesh, in our fallen, contaminated body. Romans 7:18 says, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells." When God created man, He created him with a body that was pure. But when Satan injected himself as sin into man's body, the body became corrupted. Hence, in the Bible man's body is called the flesh.

In our flesh we are one with Satan, for the flesh is Satan's dwelling place in man. In the same principle, our spirit is the Lord's dwelling place in us. A saved person is rather complicated because Satan as sin is in his flesh and the Lord as the life-giving Spirit is in his spirit.

Satan, sin, and the flesh go together. When Satan injected his evil nature into man, Satan became sin in man. When the nature of sin was injected into man's body, the body was transmuted into flesh. Hence, Satan, sin, and the flesh are mutually related within man. If we would overcome Satan and reign in life over him, we need to recognize that Satan as sin dwells in our flesh.

Because Satan is the source of both sin and death, he is the greatest enemy of all. It is not sufficient to reign over sin and death without subduing Satan. We must also

defeat the source of sin and death. Then we shall truly be able to reign in life

THE WAY TO OVERCOME SATAN

Now we must consider the way to overcome Satan. In her writings, Mrs. Jesse Penn-Lewis had a great deal to say about overcoming Satan. However, although I put her suggestions into practice, what she suggested did not work for me. What Mrs. Penn-Lewis wrote regarding this matter was correct, but I had no way to apply it. Since the time Mrs. Penn-Lewis wrote her best books, more than fifty years have gone by. By the Lord's mercy and grace, the saints have gone on during these years to see two important matters related to spiritual warfare: the Body and life.

A MATTER OF LIFE AND THE BODY

In the early 1940s Brother Nee gave a number of messages in Shanghai on the subject of the Body. He told us that spiritual warfare is not an individual matter, but a Body matter. Satan is the enemy of the Body. Hence, in order to overcome him, we must stand with the Body. The Spiritual Man, completed in 1928, presented spiritual warfare as an individual matter, not as a Body matter. For this reason, after he had come to see the Body, Brother Nee told some of us that he did not want to have it reprinted.

We have not only seen the Body, but we have also seen the place of the divine life in dealing with God's enemy. Life is nothing less than the Triune God dispensed into us to be our content. According to the book of Romans, life and the Body are one; they are inseparable. If there is no life, then there can be no Body. Life is the content, and the Body is the expression.

SATAN CRUSHED UNDER OUR FEET

In Romans Paul does not mention Satan by name until 16:20. In this verse Paul says, "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." The Greek word

rendered "your" in this verse is plural; this points to the Body. God will crush Satan under the feet of the Body. Romans 16 does not refer to the Body in a universal sense, but it refers to the local and practical expression of the Body. This means that Satan can only be crushed under the feet of the practical expression of the Body in the local churches. If we speak about the Body in a doctrinal way, we have nothing but terminology. It is only when we have a proper local church as the practical expression of the Body that Satan is crushed under our feet.

This practical expression of the Body is possible only through the divine life. We may have the experience of redemption and salvation, but if we do not experience the divine life, it is impossible to have the practical expression of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is built up with Christ as life. Satan is overcome by life and by the Body.

THE REBORN SPIRIT KEEPING US

First John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." This verse does not say "whosoever," referring to a person; it says "whatsoever," referring to a thing. In contrast to 1 John 3:9, which speaks of "whosoever," or every one who is born of God, 1 John 5:4 speaks of "whatsoever," or every thing that is born of God. If we understand 1 John 5:4 in the light of John 3:6, we shall realize that what is born of God is the human spirit. John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Hence, 1 John 5:4 refers to our regenerated spirit. It is the reborn spirit that does not sin, and it is the reborn spirit that overcomes the world.

First John 5:18 says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not" (Gk.). Who is the "he" that is begotten of God, and who is the "him" who is kept? This verse is saying that he who is born of God keeps me. There is something within me born of God that is keeping me. All believers have something within them

that has been born of God. In the same principle, all of us have something evil within us born of Satan. After Adam fell, he became one with Satan. But praise the Lord that we can now proclaim with confidence that we also have something within us born of God!

OUR PROTECTION FROM THE EVIL ONE

This verse also says, "The evil one toucheth him not." As long as we are kept by that which is born of God, the evil one does not touch us. We are protected. Our protection from the evil one is that part within us which is born of God. As we have pointed out, it is our human spirit that has been born of God, born of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our regenerated spirit is our protection.

Because we have the Son, we have life (1 John 5:11-12). Do you know where the Son of God is within you? He is in your spirit. Thus, your spirit is a place of protection, a high tower. The very life in which and with which we overcome Satan is now in our regenerated spirit. As long as we remain in our regenerated spirit, Satan, the evil one, cannot touch us. This is the way to overcome Satan.

If we get out of the spirit and stay in the flesh, we shall keep company with Satan. Whenever we are in the flesh, we have Satan as our companion. But when we are in the spirit, Christ is our companion. Satan as sin is in our flesh, but Christ as the Spirit is in our spirit. Therefore, we should choose to stay in our spirit with Christ.

Romans 8:4 says that if we walk according to spirit, not according to flesh, the righteous requirement of the law will be fulfilled in us. As we walk according to spirit, we have Christ as our companion, the companion who is truly life to us. When we stay with Him in our spirit, we are protected within a high tower, and the evil one cannot touch us.

We are either in the spirit or in the flesh. There is no third place for us to be. Whenever we are out of the spirit, we are spontaneously in our flesh, where Satan dwells as sin.

OVERCOMING SATAN BY ABIDING IN CHRIST

Do not try in yourself to overcome Satan. The writings of Mrs. Penn-Lewis regarding the warfare with Satan were not wrong, but they placed too much emphasis on the negative aspect. Mrs. Penn-Lewis said that the way to overcome Satan is by seeing that we have been crucified with Christ on the cross. According to the New Testament, it is a fact that through the cross Christ has destroyed the Devil (Heb. 2:14). Nevertheless, the more we try to cross out our flesh, the more active and living our flesh becomes. What Mrs. Penn-Lewis saw was mainly on the negative side--the matter of reckoning ourselves dead. She saw very little, if any, on the positive side. Overcoming Satan is not a matter of making up our mind to put our flesh on the cross; it is a matter of seeing that the very Christ who is life to us is now in our spirit and then of seeing that we must abide in Him. Since Christ is in our spirit, we must remain in the spirit if we would abide in Him. If we stay in our spirit, we have the reality of being crucified with Christ, and we have Christ as our reigning life. In ourselves we cannot reign over Satan, but in Christ as the reigning life we can reign over him.

Do not try to defeat Satan. He is too strong, too powerful, for you. The more you try to defeat him, the more you will be defeated by him. None of us is an exception. The only way to overcome Satan is to stay in the high tower of our regenerated spirit. When we are in this tower, we can laugh at Satan and say, "Satan, don't you know that I am here in the high tower of my spirit? What can you do to me? Very shortly, you will be crushed under our feet."

BUILT UP IN THE BODY

Furthermore, when we stay in the spirit, we are built up in the Body in a practical way. But if we stay in our minds, we shall be divided. This is true not only in the church life, but also in married life. If I remain in my mind and my wife remains in her mind, it will be impossible for us to be one. I have learned to have a healthy fear of

staying in my mind. Oh, I want to be in my spirit! Whenever I am in the spirit, there is no problem with oneness. Both in the church life and in our family life we must be afraid of our minds that are so easily set on the flesh, afraid of the division caused by our dissenting thoughts and opinions (see Romans 8:6). When we find ourselves thinking critically of others, we need to turn immediately to the Lord in our spirit and pray. We all must learn the lesson of turning to the spirit and staying there.

In the spirit we experience not only Christ as life, but also the Body. In the spirit Christ is both our life personally and the life of the Body. Therefore, in the spirit with the divine life and with the Body of Christ, Satan is overcome and even crushed under our feet. He is defeated not by individuals, but by the Body.

Never neglect your regenerated spirit, the high tower within you where you may hide from Satan. Whenever you are tempted to argue with your wife or husband, you should run into this tower. Arguments in married life come from the mind assisted by the flesh. Whenever a brother has negative thoughts about his wife, the flesh will try to provoke him to argue with her. This indicates that the flesh is always ready to help the mind in a negative way. What should we do about this? We should escape into the high tower of our reborn spirit, the place where Satan cannot touch us, the place where we enjoy Christ as our life and experience the reality of the Body. When we are in such a place, Satan can do nothing to us.

It is not difficult to get into the high tower of our spirit. We simply need to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. As long as we stay in our spirit, we have victory over Satan. He is subdued and even crushed under our feet, and we reign over him in Christ as our life. May we all practice staying in the high tower of our reborn spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

In the foregoing messages we have seen that we need to reign in life over sin, death, and Satan, our three main enemies. As the gospel of God, the book of Romans deals with these three negative things. In chapters five through eight sin and death are covered in a full way. Where there is sin, there is death, because sin brings in death. In 16:20 Paul speaks of Satan; he says that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet. The reason Paul did not mention Satan by name before the end of the book is that dealing with Satan is a Body matter, not an individual matter. If you try on your own to subdue Satan, you will be defeated. Satan, the enemy of the Body, can be defeated only by the Body. Therefore, it is through the local churches as the practical expression of the Body of Christ that Satan is dealt with. Only after Paul has covered the church in a very practical way in chapters fifteen and sixteen, does he speak of the crushing of Satan; he indicates thereby that Satan is crushed under the feet of local churches.

SATAN, SIN, AND DEATH MEETING IN MAN'S FLESH

My burden in this message is to point out that the three main enemies--sin, death, and Satan--are centered in man's flesh. Sin, death, and Satan meet together in the "meeting place" of our flesh. Sin, death, and Satan are always together. There is a place in our constitution where these three enemies can meet, and that place is the flesh. From the time of man's fall, they have been holding a continuous meeting in the flesh of man.

Throughout my Christian life, nothing has troubled me more than the flesh. We should not condemn sin, death, and Satan without realizing that the very center of our problem is the flesh. We simply cannot get away from the flesh; we are unable to walk away from it in the way we can walk out of a building. The reason we cannot get away from the flesh is that it has become part of our being. A number of times I have said to the Lord, "Lord, You are wonderful, and You have done so much for us. Lord, why don't You take the flesh away from us?" According to my economy, it would be much better for the flesh to be gone.

Perhaps you are bothered by your temper. But the source of temper is the flesh. All our problems originate with the flesh. If it were not for the flesh, we would not have a troublesome temper. Therefore, we may want the Lord to get rid of our flesh. We may think that if the flesh were taken away, we would immediately become very spiritual.

OUR FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM

But the Lord's way is not our way. Consider Adam's situation in the garden before the fall. At that time, there was no flesh, for sin had not yet entered into Adam's body to transmute it into the flesh. One day the Lord showed me that it would not be adequate to be like Adam in the garden without the problem of the flesh. I saw that my main problem was not with the flesh; it was with the shortage of the Spirit. Yes, in the garden of Eden Adam did not have the flesh, but neither did he have the Spirit of God in him. He was innocent, but he was also empty. This emptiness gave opportunity for the enemy to come in. If the Lord were to take away our flesh and leave us empty, we would not be able to keep ourselves pure very long. Satan, the subtle one, would eventually creep in. Therefore, we need to realize that our fundamental problem is the lack of the Spirit on the positive side, not the presence of the flesh on the negative side.

THE FLESH IN CHAPTERS SEVEN AND EIGHT

In Romans the flesh is exposed in a full way. Using the word "flesh" with a meaning different from that found in chapters five through eight, 3:20 says, "By the works of law no flesh shall be justified before Him." Here, "flesh" refers to a person, a human being. In the eyes of God every fallen person is flesh. Hence, in 3:20 "flesh" denotes the totality of man's fallen being. In Romans 7, on the contrary, "flesh" refers only to a part of man's being, not to the whole person. In chapter seven "flesh" denotes the sinful, wicked part of us, the part indwelt by sin. Our concern in this message is not with the flesh as revealed in 3:20, but with the flesh as covered in chapters seven and eight.

Romans 7:18 says, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells." Our flesh is the place where evil things make their abode. No matter how good a person may seem to be, at least one part of him, the flesh, is evil. Do not be deceived by a person who is seemingly gentle, kind, honest, humble, and sympathetic. It is still true of him, as it is of everyone else, that in his flesh nothing good dwells.

Throughout the years, I have learned that everyone regards himself as better than others. A husband may consider himself superior to his wife, and a wife may view herself as higher than her husband. Because of false humility, we may not say that we are better than others, but inwardly this is the way we often feel. But no matter how good we may be, we still have the flesh. Through the Lord's mercy I have come to see His holy teaching that in my flesh there is nothing good.

A SINFUL COMPOUND

We need to emphasize that there is nothing good in the flesh in order to help seeking Christians who often become disappointed with their spiritual progress. The more they desire to be holy, the less holy they seem to become. They long to be one with the Lord, but end up doing many things that are not of the Lord. They also desire to

overcome their besetting sin, but it seems that sin overcomes them. Therefore, they become discouraged with their situation and disgusted with themselves.

It is necessary for Christians to seek the Lord, to aspire to be spiritual, and to overcome all negative things. Nevertheless, we are hindered and frustrated by a sinful compound: our flesh compounded with sin, death, and Satan. It is extremely difficult to deal with this evil compound. When sin, death, and Satan are added to the human body, the result is the flesh. This compound is not merely in us; it is part of our very being.

DESPERATE TO TURN TO THE SPIRIT

Perhaps you are wondering, as I have in the past, why the Lord would not simply take this sinful compound away from us. The Lord is wise and knows what He is doing. Although the flesh is sinful and ugly, the Lord purposely refuses to take it away. The Lord does not leave the flesh with us in order to constantly disappoint us. He allows the flesh to remain so that we shall be compelled to seek Him for help. If it were not for the flesh, we would not be so desperate to call on the name of the Lord. If it were not for the problem of the flesh, I doubt that we would pray very much.

We all know that it is wrong to lose our temper with our husband or wife or with our children. However, if we love the Lord and seek Him, even losing our temper will work on our behalf, for it will force us to go to the Lord. After we lose our temper, we may feel ashamed for several hours, unwilling to pray because we are too ashamed to pray. Eventually, however, our intense desire for the Lord will compel us to pray, and we shall pray in a very good way. In this regard we are actually helped by the flesh.

In the early years of my ministry, I used to be troubled when certain saints were not doing well spiritually. Later I learned not to be bothered by this. I realized that if we

are always doing well, we shall not get into the spirit very much. If you have no failure, you may spend a great deal of time thinking how good you are. You will not be desperate to turn to the spirit. This was the reason the Lord did not exterminate all the enemies as soon as the children of Israel entered into the good land (Judg. 2:21--3:4). God deliberately permitted certain enemies to remain for the purpose of strengthening the children of Israel and of training them to fight. In the same principle, the flesh is left here for our good. This does not mean that we should do evil that good may come. It means that, in His wisdom and sovereignty, the Lord uses the flesh for a positive purpose.

GOD'S USE OF OUR FAILURES IN THE FLESH

All seekers of the Lord are troubled by the flesh. It causes all of us to have many failures. But through our failures something of the Lord is wrought into our being. I can testify that year after year God has been increasing in me, mainly through my failures. I dare not say that the more failures we have, the better off we shall be. However, I can say that God uses our failures to help us grow in the Lord. But this is only true if we love the Lord and seek Him. If we seek the Lord, we may be at peace, whether we experience success or failure.

We all must earnestly seek to reign over sin, death, and Satan. However, although we may try diligently to reign in life over these three enemies, we shall experience more failure than success. Do not be disappointed. As long as you love the Lord and seek Him, He will use even your failures to work more of Himself into you. Many of us can testify that we have gained more of the Lord through our failures than through our successes. Our failures press us to the Lord and make us desperate to get into the spirit. Eventually, by turning to the spirit in such a desperate way, we shall be fully saturated with the Lord. Without the help rendered by the sinful, ugly flesh, we would not be as desperate to gain the Lord or to have Him wrought into us.

I have read a number of books on holiness, spirituality, and the victorious life. I have tried all the ways recommended in these books. None of these ways was altogether successful. Although we know that we must be holy, spiritual, and victorious, we fall short and come into suffering. Our goal is holiness or spirituality or victory. But God's goal is to work Himself into us. As long as God has the opportunity to work Himself into our being, He does not care very much whether our situation is excellent or poor. Often He has a greater opportunity to do what He desires in us when our condition is pitiful. When our situation and condition are excellent, we may be closed to the Lord's inward working. I do not encourage you to be in a poor situation or to be in a low state spiritually. But I can assure you that when you are in such a condition or state, God will be able to work more of Himself into you than when your condition is good. The reason for this is that when we are in a difficult situation, we are more open to the Lord, more willing to turn to Him, and more willing to allow Him to work Himself into us.

Because sin, death, and Satan are conducting a continuous meeting in our flesh, we all eventually become extremely troubled and even disgusted with the flesh. But God is sovereign. If we seek Him, even the sinful compound of the flesh will become a help to us in gaining the Lord. Because we fail so often, we are pressed into the spirit, and, in this way, we gain more of the Spirit. This is not a matter of victory; it is a matter of gaining the Spirit.

TURNING TO THE SPIRIT

Doctrinally speaking, it is easy to say that we should turn to our spirit, but it is rather difficult to practice this. Some may think that it is difficult to turn to the spirit when their situation is poor, but I do not agree with this. In such a case it may be difficult to turn to the spirit outwardly, before man, but it is easier to have a genuine, inward turn. If our condition is never poor, our turning to

the spirit is likely to be quite shallow. But when we have a great failure, we truly turn to our spirit.

In our Christian experience we need the night as well as the day. For this reason, God allows us to fail. We are always happy in the day, but disappointed or discouraged in the night. But we need the night as well as the day. Whether it is during the day or during the night, God is working in us.

Romans 8:4 speaks of walking according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. It is very easy to talk about this, but not so easy to practice it. In order to get into this verse in reality, we need to be processed through many experiences of failure. Then we shall find ourselves more in the spirit. The only way to deal with the flesh and to be saved from its influence is to get into the spirit.

Unless we turn on a light, there is no way to deal with darkness. No matter how much we deal with the darkness, it will remain until light comes in. In the same principle, we cannot deal with the flesh if we are short of the Spirit. The more we deal with our flesh apart from the Spirit, the stronger and more active the flesh becomes. By our own striving we cannot overcome the flesh. The only way to be rescued from it is to turn to the spirit and to get into the spirit.

Our problem is that we rarely turn to the spirit willingly. Thus, we need failures to make us willing to turn. Once we turn to the spirit, we spontaneously walk according to the spirit. We all need something to force us, to press us, to the spirit. In this matter our own willingness is not adequate.

In His sovereignty, God has a way to use the flesh in the fulfillment of His purpose. He sovereignly manages everything related to us for the carrying out of His economy. For the sake of His economy, God uses our sinful, ugly flesh to force us to turn to our spirit that we may gain more of the Spirit. How wise and how sovereign He is!

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-ONE

SERVING IN THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON

In Romans 1:9 Paul says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son." Many Christians think that the gospel is simply the good news of how Christ is the Savior who died that sinners may be forgiven and one day go to heaven. But the gospel is much richer and more profound than this. The gospel in 1:9 includes the whole book of Romans.

THE GOSPEL IN ROMANS

In the very first verse of Romans Paul says that as a slave of Christ and a called apostle, he was "separated to the gospel of God." This indicates that Paul's intention in this book is to write concerning the gospel; the gospel is the theme of this Epistle. The entire book unfolds the gospel, the glad tidings of God, in its fullest way.

In Romans Paul mentions the gospel much more than he does in any of his other Epistles. In 2:16 he says, "God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel by Jesus Christ." According to the natural, religious concept, God will judge people according to the law. But here Paul says that God will judge them according to his gospel.

The gospel is to be not only believed, but also obeyed. This is proved in 10:16, where Paul says that "not all obeyed the gospel." Those who do not obey the gospel may become enemies of the gospel (11:28). It is our attitude toward the gospel that determines whether we are obedient or disobedient and whether or not we are enemies.

The gospel that Paul proclaimed in Romans was to be preached not only to unbelievers, but also to the believers in the Lord. In 1:15 Paul says, "So, as far as depends on

me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." Furthermore, Paul believed that God would establish the saints according to his gospel: "Now to Him Who is of power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ" (16:25).

Romans 15:16 says, "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." For Paul, the preaching of the gospel was a priestly ministry, a priestly service. As priests, we all must serve God in the gospel of His Son.

PROMISED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now we must ask a basic and fundamental question: What is the gospel? What Paul speaks regarding the gospel in the book of Romans is deep and profound. The word "gospel" means good news, or glad tidings. The gospel is news that gladdens those who hear it. It is good news from God, from the heavens. In 1:2 Paul says that the gospel of God was "promised before through His prophets in the holy scriptures." This indicates that if we would understand the content of the gospel as the good news, we must know the Old Testament. The Old Testament is not merely a record of creation and history. In it are revealed some crucial elements pertaining to the gospel.

The first of these elements is found in Genesis 1:26, where we are told that man was created in the image of God. The image of God is part of the content of the gospel. How marvelous that we men of clay can bear the image of God! What good news this is! Whose heart would not be gladdened by such good news? If we truly saw what it means to be in the image of God, we would praise the Lord.

A second matter related to the gospel is found in Genesis 2. Here we see that the man created by God was placed in front of the tree of life. This indicates that not only do we have the image outwardly, but that we also may have the divine life inwardly.

In Genesis 3 the serpent came in to seduce man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But this chapter also tells us good news. Verse 15 says that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. Although the serpent has come in, this verse prophesies that the seed of the woman will come to deal with the serpent.

A fourth element is found in the next chapter. Genesis 4:4 says that Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." This indicates that by the proper offerings we, the fallen sinners, are accepted by God.

In chapter one of Genesis there are more aspects of the content of the gospel. Verse 9 says that the waters were gathered together into one place and that the dry land appeared. Verse 11 continues, "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so." Many kinds of life--vegetable, animal, and even the human life--are related to this land, which typifies the all-inclusive Christ. This is part of God's good news.

In Genesis 2:18 the Lord said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." Man in Genesis 2:18 is a type of Christ. To say that it is not good for man to be alone means that it is not good for Christ to be alone. As the Bridegroom, Christ is longing for a bride, someone to match Him. The matter of God's producing a bride for Christ is also an element of the gospel promised in the Old Testament.

CONCERNING A WONDERFUL PERSON

In 1:3 Paul says that the gospel is concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The main concern of the gospel is not forgiveness nor the winning of souls nor the saving of sinners for heaven; it is the very Person of Christ, the Son of God. The gospel is not a doctrine nor a teaching nor a religion. It is a wonderful Person.

This wonderful Person has two natures, the divine nature and the human nature. In verse 3 Paul speaks of Christ as the Son. This indicates His divine nature. But Paul also says in this verse that Christ "came out of the seed of David according to the flesh." This points to His human nature. By incarnation, the Son of God became a man, a descendant of David according to the flesh.

Verse 4 says that He was "designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." The Spirit of holiness here is in contrast with the flesh in verse 3. As the flesh in verse 3 refers to the human essence of Christ, so the Spirit in this verse refers not to the Person of the Holy Spirit of God, but to the divine essence of Christ, which is "the fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9). This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself (John 4:24), is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy. According to such a Spirit, Christ was designated, marked out, the Son of God in power out of the resurrection of the dead. By incarnation Christ, the Son of God, became a man in the flesh, but by resurrection, as a man in the flesh, He was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness.

The gospel is concerned with a wonderful Person who became flesh and was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. For Christ to be designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness is different from the fact that He was the Son of God in eternity. As the eternal Son of God, He did not have the human nature. But His being designated the Son of God in resurrection has much to do with His human nature. Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, was designated the Son of God.

The central message of the book of Romans is that sinful, fleshly people are made sons of God and conformed to the image of the Son of God. In this way Christ becomes the Firstborn among many brothers. Thus, the central point of the gospel is not forgiveness of sins. It is the producing of the sons of God, many brothers of the Son of God.

MANY SONS CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

Christ is the model, the pattern, of the gospel. He was born in the flesh; yet He was made the Son of God by resurrection in the Spirit of holiness. The first three chapters of Romans reveal our sinfulness; chapter four reveals our justification; chapter six, our death and burial; and chapter seven, our problem with the flesh and the natural life. But chapter eight reveals that we are conformed to the image of Christ, the Firstborn among many brothers. Christ was designated the Son of God, and we also are designated the many sons of God. This is the main point of the gospel.

In chapter one we have the model, the pattern, whereas in chapter eight we have the mass production. In chapter one we have one Person in the flesh designated the Son of God; however, in chapter eight we have many people in the flesh designated the sons of God. Hence, eventually the Son of God will be the Firstborn, the elder Brother, among many brothers.

Christians today talk a great deal about going to heaven. But we cannot find this concept anywhere in the book of Romans. Those Christians who are somewhat advanced speak about the so-called deeper life and about spirituality. However, not even the deeper life or spirituality is the ultimate issue of the gospel. According to Romans, so many who once were fleshly will become the designated sons of God. In a sense, I have no interest in spirituality. Many who claim to be spiritual do not express the image of the Son of God. Romans reveals that we shall be conformed not to spirituality, but to the image of the Son of God.

A person may be kind and humble without being conformed to the image of Christ. Others may see his kindness, but not the image of the Son of God. Again I say, the central point of the gospel is nothing less than conformity to the image of the Son of God. Hallelujah, one day we, people in the flesh, will become glorious sons of God!

THE POWER OF GOD

In 1:16 Paul says that the gospel is the power of God. The reason the gospel is so powerful is that the righteousness of God is revealed in it. Many expositions of Romans do not give an adequate definition of the righteousness of God. It is correct to say that the righteousness of God is simply Christ. However, such a definition is too doctrinal.

The gospel of God is powerful to save people because it reveals the righteousness of God. Many Christians think that the power of the gospel is the Holy Spirit or the love of God. Others say that the power of the gospel is the grace of God. But in Romans Paul does not say that the power of the gospel is the Holy Spirit or the love of God or the grace of God. He says that it is the righteousness of God. Nothing is more solid and trustworthy than righteousness. Love, on the contrary, is changeable and may fluctuate. The same is true of grace. For example, if I like you, I may give you a large gift of money. But if I do not like you, I may not feel like giving you anything. Likewise, the giving of the Holy Spirit is at least somewhat related to our obedience and therefore is not unconditional. But with righteousness there is no room, no margin, for change. When we act according to righteousness, we do certain things, not out of love, but because we are bound by righteousness to do them. Consider the example of paying rent. A person who rents a house makes his monthly rental payment not because he loves his landlord, but because he is obligated to fulfill the righteous requirement of the rental agreement. No matter how he feels toward his landlord personally, he must pay the rent. In this sense, paying rent is a matter of righteousness.

One day I saw that I was saved not only by the love of God and by the grace of God, but by the righteousness of God. I could confidently say to the Lord, "Lord, whether You are happy with me or not, You are bound by Your righteousness to save me. Even if You do not love me, You must still save me because You are righteous. Your love is eternal, but the basis of my salvation is not Your love. It is

Your righteousness." Hallelujah, this is the power of the gospel!

Sometimes in preaching the gospel we face certain objections from thoughtful people. After listening to the gospel concerning the love of God, some have said to us, "Yes, God is love, but I'm not lovable. You say that God's love is unconditional, but how do I know that His love for me will not change, especially if I do something sinful?" Before we were enlightened regarding the righteousness of God, we had difficulty answering questions such as these. But now we can boldly proclaim the righteousness of God as the very power of God in the gospel. Because God is righteous, He is bound to forgive us if we come to Him through Christ, no matter how He may feel about it.

MINISTERING CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL

If we would serve God in the proper way, we need to serve Him in the gospel. To do this, we firstly need to know what the gospel is, and then we need to experience all that the gospel includes. We also need to learn how to minister the gospel to others, that is, how to function as priests in ministering the gospel of God. Serving God is not simply a matter of gathering together to sing, to pray, and to rejoice. Likewise, it is not just to win souls or to help the saints in certain ways. To serve God is to function as a priest in the gospel. This means that whenever we contact anyone, whether a believer or an unbeliever, we need to know his need as far as the gospel is concerned. For example, if a person is not clear about salvation, we must help him to be clear and even joyful in God's salvation. We need to serve him with the gospel. Others may be clear about salvation, but not about other aspects of the gospel. Thus, we must minister something to meet their needs. The crucial point of the service in the church life is to minister Christ to others in the gospel. For this, we all must learn the elements and the details of the gospel, and we need to experience the full content of the gospel. Along with this, we must develop the proper technique and skill

to minister Christ in the gospel according to what we have experienced.

The book of Romans is a full revelation of the gospel. My burden in this message is to point out that the central point of the gospel is that God is transforming sinners in the flesh into the designated sons of God in the spirit. If we would serve God in the gospel, we all need to make this same matter our goal. Why do we preach the gospel? We preach the gospel not simply that people may be saved or be forgiven of their sins or become spiritual, but that they may become sons of God. This is our aim.

The book of Romans, of course, does not stop with chapter eight, that is, with the matter of the many sons being conformed to the image of Christ. In chapter twelve Paul speaks of the Body. The Body of Christ cannot be built up with people in the flesh; it can be built only with the glorious sons of God. This is the reason that the building up of the Body of Christ is not mentioned before chapter twelve. In order for the Body to be produced, people in the flesh must become conformed to the image of the Son of God. By the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, God is transforming sinners in the flesh into sons of God in the spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the goal of the gospel.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-TWO

DESIGNATION

In our reading of Romans we may pay attention to condemnation, justification, sanctification, and glorification, but neglect the matters of sonship, transformation, conformation, and the Body life. The central thought of Romans is not condemnation nor justification; it is not even sanctification nor glorification. In 1:1 and 3 Paul says that he was separated unto the gospel of God concerning God's Son. This indicates that the central concept of the gospel of God is related to the Son of God. God's intention is to bring many sons into glory.

GOD'S DESIRE TO HAVE MANY SONS

According to the Bible, the spiritual significance of sonship is that a son is the expression of his father. God desires to have many sons because His intention is to have Himself expressed in a corporate way. He does not want simply an individual expression in the only begotten Son, but a Body expression, a corporate expression, in many sons. John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Although God's expression in the only begotten Son is marvelous, God still desires an expression in many sons. His intention is to make the only begotten Son the Firstborn among many brothers. Before the resurrection of Christ, God had just one Son; that is, He had an individual expression. But by means of Christ's resurrection, God now has a multitude of sons; that is, He has a corporate expression.

Many of us were taught that we were sinners, that God loved us, and that God sent His Son to die on the cross for our redemption. Furthermore, we were told that as

Christians we should live for the glory of God and seek to enjoy fellowship with Him. Then we were taught that we shall eventually be taken to heaven. Very few of us had heard about God's goal to produce many sons for His corporate expression. For eternity, God will be expressed through a corporate Body of glorified sons. This is His intention.

CHRIST AS THE MODEL AND PATTERN

According to the book of Romans, the gospel of God is a gospel of sonship. The central aim of God's gospel is to produce many sons conformed to His Son (8:29). His only begotten Son is a pattern, a model, for the producing of the many sons. Romans 1:3 and 4 describe this model, whereas Romans 8 reveals the mass production. Eventually, the only begotten Son--the model--will become the Firstborn among many brothers--the mass production.

As the model, Christ has two natures: the nature according to the flesh and the nature according to the Spirit of holiness. "Holiness" in verse 4 refers to the essence, the substance, of God. Before His incarnation, Christ did not have humanity, the nature according to the flesh. Through incarnation He put on human nature. However, when He put on the human nature, He did not lose the divine nature. Thus, when He was on earth, He was a mystery. According to His outward appearance, He was altogether a human being. But many of the things He said and did were extraordinary, things which no ordinary human being could possibly say or do. For example, in the Gospel of John the Lord said that He was the life and that He was the truth (14:6). He also said, "I am the light" (8:12), and, "I am the bread of life" (6:35). Furthermore, He said that anyone who did not believe in Him could not have eternal life (3:36). No philosopher would dare make such a statement. Because Christ is both divine and human, people wondered about His identity when He was on earth. They knew His family, but they could not explain how He was able to do certain things (Matt. 13:54-56). The reason for their perplexity was that the Son of God had clothed Himself with humanity.

Those responsible for the crucifixion of Christ did not realize that crucifixion was the best way for Him to be designated, to be glorified. We may use a carnation seed to illustrate this point. If the seed is put to an end by being buried in the soil, it will eventually sprout, grow, and blossom. In the same principle, through death and resurrection Christ "blossomed" as the Son of God. Satan expected the crucifixion of Christ to mark His termination, but the Lord Jesus knew that this was actually the beginning, that it would lead to His designation according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection from the dead. Without death, there can be no resurrection. Hallelujah, in resurrection Christ was designated the Son of God in power!

As the designated Son of God, Christ still has two natures, both that of divinity and that of humanity. However, the humanity He has now is not the natural humanity, but the humanity uplifted in resurrection. Even His flesh has been designated the Son of God. Hence, He has been designated the Son of God with both divinity and humanity. As such a marvelous Person, He has become the model, the pattern, of all those who are being designated sons of God. A son of God must have both the divine nature and the resurrected, glorified, uplifted human nature.

THE TWO NATURES OF THE MANY SONS

God does not intend that we lose our humanity. On the contrary, we shall bear our humanity for eternity. But our humanity in eternity will not be natural; it will be resurrected, glorified, and uplifted. This is proved by the contrast between the natural body and the spiritual body, the resurrection body, in 1 Corinthians 15. Today our physical body is like a seed. But one day this "seed" will be resurrected and glorified.

How can we have divinity? We have it by being regenerated in our spirit by the Spirit of Christ. Through incarnation Christ put humanity upon Himself and thereafter had two natures, the divine nature and the human nature. Through His resurrection and through coming into us as the Spirit, Christ has brought divinity

into us. Therefore, we also have two natures, the human nature and the divine nature. By being born of the Spirit we have become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). We can say, "Lord, just as You have two natures, so we have two natures also. You are divine and human, and we are human and divine. Hallelujah, we are the same as You! Lord, You have our nature, and we have Yours. You are both divine and human, and we are both human and divine. You are the Head of the Body, and we are the members of the Body. Lord, You are the Son of God, and we are sons of God also." The Lord appreciates it when we speak to Him in this way. He enjoys it when we declare the fact that God no longer has just one Son, the only begotten Son, but many sons, Christ as the Firstborn and us as the many sons of God. Christ has already been designated the Son of God, but we are still in the process of designation. One day this process will be completed, and for eternity we shall be the same as Christ, God's firstborn Son. Romans 1:3 and 4 contain many key words. Verse 3 has the phrase "according to the flesh," and verse 4, the phrase "according to the Spirit." In 8:4 Paul speaks about walking "according to spirit" and not "according to flesh." This is one example of how the key words in 1:3 and 4 are used again by Paul later in this book.

DESIGNATED BY RESURRECTION

An especially marvelous word in 1:4 is "resurrection." Christ was designated the Son of God "out of the resurrection of the dead." In 6:5 Paul says that "we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Christ was designated by resurrection, and we shall be in the likeness of this resurrection. As we share Christ's resurrection, we undergo the process of being designated the sons of God. We are designated, in fact, by resurrection.

To designate something is to mark it out, not merely to label it. As sons of God, we are designated by resurrection, that is, by a change in life. Let us use a carnation seed as an illustration once again. Most people cannot tell the

difference between a carnation seed and other kinds of seeds. Some may think that the way to tell which among many seeds is a carnation seed is to label the carnation seed. This, however, is not the way of life. According to the way of life, the carnation seed is designated by being put into the earth so that it can grow into a blossoming carnation plant. When a carnation plant is still a tiny sprout, it is very difficult to recognize that it is a carnation, for it looks the same as other kinds of sprouts. But the more the carnation plant grows, the more it is designated. Eventually, by its blossom, we all can recognize that it is a carnation. By blossoming it is fully designated a carnation.

In the same principle, we are designated the sons of God by a change in life through the process of resurrection. The day is coming when we shall reach the stage of "full blossom." That will be the time of the redemption, the glorification, of our body, which is the full sonship (8:23). The life of the Son of God has been implanted into our spirit. Now we, like the carnation seed that is sown into the earth, must pass through the process of death and resurrection. This causes the outward man to be consumed, but it enables the inner life to grow, to develop, and, ultimately, to blossom. This is resurrection. Praise the Lord that we are daily being put to death so that we may share Christ's resurrection in a practical way. Hallelujah, we shall be designated sons of God by resurrection!

PROCESSED THROUGH OUR FAILURES

Most of us today may not have the confidence to say that we are the sons of God. We do not yet have the appearance, the expression, of God's sons. We are like the carnation plant that has not yet produced flowers. Nevertheless, we are under the process of designation by resurrection, and, eventually, after we have been fully processed, all will know that we are sons of God. The entire creation is waiting and groaning for this. We also groan because we do not yet have the appearance we should have. We know that we are still short in so many respects and wrong in many things, and we still have failures. But under the Lord's sovereignty, even our

failures are used as part of the process. The Lord allows us to fail time after time so that we may be processed. By our failures, our ugly self is torn down, and the Lord has a greater opportunity to work within us.

Praise the Lord for the divine process! We are on the way of resurrection. Not only have we been grafted into Christ that we may have a vital union with Him in His death, but we also enjoy His resurrection. We all are presently in the process of being designated sons of God by means of resurrection.

FOUR ASPECTS OF RESURRECTION

In this process of resurrection there are four aspects: sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. In 6:22 Paul says, "But now, having been freed from sin and having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life." Sanctification, the process of being made holy, brings us into the enjoyment of eternal life. Thus, the end, the issue, of sanctification is eternal life.

In 12:2 Paul speaks of transformation, saying that we should not be conformed to this age, but that we should be transformed by the renewing of the mind. In 8:29 Paul speaks of conformation, and in the next verse, of glorification. Our future glorification will be the ultimate step of resurrection; it is resurrection as applied to the body. Because our bodies are still subject to death, we are sometimes weak and even physically ill. Thus, we need the redemption of our bodies; we need resurrection applied to our bodies. As those who are in the process of resurrection, we have as the last step of resurrection the transfiguration, the glorification, of our bodies.

SANCTIFICATION

We have seen that sanctification is a part of resurrection. The more we are sanctified, the more we are resurrected. When we speak of sanctification, we do not mean sinless perfection, nor even the mere change of

position. Arguing against the concept of sanctification as sinless perfection, some have pointed out from Matthew 23 that the gold is sanctified by being placed in the temple and that an offering is sanctified by being laid upon the altar. Therefore, these ones teach that sanctification has nothing to do with sin, but that it is related to the change of position. For example, when the gold was in the market, it was common, secular; but when it was put into the temple, it was sanctified. Sanctification, however, means much more than this. It includes not only a change of position, but also a change in disposition. The sanctification spoken of in Romans is dispositional sanctification. We need to be sanctified in both our position and our disposition.

Making tea is a good illustration of dispositional sanctification. When a tea bag is placed in a cup of water, the tea "tea-ifies" the water. This causes the water to change in color, appearance, and taste. We may say that the water undergoes a dispositional change. The more tea that is put in the water, the more the water is "tea-ified." This "tea-ification" is a picture of our subjective experience of sanctification. Christ is the heavenly "tea," and we are the "water." The more of Christ that is added to us, the more we are sanctified dispositionally.

TRANSFORMATION

Not only are we sanctified, but we are also transformed. Sanctification involves substance, whereas transformation involves form, a change from one form into another. To be sanctified is to have more of Christ added to us. To be transformed is to be shaped into a certain form through the addition of the divine substance. Transformation is the second aspect of resurrection. The more we are transformed, the more we are resurrected.

CONFORMATION

The third aspect of the process of resurrection is conformation, which is closely related to transformation. In this process we are conformed to the image of Christ. As

8:29 says, "Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brothers."

GLORIFICATION

We have pointed out that the ultimate step of the process of resurrection is glorification, the transfiguration of our body. The divine life within us will eventually be expressed through our physical body in a full way, transfiguring it into a glorious body. In this way, mortality will be swallowed up by the divine life within us. At that time, we shall be fully sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified. This means that we shall be altogether in resurrection, with the divine life and nature permeating our whole being. That will be full sonship (8:23).

We all have the sense within that today our sonship is not yet full. However, it will get fuller and fuller until it reaches the peak at the time of our glorification, when we shall be fully resurrected and designated the sons of God in nature and in appearance. Both in name and in reality we shall be the sons of God in spirit, in soul, and in body. Just as a carnation seed grows from a seed into a full-grown blossoming plant, so we shall be processed through resurrection until we are fully glorified and designated as the many sons of God. We are now in the process of resurrection so that we may be sanctified, transformed, conformed, and glorified. This process will go on until we are sons of God in full. This is the central aim of the gospel.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-THREE

SONSHIP IN ROMANS

In 1:9 Paul said that he served God in the gospel of His Son. This indicates that we all should serve God in the gospel of Christ. In order to do this, however, we need to know what the gospel is.

The gospel does not simply involve matters such as redemption, forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, cleansing, and regeneration. All these are aspects of God's salvation. But God's salvation has a goal, and that goal is sonship. This means that redemption, forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, cleansing, and regeneration are all for the fulfillment of God's desire to have many sons to be His expression.

God's eternal intention is that He be expressed through a Body constituted of glorified sons. Originally, God had just one Son, His only begotten Son. But now that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been accomplished, He has many sons. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, millions of sinners have been made sons of God. This is God's eternal purpose. Hence, the book of Romans reveals that the goal of the gospel is sonship, the producing of the many sons of God.

The first four verses of Romans are extremely important. In the very first verse Paul says, "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated to the gospel of God." The fact that Romans opens with a word about the gospel of God indicates that the gospel is the subject of this book. The gospel of God is not concerned with religion, doctrine, or forms; moreover, it is not concerned merely with redemption, forgiveness, or justification. As verse 3 makes clear, the gospel of God is concerned with God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This indicates that the

gospel is concerned with sonship. God's delight, desire, and pleasure are all related to His Son. It is His intention to produce many sons conformed to the pattern, the model, of the Firstborn. Through Him, in Him, and with Him many sons are being produced. Thus, the gospel of God is concerned with this producing of many sons conformed to the image of Christ.

CHRIST DESIGNATED THE SON OF GOD

In His incarnation Christ came as the seed of David according to the flesh (1:3). In the Bible the word "flesh" is not a positive word. Nevertheless, the Gospel of John declares that the Word became flesh (1:14). The gospel of God concerns the Son of God who became flesh, who became the seed of a man according to the flesh. In Romans we see that this flesh has been designated the Son of God!

Through this designation the Christ who was already the Son of God before His incarnation became the Son of God in a new way. Before His incarnation, He was the Son of God only with divinity. But now, through His resurrection, He has been designated the Son of God both with divinity and in humanity. If Christ had never put on human nature, there would have been no need for Him to be designated the Son of God, for in His divinity He was already the Son of God, even from eternity.

Romans 8:3 says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. This indicates that Christ did not have the sinfulness of the flesh; He had only the likeness of the flesh of sin. In this respect, He was like the brass serpent lifted up on a pole in the wilderness (Num. 21:8-9). The brass serpent had the form of a serpent, but it did not have the poisonous nature of a serpent. In the same principle, Christ had the form, the appearance, the likeness, of the flesh of sin, but He did not have the sinful nature of the flesh of sin.

Because Christ, the Son of God, had clothed Himself with the flesh, He needed His human nature to be designated the Son of God in power by resurrection. Death

in Adam is terrible. The death of Christ, however, is wonderful. This is because His death terminated all the negative things and opened the way for resurrection. Through resurrection Christ was transfigured and designated the Son of God.

Psalm 2:7 says, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Since Christ was already the Son of God, how could there have been the need for Him to be begotten as the Son of God? Acts 13:33, which quotes from Psalm 2:7, indicates that Christ was begotten as the Son of God on the day of His resurrection. But was He not the Son of God before that day? Certainly He was. Nevertheless, He still needed to be begotten by resurrection because He had put on humanity. As to His divinity, there was no need for Him to be begotten. But as to His humanity, there was the need for this. On the day of His resurrection, Christ's flesh was uplifted and transfigured into a glorious substance. This is the begetting in power by resurrection. This begetting is also the designation. In this way, Jesus, the Man in the flesh, was begotten and designated the Son of God.

ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

Verse 4 says that this designation was according to the Spirit of holiness. The illustration of a carnation seed will help us understand the meaning of this. When a carnation seed is put into the soil, the seed dies. But this death prepares the way for resurrection. Eventually, the seed sprouts and grows into a mature plant that produces carnation flowers. When the carnation plant blossoms, it is designated. The carnation flower is the designation of the carnation seed. A carnation seed is designated, not by being labeled, but by being buried into the ground and by growing into a blossoming carnation plant. This indicates that the carnation seed is designated according to the life which is within it; that is, it is designated according to life. If I put a stone into some soil, nothing will happen because there is no life in the stone. But after a carnation seed is placed in the earth, it will be designated according to the life within it.

In the same principle, when Christ was resurrected from among the dead, He was designated in power by resurrection according to the Spirit of holiness that was in Him. Now He is the Son of God in a way that is more wonderful than before, for now He has both the divine nature and the resurrected, transformed, uplifted, glorified, and designated human nature.

As the Son of God with both divinity and humanity, Christ is now the pattern and model for the mass production of the many sons of God. We have seen that God does not want just one Son, the only begotten Son; He desires many sons, all of whom are the mass production of the Firstborn. In chapter one we have the pattern, but in chapter eight we have the mass production. Chapter eight clearly reveals that the only begotten Son has become the Firstborn among many brothers.

HOW THE MANY SONS ARE BROUGHT INTO BEING

Now we need to consider how these many sons are brought into being. The key to understanding this is in 1:3 and 4. In these verses there are a number of crucial terms: according to flesh, according to the Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, power, resurrection, and Son of God. In a sense, the entire book of Romans is structured around these phrases. Verses 3 and 4 of chapter one actually summarize the whole book. The book of Romans is a record of sinners in the flesh becoming sons of God in power and by resurrection. In 3:20 we read that "by the works of law no flesh shall be justified before Him." This indicates that the flesh, the fallen man, is hopeless. Chapter seven reveals how ugly and troublesome the flesh is. Chapter eight then describes the utter inability of the flesh to keep the law of God. Before we were saved, we were just flesh; we were hopeless, troublesome, and weak. But Christ was made in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and in His crucifixion He brought this flesh to the cross and terminated it.

According to the flesh, we cannot be designated sons of God. We can only become sons of God according to the Spirit of holiness. As believers in Christ, we have both the

flesh, which we received of our natural parents, and the Spirit of holiness, who has been given to us by God. Like the Lord Jesus, we also have two natures, the human nature and the divine nature. Now we can boldly say, "Lord Jesus, You have two natures, and we have two natures also. You were made flesh, and we also are flesh. Within You there was the Spirit of holiness, and within us there is the Spirit of holiness." Oh, within us we have the Spirit of holiness, who is actually the wonderful Person of Christ Himself! Holiness is the substance, the essence, the element, the nature, of God. This holy nature of God is absolutely different from all other things and separate from them. The Spirit of holiness refers to God's very essence. Thus, by having the Spirit of holiness, we have God's substance within us. According to this Spirit, we are being designated the sons of God.

GRAFTED INTO CHRIST

As believers, we have been grafted into Christ. Suppose a branch from a poor tree is grafted into a better tree. Through this process of grafting, the poor branch becomes a good branch, part of a good tree. Having been grafted into Christ and into the likeness of His death, we are now undergoing the process of resurrection. According to 1 Peter 1:3, we were regenerated by the resurrection of Christ. This means that we were born again when Christ was resurrected. In a very real sense, we were born again before we were born. Now we are experiencing the resurrection of what has already been resurrected and the release of what has already been released. For this reason, we can say that we are in the process of being resurrected.

This concept is found in Romans 8. He who raised Christ from among the dead gives us life through His Spirit who dwells in us (v. 11). This indicates that we are presently undergoing the process of resurrection.

NOT CORRECTION BUT RESURRECTION

On the one hand, to be resurrected means to put everything negative to death; on the other hand, it means

to release all the positive things, to uplift what has been put to death and resurrected. Strictly speaking, in God's economy there is no outward correction, adjustment, or improvement. There is only resurrection, which is the termination of the negative and the release of the positive.

Suppose a certain brother is very proud. The religious way is to teach him to be humble. But this is not God's way. The way according to the divine economy is to graft this proud man into Christ and to allow the death of Christ to work within him and, eventually, to terminate him. The death of Christ will then open the way for His resurrection power to release something of Christ from within this brother. In this way the life of Christ will swallow up his proud nature. This is not correction; it is resurrection.

In the early years of my ministry, it was my habit to correct and adjust others. But I gradually learned that this is not God's way in His economy. Because we have the Spirit of holiness within us, there is no need for outward adjustment. If we turn to the Lord and contact Him, we shall experience His death and resurrection. This resurrection is according to the Spirit of holiness. Hallelujah, the resurrection life with the resurrection power is within us!

How absurd it would be to try to help a flower grow by correcting it outwardly! The proper way is simply to water the plant. In the same principle, we should water one another. As 1 Corinthians 3:6 says, Paul planted and Apollos watered, but God gives the growth. We need to water the brothers and sisters and to nourish them. Then the inner life will grow, and eventually a beautiful "flower" will be brought forth. This is resurrection.

In a very real sense, God's children do not need to know so much doctrine. What we need is the Word and the power of resurrection within us. No teaching or doctrine can replace resurrection. According to the power of resurrection we are being designated the sons of God.

SANCTIFICATION AND TRANSFORMATION

To be designated means that we are being sanctified. Holiness is the substance, but sanctification is the process

of becoming holy. Some Christians regard holiness merely as sinlessness. Others point out that holiness denotes separation, a change of position. Neither is a proper or adequate definition. Holiness includes both sinlessness and separation, but it also involves a change of disposition.

Consider once again the illustration of making tea. When tea is added to water, the water is "tea-ified." This is a picture of sanctification. Christ is the heavenly "tea," and we are the "water." The more divine "tea" is added to us, the more we are "tea-ified." The more Christ is added to us, the more we are sanctified. Sanctification is not simply a change in position, but a change in disposition. In the illustration of making tea, the disposition of the water, even its essence, is changed as the water is "tea-ified."

Sanctification involves transformation. As the water is "tea-ified," it is also transformed. Thus, resurrection, sanctification, and transformation are all related.

THE PROCESS OF SONSHIP

Transformation is for conformation. According to 8:29, we all shall be conformed to the image of Christ. By conformation, we are brought into the reality of sonship. When we were born again, we had just a small portion of the sonship. Now the sonship needs to spread within us until it saturates our whole being. Eventually, at the time of the Lord's coming back, even our physical body will be saturated with the sonship. Thus, the saturation of our body with the sonship is the redemption of our body.

Today our spirit is in the sonship, but our body is not. According to the spirit we are sons of God, but according to our physical body, we are not yet in the sonship. The transfiguration, the redemption, of our body at the Lord's coming back will be the last step of the sonship. At that time, we shall be brought wholly and thoroughly into sonship. In every part of our being--spirit, soul, and body--we shall be the real sons of God. Then we shall be glorified. Praise the Lord that today we are undergoing the process of sonship, the process of becoming sons of God.

Within us we have the Spirit of sonship as a foretaste. When we cry, "Abba, Father," we have a sweet enjoyment of the Holy Spirit as a foretaste. This Spirit of sonship is now resurrecting us, sanctifying us, transforming us, and conforming us to the image of Christ.

THE BODY BUILT UP WITH SONS

These many brothers, the many sons of God, are the members of the Body of Christ. Because the Body can be built up only with sons of God, not with sinners in the flesh, the sonship is mentioned first and the Body is mentioned later. Romans 12 is the direct continuation of Romans 8. Only after we have been conformed to the image of Christ can we have the reality of the Body, of which we all are members.

The goal of the gospel as revealed in the book of Romans is to transform sinners in the flesh into sons of God in the spirit for the formation of the Body of Christ. The Apostle Paul served God in this gospel. We today must also learn to serve God in such a gospel. God establishes us according to the gospel unfolded in Romans (16:25). This gospel is not just for unbelievers, but also for believers. God establishes the believers according to the gospel concerning the Son of God who became a man in the flesh and who in His humanity was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness in power by resurrection. Romans 1:3 and 4 are a summary of the gospel, and the remainder of the book of Romans is the complete content of the gospel. In this gospel God is transforming sinners in the flesh into sons of God in power, by resurrection, and according to the Spirit of holiness.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FOUR

DESIGNATION BY RESURRECTION

We have seen that in 1:1 Paul said that he was "separated to the gospel of God," and then he goes on to say that the gospel of God concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1:3). This indicates that the gospel of God is a gospel of sonship. The goal of this gospel is to transform sinners into sons of God for the formation of the Body of Christ.

THE PROCESS OF RESURRECTION

As we consider this matter of sonship, certain important words command our attention: designation, resurrection, sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and manifestation. We are being designated sons of God through the process of resurrection. In this process a number of steps are involved. These steps include sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. This glorification will also be the manifestation. Today people may not realize that we are Christians. But on the day of our glorification, no one will need to ask us whether or not we are Christians, for we shall be manifested as sons of God. That manifestation will be the consummation of the process of designation by resurrection.

Sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification are not four altogether separate steps. Rather, as sanctification is going on, we are also being transformed. Moreover, as we are being transformed, the process of conformation begins to take place. Eventually, as the spontaneous continuation and consummation of these processes, we shall reach the stage of glorification or

manifestation. When sanctification, transformation, and conformation reach their peak, that will be the time of our glorification. This glorification will be our manifestation as sons of God. We are presently undergoing the process of designation by resurrection, a process which will ultimately bring us to the point of manifestation. The key to this process is resurrection. Therefore, we speak of designation by resurrection.

THE EXPERIENCE OF RESURRECTION

In this message we need to consider the matter of resurrection in some detail. We shall not look at it objectively, from the standpoint of doctrine, but subjectively, from the standpoint of the experience of life. Romans 6:5 speaks of the experience of resurrection. This verse says that we share in the likeness of Christ's resurrection. Some students of the Word have said that the resurrection mentioned here is the first resurrection spoken of in Revelation 20:4 and 5. But I do not believe that this is Paul's understanding of resurrection here. Paul is not saying that we must wait until the millennium to participate in the resurrection of Christ. In 6:5 Paul says that we have grown together with Christ in the likeness of His death and that we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. This does not refer to a future, objective resurrection, but it refers to our present experience of Christ's resurrection life. We should not regard the resurrection merely as a future event, as Martha did in John 11. The Lord Jesus told her that He was the resurrection and the life (v. 25). His word indicates that there is no need for us to wait until a future day to have Him as resurrection. Resurrection is not a matter of time or place; it is a matter of Christ. If we have Him, we have resurrection. But if we do not have Him, we do not have resurrection life, neither now nor in the future. Hallelujah, resurrection is Jesus, the Son of God! As long as we have Jesus Christ, we have resurrection, no matter where we may be.

What a difference there is between the doctrinal teaching regarding resurrection and the subjective revelation of Christ as resurrection! What we need today is not the objective teaching about resurrection, but the subjective, living, up-to-date experience of Christ as resurrection.

CHRIST AS LIFE-POWER

To say that Christ is resurrection means that Christ is the life-power. Resurrection is life-power. With life there are the life-essence, the life-shape, and the life-power. Firstly we have the life-essence and then we have the life-power. Following this, we have the life-shape, the life-form. Resurrection is Christ being the life-power to us. This is a very significant matter.

In 1936 I paid a visit to one of the leading universities in China. One of the students spoke to me about his difficulty in believing in resurrection. He told me that due to his modern scientific knowledge he could not believe. To him, resurrection was against scientific truth. Outside of the room where we were meeting there was a wheat field. Drawing his attention to the wheat growing in the field, I pointed out that the wheat was produced by some grains of seed that were buried in the earth. I told him that, in a sense, those seeds died, but that now they had come forth in resurrection as wheat. Through that illustration of death and resurrection, this young man was saved. Now he is one of the leading co-workers in Taiwan. This illustration shows that resurrection is a matter of life-power.

THE FUNCTIONS OF RESURRECTION

Conquering Negative Things

This life-power has a number of functions. The first function is that of conquering. Resurrection is able to conquer every negative thing, including death. Apart from God Himself, the most powerful thing in the universe is death. Whenever death visits anyone, that one cannot

resist it; he must yield to its power. Although death is so powerful, resurrection is even more powerful. Death cannot hold resurrection (Acts 2:24). On the contrary, resurrection conquers death and overcomes it.

In 1 Corinthians 15:26 Paul says, "The last enemy that is being abolished is death." This indicates that death is the strongest enemy. Such a strong enemy can be defeated only by resurrection. Therefore, the first function of resurrection, of the life-power, is that of conquering the negative things, especially death. The more resurrection is placed in a situation of death, the more opportunity it has to function to conquer death.

Swallowing Up Death

The second function of the life-power is to swallow up death. Resurrection not only conquers death and overcomes it, but it also devours it. In Numbers 14:9 Caleb said that the enemies of the children of Israel would be their food. Death, the last and greatest enemy, is food for resurrection. Sometimes an enemy is conquered, but he is still present. Through the function of the life-power, death is not only conquered, but is swallowed up to the point that it disappears. When the life-power swallows death, death vanishes.

Producing Growth, Transformation, and Shaping

The functions of conquering and swallowing are negative functions. Resurrection, however, also has many positive functions. The first of these is to produce growth and transformation. The more something grows, the more it is changed, transformed. Once again the growth of a carnation flower illustrates this. The carnation begins as a small seed. But after the seed is sown into the soil, it begins to grow, firstly into a tender sprout and eventually into a full-grown, blossoming carnation plant. When the carnation is still a sprout, it is difficult to distinguish it from other types of plants. But the more it grows, the more it changes and is transformed. It is transformed by growth.

In principle, the same kind of change takes place in children. As a child grows, his body assumes a certain shape. As the life-power transforms, it also shapes. The more we grow, the more we are shaped. Hence, resurrection causes growth, change, and shaping.

Releasing the Positive Things

Resurrection also releases the positive things. Fruit-bearing is one kind of release brought about by the function of resurrection. In the bearing of fruit there is the release of the life-essence from within a certain tree. This indicates that through Fruit-bearing the riches of the life within that tree are released. By the releasing function of the life-power all that is in a seed--the root, the stem, the branches, the leaves, the flower, and the fruit--is released. As the seed is resurrected, everything positive in it is released.

We often speak about the riches of Christ. Christ with all His riches has been sown into us as a seed. We see this in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. According to this parable, Christ has sown Himself into us as a seed of life. This seed includes all kinds of positive things: love, holiness, righteousness, humility, patience, endurance. In this seed are both the divine attributes and the human virtues. The only thing that is needed is the release. Resurrection releases the essence of all the riches of Christ from within the seed.

The Power to Rise Up

With resurrection there is also the power to rise up. Resurrection, like the calamus used in making the anointing oil in Exodus 30, rises above the "muddy" situations. This calamus is a picture of the power in Christ to rise up.

OUR EXPERIENCE OF RESURRECTION

As believers, we have Christ within us as resurrection, and this resurrection is our life-power. Day by day this

power functions to conquer death. Death has many aspects: weakness, hatred, darkness, pride, criticism, rumors. Even if you murmur or engage in a little gossiping, you will touch death. All negative things are included in the content of death. The resurrection within us conquers every form of death and swallows it up. It swallows our pride, our criticism, our false humility. Furthermore, this life-power causes growth, transformation, and shaping. It also releases the positive things, and it causes us to rise above every "muddy" situation.

Even if we do not have the realization that this life-power is within us, we do have the reality of this power. If we look back upon our experience with the Lord over the years, we shall see that the resurrection within us has been conquering death and swallowing up negative things. Our experience also testifies that this life-power has caused us to grow, to be transformed, and even to be somewhat shaped into the image of Christ. Furthermore, our experience reveals that the life-power has released so many positive things from within us. As resurrection releases, it also rises up within us.

Satan is always doing his best to hold us down. He does everything he can to suppress us, depress us, and oppress us. But praise the Lord for the rising calamus within us! The Lord sometimes allows the enemy to cast us into a "muddy" situation just so that resurrection has an opportunity to function by raising us far above that situation. This subjective resurrection is the resurrection spoken of in the book of Romans. It is in this resurrection that Christ in His humanity was designated the Son of God. By means of such a resurrection we also are in the process of being designated the sons of God.

THE SPIRIT AS THE REALITY OF RESURRECTION

Romans 8:11 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. In this verse resurrection is linked to the Spirit. The Spirit is the reality of resurrection. The Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from among the dead dwells in us as the reality of resurrection. If a person does not have the Holy Spirit, he cannot have resurrection. The resurrection we experience is actually the Holy Spirit Himself. If we had Romans 6 without Romans 8, we would not be able to participate in Christ as resurrection in a practical way. In Romans 8 we have the reality of resurrection; that is, we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We should never separate resurrection from the Spirit.

THE PROCESS OF DESIGNATION

We are being designated as sons of God by resurrection. We are daily undergoing the process of designation, and this designation is by resurrection. We all need to see that what the Lord is doing within us today is a matter of designation.

I would like to continue with the illustration of a carnation seed. A carnation seed is designated, not by being labeled, but by being sown into the earth and by growing gradually into a mature, blossoming carnation plant. The seed is designated as it grows. The more it grows, the more it is designated. When it reaches full bloom, it will be designated in a complete way. This means that the full blossoming of a carnation flower is its full designation. Like the carnation seed, we all are in the process of designation. The more we grow and are transformed, the more we are designated the sons of God.

ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

According to the flesh, we all are troublesome, both to the church and to those with whom we live. The husbands trouble the wives, and the wives trouble the husbands. But we do not need to have our being according to the flesh, for we have the option of being according to the Spirit. When the brothers and sisters have their being according to the Spirit, they are wonderful and glorious. Whether you have

your being according to the flesh or according to the Spirit depends on the choice you make. By your own will you may decide either to have your being according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. May the Lord be merciful to us so that we may choose to live according to the Spirit. We urgently need to learn how to walk according to the Spirit. If we walk according to the flesh, the church life will be most unpleasant. But if we walk according to the Spirit, the church life will be in the heavens.

The sonship is realized by resurrection and in the Spirit. The Spirit who dwells in us is the rising-up Spirit and the designating Spirit. Day by day, this Spirit is designating us the sons of God.

If, like Paul, we would serve God in the gospel concerning His Son, we must know what sonship is and how it is realized. Thank the Lord that Paul wrote this Epistle to the Romans! This book reveals that we should help others not only to be saved, but also to experience the sonship. This means that we need to help them to see the matter of designation by resurrection, including sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD

The universe is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (8:19). This manifestation will not come as an accident, but it will come as the consummation of the process of designation, just as a carnation flower blossoms as the consummation of a long process of growth and change. The more we grow, the more we are designated by resurrection. One day, at the time of our glorification, we shall fully blossom and manifestly be the sons of God.

Many Christians devote their attention to objective teachings regarding the so-called dispensations in the Scriptures. According to the Bible, however, the word *dispensation* does not denote an age, but it denotes an act of dispensing. The New Testament revelation needs to become very subjective to us. I do not believe that a person who lives outside the presence of the Lord will suddenly be

raptured into His presence. Being brought into the Lord's presence involves a process of sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification.

SUBJECTIVE SANCTIFICATION

No believer in Christ is ever sanctified accidentally. I realize that, in a sense, we were all sanctified when we were saved. But we still need to pass through the process of sanctification in order to be sanctified dispositionally. In the Bible the words *sanctification, holy,* and *holiness* refer to separation. Hence, to be sanctified is to be separated, to be made different from that which is common.

When a carnation plant is a tender sprout, it may not appear to be very different from other kinds of sprouts. But the more the carnation plant grows, the more it becomes separated, different, from other plants. When it blossoms, it is wholly separated, absolutely different, from all other flowers. This is an illustration of subjective sanctification, of dispositional sanctification.

THE CONSUMMATION OF TRANSFORMATION

Sanctification in Romans refers not merely to a change of position, but to a change of disposition. It involves a change in shape that is the result of an inward change in life. This indicates that conformation, the change in shape, is related to growth and transformation. A carnation plant illustrates this also. As a carnation grows and is transformed, it is shaped into a particular form. By growth, it is changed from one form into another. This change continues until the plant blossoms. The blossoming is the consummation of transformation.

SHAPED INTO THE LIFE-FORM

To be transformed is to be shaped into the life-form by the life-power with the life-essence. Suppose in your garden two kinds of plants are growing, a carnation and a lily. As these flowers grow, the carnation will take on one form, and the lily will take on another form. Each is shaped by the life-power with the life-essence within it.

Every life has its own form. For example, a dog has one form and a chicken has another. The growth of a certain life brings in the full form of that life. Today we are sons of God, but we do not yet have the full form, the complete shape, of sons of God. Therefore, by growth and transformation we need to be conformed to the image of Christ. Eventually, we shall be completely conformed to His image. Then we shall possess the full life-shape which comes from the life-power with the life-essence. A carnation, a chicken, and a dog all have a different life-form according to their life-essence. A carnation has the form of a carnation because it has the life-essence of a carnation. The carnation essence develops into the carnation form by means of the life-power within the carnation. Praise the Lord that we have the life-essence and the life-power within us! This life-power is shaping us into the image of the Son of God. Through this shaping function of the life-power, we shall be fully conformed to the image of Christ.

ENJOYING THE DESIGNATING SPIRIT

Praise the Lord that instead of mere objective teachings, we have the designating spirit within us! We have the designating Christ as resurrection within. Do not try to improve yourself or to make yourself sinlessly perfect. Rather, enjoy and experience the designating Spirit. If by the Spirit we put to death the practices of the body, we shall live (8:13). We need to walk according to the Spirit, set our mind upon the Spirit, and by the Spirit put to death the practices of the body. If we walk daily according to the Spirit, we shall be fully in the process of designation by resurrection. By the power of resurrection, we shall be transformed, conformed, and, eventually, glorified.

The more we contact the Lord by calling upon His name, the more we sense His presence and the more we

are conscious of His anointing within. By calling on the name of the Lord, we are watered, we are refreshed, we are sanctified, we are satisfied, and we are strengthened. In this way we are brought into His presence and we are made ready for His coming. The kind of teachings we need today are not the objective teachings about prophecy or about the dispensations, but those regarding how we are designated by enjoying and experiencing Christ as the life-power. If we have this kind of teaching, we shall realize that in ourselves we are hopeless and helpless, and we shall no longer try to improve ourselves. Rather, we shall exercise our spirit to contact the Lord so that we may enjoy His anointing and participate in the process of designation by resurrection.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FIVE

DESIGNATION BY THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

In the foregoing message we considered seven significant words: designation, resurrection, sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and manifestation. We are designated sons of God by resurrection. The process of resurrection includes sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. This glorification will also be our manifestation.

All these seven items take place by the Spirit and with life. God designates us and causes us to undergo the process of resurrection by means of His Spirit and with life. Also, God sanctifies us, transforms us, conforms us, glorifies us, and brings us into the full manifestation of sonship by the Spirit with life. In the book of Romans both the Spirit and the divine life are covered.

HOLINESS, THE DIVINE ESSENCE

In 1:4 why does Paul speak of the Spirit of holiness and not of the Holy Spirit? There is a distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of holiness. Holiness is the divine essence, the substance of God. Hence, the Spirit of holiness is the Spirit of the divine substance, whereas the Holy Spirit is the Person of the Spirit. As fallen ones, we are constituted with sinfulness. But as the Son of God, Christ is constituted with holiness. Holiness is His very element. Here holiness does not mean sinless perfection or positional separation; it denotes the divine essence, the very substance of God's being. It was according to the Spirit of holiness that Christ was designated the Son of God.

Once again we may use the plant life as an illustration. When a carnation and a lily have just sprouted, they may look very much alike. But as these plants grow, they are gradually designated according to the life-essence within them. In the same principle, the Spirit of holiness is the life-essence within the Lord Jesus. When He was living on earth in the flesh, He had this divine life-essence within Him. Because this life-essence was according to God's being, it was also the essence of holiness. According to our understanding, the word holiness refers to being separated, distinct, from all common things. Because God's essence is unique, God is separate from all things other than Himself. The holiness spoken of in verse 4 is the divine essence that was in the Lord Jesus when He lived on earth. Just as a carnation flower is designated according to the life-essence within it, so the Lord Jesus was designated by resurrection through the divine life-essence within Him.

We have pointed out that we all need to serve God in the gospel of His Son. To serve God in the gospel is to serve Him not only in the matters of redemption, justification, and forgiveness, but especially in the matter of sonship. All the service in the local churches should be the service in the gospel of sonship. According to this gospel, sinners in the flesh can be transformed into sons of God in the Spirit. What glad tidings!

THE APPLICATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

In this message we need to see that designation, resurrection, sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and manifestation are all realized by the Spirit of holiness. In order to understand this, we need to know that God's economy is to dispense Himself into man. The fact that God is triune--the Father, the Son, and the Spirit--is related to His economy, to His dispensing of Himself into us. God the Father is embodied in God the Son, and God the Son is realized, transmitted, experienced and gained by us in God the Spirit. The Spirit as the third

in the Godhead is God being our realization and experience. This means that the application of the Triune God to us comes by the Spirit of God. For this reason, in our experience the Triune God is the Spirit.

Electrical current is an illustration of the Spirit as the application of the Triune God. Apart from the current of electricity, electricity cannot be applied. In its application, electricity needs to become an electrical current. The current, however, is not something different from electricity itself. The current of electricity is simply electricity in motion. In the same principle, the application of the Triune God to us is the Spirit. The Spirit is the current of the Triune God for us to apply; He is the Triune God in motion.

CHRIST BEING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

The New Testament clearly reveals that Christ today is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). This means that Christ is the Spirit who is the current of the Triune God for us to apply in our experience. This understanding may differ from traditional theology, but it corresponds to the pure Word of God. The New Testament reveals that Christ, God incarnated as a man, died on the cross for our sins, was resurrected from among the dead, ascended to the heavens, and has been glorified and enthroned as the King, the Head, and the Lord over all. This very Christ is also the life-giving Spirit.

All the objective items of who Christ is and of what Christ is are recognized and taught by fundamental Christians today. However, the matter of Christ as the life-giving Spirit has been grossly neglected. This is due to Satan's subtlety. A person may talk about what electricity is and what it can do, but he may neglect the current of electricity. What good is it to discuss electricity without applying it? I do not know very much about electricity, but by applying it I enjoy its benefits. In the same principle, our need today is not mainly the objective knowledge of

doctrines; it is the subjective experience of the current of the Triune God.

Satan, the subtle enemy of God, may allow people to know that Christ is the Son of God who was incarnated as a man, who died on the cross for our redemption, who was resurrected, and who has ascended to the right hand of God. But the enemy blinds the believers to the vital truth regarding Christ as the life-giving Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:6 says that the letter kills, but that the Spirit gives life. According to 2 Corinthians 3:17, the Lord is this very Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Verse 18 continues, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (Gk.). In this verse we see a compound title--Lord Spirit. Few Christians have paid attention to this title of the Lord. The understanding and experience of Christ as the Lord Spirit need to be recovered. I love to call on the name of the Lord Jesus, but I especially enjoy touching Him as the Lord Spirit. The Lord Jesus today is the wonderful life-giving Spirit.

This very point is also covered in Romans 8. In verse 9 of this chapter Paul speaks of the Spirit of God dwelling in us. Then he says, "But if any one has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." This clearly indicates that today the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. Furthermore, the next verse speaks of Christ being in us. The fact that these terms are used interchangeably indicates that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ and that the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself. The Spirit spoken of in Romans 8 is Christ Himself.

This Christ who is the life-giving Spirit is in our spirit. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit." This reveals clearly that the Holy Spirit is one with our regenerated human spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ today is the application and realization of the Triune God. Furthermore, this application and realization is in our spirit.

APPLYING THE HEAVENLY ELECTRICITY

Our being is like a building. In this building Christ as the heavenly electricity has been installed. We praise the Lord that in this building the divine electrician has placed a switch--the human spirit. Our spirit can be compared to a switch by which we apply the heavenly electricity. What a frustration it would be to us if electricity had been installed into this building, but there were no switch. Praise the Lord for the switch of our human spirit! Using this switch is the key to experiencing the Spirit as the application of the Triune God. Time and time again we need to remind ourselves that Christ as the realization of the Triune God is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit.

Many of us have been taught to meditate upon the Lord and upon spiritual things. In such meditation we may recall how the Son of God was incarnated, how He was born in a manger, how He worked as a carpenter, and how He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended. I do not oppose this kind of meditation. I wish to point out, however, that it is too objective. If we only meditate on the Lord, we shall not enjoy the practical, instant application of Him as the life-giving Spirit. A believer may enjoy a continual application of Christ, although he may not know much about Him in a doctrinal way. Consider the illustration of the electricity again. Do you wait until you understand electricity before you apply it? Of course not. Although it may be useful to understand electricity, the important thing is to apply it. Many Christians concentrate on obtaining a doctrinal knowledge of Christ, but they neglect the practical experience of Him. Many believers simply do not know how to apply Him. If we would apply Him, we need to see that today, as the life-giving Spirit, He is the divine electricity in our spirit.

CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

The way to use this switch is given in 10:12. There it says, "The same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon

Him." This divine electricity is rich to all who "switch on," and the way to "switch on" is to call on the name of the Lord. By calling on the Lord we exercise our spirit. If we simply think about what the Lord is to us, we do not have any practical contact with Him. Remember, 10:12 says that the Lord is rich to all who *call* upon Him. How simple this is! By calling on the name of the Lord Jesus we are released from the vanity of the natural mind, and we are kept in the spirit.

EXPERIENCING WHAT IS RELATED TO THE SPIRIT

Designation is by resurrection, which includes sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. All these wonderful things are in the Spirit. By touching the Spirit, we enjoy resurrection and everything included in it. Resurrection is not a matter of doctrine; it is absolutely a matter of touching the Spirit. The most simple way to contact the Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. The more we touch the Spirit, the more we enjoy resurrection and the more we are sanctified, transformed, and glorified.

According to the book of Romans, the Spirit as the realization of the Triune God is related to at least ten items. All ten of these items are related to our experience of the reality of resurrection.

Holiness

Firstly, the Spirit is related to holiness (1:4). We have pointed out that Paul even uses the term the Spirit of holiness in 1:4. If we would partake of God's holiness, the essence of God's being, we need to contact the Spirit.

Life

In 8:2 the Spirit is called the Spirit of Life. Many Christians today talk about life without realizing that life is related to the Spirit. Life is extremely difficult to define. In speaking about life, it is best to speak from the

standpoint of experience. Romans 8:6 says that the mind set on the spirit is life. To be in life means that our inner being is living. By setting the mind on the spirit, we are living. However, if you set your mind upon your situation or your environment, you will be deadened. You will sense that your inner being is depressed. But if you turn your mind to the spirit and set it on the spirit, you will be living once again. This indicates that life is manifested as livingness.

Life also energizes us. The divine life within us is never exhausted. I can testify that as I speak in the Lord's ministry, the life within energizes me.

Furthermore, this same life strengthens and satisfies us. When we experience life, we never have a sense of emptiness within. On the contrary, we are richly satisfied. Hence, by life we become living, energized, strengthened, and satisfied. The more we contact the Spirit by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, the more we become living, energized, strengthened, and satisfied.

Law

According to 8:2, the Spirit is also related to law. This verse speaks of the law of the Spirit of life. Here Paul tells us that this law sets us free from the law of sin and of death. The law of the Spirit of life is versus the law of sin and of death. Because the law of the Spirit of life is higher than the law of sin and of death, it sets us free from that law.

We have spoken about the Spirit of holiness and the Spirit of life. Actually, the Spirit *is* holiness and life. In the same principle, the Spirit is the law that sets us free from the law of sin and of death. This law is a spontaneous, automatic power. Whenever we touch the Spirit, we touch this law, this spontaneous, automatic power. If we see this, we shall realize the vanity of expending our own effort to improve ourselves. Instead of striving, we should simply contact the Spirit and give place to the spontaneous working of the law of the Spirit of life within us.

Peace

The Spirit is also related to peace. The mind set upon the spirit is not only life, but peace as well. Peace is not only a matter of rest, but even more a matter of enjoyment. Without enjoyment we cannot have genuine peace. Silence without enjoyment is not peace. The Spirit is peace to us. When we contact the Spirit, we have a living and genuine peace.

Joy

Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." This verse indicates that the Spirit is related to joy. When we are in the Spirit, we are joyful, so joyful that we may shout praises to the Lord. At times we may be beside ourselves with joy, and praises spontaneously flow out from within us.

Hope

Romans 15:13 says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit." There is no need for us to be without hope, for whenever we touch the Spirit, we have hope. Psalm 3:3 says, "But thou, O Lord, art...the lifter up of mine head." The Lord is the One who lifts up our head. This means that He gives us hope. When we are in the Spirit, our heads are uplifted, and we are filled with hope.

Love

Romans 5:5 indicates that the Spirit is also related to love: "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us." Furthermore, in 15:30 Paul speaks of "the love of the Spirit." As we contact the Spirit, we experience love.

Power

In 15:13 and 19, Paul mentions the power of the Spirit. This power is like a dynamo energizing us from within. When we are in the Spirit, we are spontaneously energized by the power of the Spirit.

Service

Romans 7:6 says that "we should serve as slaves in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter." This verse points to the relationship between the Spirit and service. If we are not in the Spirit, we cannot serve the Lord. In 1:9 Paul said that it was in his spirit that he served God in the gospel. The more we are in the spirit, the more we serve the Lord as willing bondslaves. We shall say, "Lord Jesus, as Your bondslave, I am willing to serve You."

Preaching the Gospel

Finally, the genuine preaching of the gospel is in the Spirit. This gospel includes the entire content of the book of Romans.

Perhaps you have never seen before that holiness, life, law, peace, joy, hope, love, power, service, and the preaching of the gospel are all related to the Spirit. In fact, the Spirit Himself is the reality of all these items to us in our experience. If we have the Spirit, then we also have all these marvelous items. When these items are added together, they equal sanctification, transformation, conformation, and glorification. All this is the reality of resurrection. The more these ten items become our experience, the more we enjoy resurrection by the Spirit and with life. What we need today is not the objective teachings, but the practical contact with the Lord by turning on the switch. As we call upon the name of the Lord, we touch the Spirit, who is the realization and application of the Triune God. In this way we experience being designated the sons of God by the Spirit and with life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SIX

DESIGNATION BY THE MINGLED SPIRIT

We have seen that the gospel of God is the gospel of sonship. This means that God's intention is to produce many sons through the gospel. For the producing of these many sons, the economy of the three Persons of the Godhead is involved. The Father as the source is in the Son, who is the course, and the Son as the embodiment of the Father is now in the flow of the Spirit. The Spirit is thus the current of the Triune God. Just as electrical current is electricity in motion, so the Spirit of the Triune God is God in motion. Hence, the Spirit of God is for the application of God to us.

THE FLOWING OF THE DIVINE CURRENT

Apart from the Spirit as the current, the flow, there is no way for God to be applied to us. God is rich and all His riches are for us; but there is the need of the Spirit as the current for the application of the riches of God to our experience. This flow of the Spirit is the anointing, the moving, of the ointment within us. All that God is in Christ and all that God has accomplished, obtained, and attained in Christ are in this current, this flow, this anointing. Now in our spirit we have the flowing of the divine current, the moving of the ointment. Within us there is something that is constantly in motion. This moving element includes divinity, humanity, Christ's human living, the effectiveness of His death, the power of His resurrection, the fragrance of His resurrection, His ascension, enthronement, headship, lordship, authority, and kingdom. Thus, the anointing within us is an all-inclusive ointment. Praise the Lord that this current is flowing within us!

APPLYING THE HEAVENLY ELECTRICITY

We also have seen the importance of our spirit in applying the current of the Triune God. Our spirit is like a switch. By exercising our spirit, we switch on the heavenly electricity which has been installed into us. If we did not have a switch or did not know where the switch was, we would have no way of applying electricity. In the same principle, apart from the switch of our spirit, we have no way to apply the heavenly electricity. Praise the Lord that we have a switch and that we know where it is! The switch is in the inner chamber of our being, that is, in our spirit. The simplest way to switch on the current is to call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT

In 1:9 Paul said, "For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son." The place to serve God is not the mind; it is our spirit. People rarely say "my spirit." They speak of their heart, their soul, their mind, their emotion, and their will, but not of their spirit. However, Paul was a person who served God in his spirit. We need to develop the habit of saying "my spirit" or "our spirit." As 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." We need to speak more about our spirit, turn to our spirit, and use our spirit in all things.

The reason certain ones do not pray or function in the meetings is that they do not exercise their spirit. Many seem to leave their spirit at home when they come to the meetings. How different they are from Paul, who could attend a church meeting in his spirit even when he was not physically present (1 Cor. 5:3). We do not function in the meetings because we do not exercise our spirit. Likewise, we have many failures in our daily living because we fail to use our spirit. For example, we lose our temper or become depressed because we do not exercise our spirit. In the same principle, we may be unable to know the will of God or to obtain life from the Word

because our spirit is dull from lack of exercise. All our problems are solved and all our needs are met through the exercise of our spirit. All that God is and all that He has accomplished are in the all-inclusive Spirit who has been installed in our spirit. Therefore, by turning to our spirit and by exercising our spirit, we may obtain the full supply to meet our need.

WHAT WE NEED TODAY

Through many years of experience and suffering, I have learned that what we need today is not the knowledge of doctrine, but the exercise of our spirit so that we may experience the application of the Triune God in the flow of the Holy Spirit. After I was saved, I joined a group of Christians who emphasized the objective study of the Bible. I remained under their influence as a willing learner for more than seven years. But one day as I was walking on the street, the Spirit within said to me, "You know so many teachings, but look how dead and unfruitful you are. In the past several years you have brought almost no one to the Lord." My heart was smitten, and I cried to the Lord for His mercy. I admitted that I was wrong. Early the next day, I climbed a mountain near my home, and there I cried out to the Lord to have mercy on me because of my deadness. The Lord was merciful, and from that time He caused me to seek Him in a consistent way. After that, brother Watchman Nee visited my home town and stayed with me for a while. His visit was a turning point in my life. My eyes were opened to see that the Christian life is not a matter of knowledge, but absolutely a matter of life and the Spirit. However, it took me a long time to become entirely free from the influence of dead knowledge. Once this kind of knowledge gets into us, it is hard to get it out. Therefore, when I say that what we need today is not mere knowledge but the contact with the living Spirit, I know what I am talking about.

All that Christ is, all that He has accomplished, and all that He has obtained and attained are in the all-inclusive

Spirit. This Spirit contains everything we need: resurrection, power, life, guidance, light, love, humility. Furthermore, this wonderful all-inclusive Spirit has been installed in our spirit. Hallelujah, the living Christ who is the all-inclusive Spirit is in our spirit! We can apply this wonderfully rich One simply by using our spirit.

THE RICHNESS OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

In the last message we considered ten matters related to the Spirit: holiness, life, law, peace, joy, love, hope, power, service, and preaching. Now we shall consider another ten items to impress us with the richness of the indwelling Spirit.

Freedom

In the Spirit we have freedom. Romans 8:2 says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed us from the law of sin and of death. Verse 21 of the same chapter speaks of the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Today we are in the process of becoming free. The entire universe with everything in it is in a state of slavery. In Romans 8 this slavery, this bondage, is called the slavery of corruption. Things die because they are held by this slavery of corruption. But the Spirit is setting us free from this slavery. One day we shall be fully out of the slavery of corruption and fully into the freedom of glory.

Foretaste

Today we also enjoy the Spirit as a foretaste (8:23). We need to learn to have a greater appreciation for the Spirit as a foretaste. How sweet, tender, and enjoyable this foretaste is to us!

Sonship

The sonship we have in the Spirit (8:15) includes a number of items: the life of the son, the sphere of the son, the position of the son, the living of the son, the enjoyment

of the son, the birthright of the son, the inheritance of the son, and the manifestation of the son. We have such an all-inclusive sonship in our spirit. If we stay away from the spirit, we are kept from the enjoyment of the sonship. However, as we are waiting for the full sonship, we should daily enjoy the sonship by exercising our spirit.

The Leading of the Spirit

Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Here we have the leading of the Spirit. As sons of God, we have the Spirit's leading. We have something that functions within us spontaneously and automatically to give us the Lord's leading. However, we need to cooperate by paying attention to this leading and by honoring it. Sometimes we say that we do not know the Spirit's leading, when deep within we know it quite well. We may not know it in the mind, but we know it in our spirit. Perhaps you are wondering whether or not you have the Lord's leading to participate in a certain activity. Do not come to me and ask me what you should do, for I shall tell you that within your spirit you have the leading of the Holy Spirit. Since you already have the Spirit's leading, you should simply honor it and obey it.

Witnessing

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." This verse indicates that we have the witnessing of the Spirit. The Spirit witnesses that we are God's children.

Furthermore, the Spirit bears witness that, as the children of God, we should not wear certain kinds of clothing or go to certain worldly places. Many times this witness bothers us. On the one hand, it assures us that we are children of God. But on the other hand, it convicts us when we do things that are not in keeping with being a child of God. This indicates that to be a child of God is to be limited and restricted. However, this limitation and

restriction are not a suffering, but a protection. Thank the Lord that we are preserved and protected by the inner witnessing of the Spirit.

Interceding

In 8:26 and 27 we have the interceding of the Spirit. Often the Spirit intercedes with sighs or groanings, especially when we are about to do something displeasing to the Lord. The purpose of the Spirit's intercession is that we would be conformed to the image of Christ. For this reason, verse 27 says that the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God. When we do something that does not help to conform us to the image of Christ, the Spirit groans within us. Because of the Spirit's groaning, the Christian life is not always a life of joy, for we are inwardly troubled when we do certain things. The people in the world may participate in a particular form of worldly entertainment and be happy about it. But if we share in that form of entertainment, we shall feel deeply troubled within. The Spirit groans concerning anything we do that does not correspond to the divine essence, that is, to holiness, or that does not help to conform us to the image of Christ.

Verse 28 says that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to the purpose. The "all things" in this verse are related to the interceding of the Spirit in verses 26 and 27. Because the Spirit intercedes, 90 many things work together for good on our behalf. For example, suppose you spend your money in a loose way and do not use it properly for the Lord's interest. This will cause the Spirit to intercede with groanings. Eventually, the Father will answer the Spirit's intercession by causing you to have a shortage of money. This financial difficulty will help to conform you to the image of the Son of God. The time to declare that all things work together for good is not when we are enjoying material benefits, but when our situation is difficult. God did not regenerate us so that we might enjoy the world. He regenerated us so that we might

become His sons. In order for us to reach the full sonship, we need the Spirit's interceding.

Renewing

Next we have the renewing of the Spirit. It is by this renewing of the Spirit that we have the newness of life in 6:4. We all should walk in this newness.

The Newness of the Spirit

In 7:6 Paul said that "we should serve as slaves in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter." Today we serve God in the newness of spirit.

Resurrection

Furthermore, the genuine resurrection power is in the Spirit. When we are in spirit, we are in resurrection.

Sanctification

Finally, sanctification takes place in the spirit.

CONTACTING THE SPIRIT

It does not matter very much whether we understand all these items or not. As long as we are in the Spirit, we have the reality of them all. For example, you may not know what ingredients are in the food you eat, but by eating you take in all the ingredients. What is important is not that we know the recipe, but that we eat the food. Again I say, our need today is not for more teachings; it is for the application and enjoyment of the all-inclusive Spirit. Teachings cannot make us spiritual or humble. We become spiritual and truly humble only by contacting the Spirit through the exercise of our spirit.

WALKING ACCORDING TO THE MINGLED SPIRIT

Translators have a difficult time deciding whether or not to use a capital letter for the word for Spirit in chapter eight. The reason is that the Spirit in this chapter is the mingled spirit, the Holy Spirit mingled with our human

spirit. Therefore, to walk according to the spirit in chapter eight is to walk according to the mingled spirit. Day by day we should cleave to the mingled spirit and do everything according to this spirit. Whenever we walk according to the flesh we are sinners, no matter whether we regard ourselves as good or bad. But we need not walk according to the flesh, for we have the option of walking according to the spirit. When we do this, we enjoy all the riches of Christ.

We daily need to practice having our being according to the spirit. We need to apply this in our talking, in our thinking, and in everything we do. For example, suppose a young one is wondering whether he can participate in a certain kind of athletic activity. My advice to him would be that if he can participate in that athletic activity according to the spirit, then he should go ahead and do so. As Christians, we should not decide matters according to right or wrong; rather, we should decide them according to the spirit.

The Spirit who is mingled with our spirit and according to whom we may have our very being is the wonderful Spirit of the Triune God. Such a Spirit, the realization and application of the Triune God, is now mingled with our spirit. In Romans 8 it is no longer a matter of simply the divine Spirit nor of just the human spirit, but it is a matter of the divine Spirit mingled with the human spirit. Hallelujah for this marvelous mingling!

THE MINGLED SPIRIT AND THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

But although we have such a wonderful mingled spirit within us, we may not care for this spirit very much. But I believe that in the Lord's recovery the Lord will recover the matter of walking according to the mingled spirit. Without this, it is impossible to have the proper church life. If we do not live and walk according to the spirit, we cannot be a help to the church life. If we do not know how to help others have their being according to the spirit, the church will not be built up, no matter how much we may

preach, teach, or minister. What counts is not teaching, but our living according to the mingled spirit and our helping others to do the same thing. Here in the mingled spirit we enjoy the riches of Christ, and here we have the church as the genuine expression of the Body of Christ. The more we walk according to the spirit, the more the church will be built up in a practical way.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

Romans 8:4 and 5 give us the key to the experience of Christ and the church life: walking according to the mingled spirit. All that Christ is and all that He has done is in this mingled spirit. Our spirit has been regenerated, and now it is indwelt by the wonderful life-giving Spirit. Furthermore, it is mingled with this all-inclusive Spirit. Do not be occupied with your weaknesses or infirmities, but pay attention to the marvelous heritage you have--the all-inclusive Spirit indwelling your regenerated spirit. Today we are living in the dispensation of the all-inclusive Spirit. The ointment has been compounded by the divine perfumer, and we now have the anointing of the ointment within us, in our spirit. Every regenerated person has had his spirit indwelt by and mingled with the all-inclusive Spirit. All we need today is to exercise our spirit to switch on the heavenly electricity. It is by switching on, not by teachings, that we touch the Lord as the life-giving Spirit and enjoy Him. It is by using the switch that we walk according to the mingled spirit.

THE WAY TO BE DESIGNATED SONS OF GOD

We have pointed out that even the Lord Jesus according to the flesh had to be designated the Son of God. Before His designation, according to the flesh He was just the seed of David; in that part of His being He was not yet the Son of God. But by resurrection He was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. In the same principle, according to the flesh we are sinners. But now

that we have been regenerated, we can have our being according to the spirit. The more we walk according to the mingled spirit, the more we undergo the process of designation. Day by day, we are resurrected, sanctified, transformed, and glorified. The way to be designated sons of God is not to acquire more teachings. It is to have our being according to the mingled spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SEVEN

RIGHTEOUSNESS--THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

We have seen that the book of Romans is the gospel of sonship. However, in this book another important matter is covered, and that is the matter of righteousness. In 1:16 and 17 Paul says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, because the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. In this message we shall see why righteousness is the power of the gospel and why righteousness is necessary in order for God to produce many sons through the gospel.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS FULFILLED BY CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS

In eternity past God predestinated us to be His sons. However, although we were the predestinated ones, we became fallen and involved with sin. This brings in the matter of God's righteousness. If we had not fallen, we would not need to be concerned with righteousness. But because we are fallen, God must deal with us according to His righteousness. What should God do with those He has predestinated to become His sons? Some may say that because God loves us, He cannot cast us all into the lake of fire. Yes, God loves us, but He hates sin. God does not desire to give us up or to cast us into the lake of fire. However, He cannot forgive us unless His righteousness has been satisfied. If God would forgive us in a light manner, He would place Himself in a position of being unrighteous. As a righteous God and a just God, He cannot forgive sinful people without meeting the demands of His righteousness.

In order that God might be able to forgive us, Christ, the Son of God, became flesh. As 8:3 says, God sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. By incarnation, the Lord took upon Himself the likeness of the flesh of sin and became identified with sinners in the flesh. For the sake of God's righteousness, the Lord Jesus was put to death on the cross. There, on the cross, He was made sin for us, and God condemned sin in the flesh. By dying on our behalf the Lord accomplished redemption and fulfilled all of God's righteous requirements. Now God has the position righteously to forgive us. In fact, He not only can forgive us, but, for the sake of His righteousness, He must forgive us. God forgives not primarily because He loves us, but because He is bound by His righteousness to do so.

John 3:16 says that because God loved us, He gave His only begotten Son 80 that everyone who believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. This verse indicates that God saves us because He loves us. Furthermore, in Ephesians 2:5 and 8 we are told that we are saved by grace. The book of Romans, however, reveals that we are saved not by grace nor by love, but by righteousness. Neither love nor grace is a legal matter. You cannot claim that, according to law, a person is required to love you or to show grace to you. Only with those things which are related to righteousness do we have the position to claim something in a legal way.

For example, suppose you are a landlord and I am one of your tenants. Each month I am required to pay you a certain amount of money as rent. If I fail to pay rent for two months, you have the position to righteously claim from me the payment of the rent. On my part, I must pay the rent, not out of love nor out of grace, but out of righteousness. I am legally obligated to pay the rent. If I pay it, I am righteous. But if I do not pay it, I am not righteous.

In one sense, the Lord Jesus was put to death by the Jews and Romans. But in another sense, He was put to death by God. The Lord was on the cross for six hours. During the first three hours, He suffered the persecution

of men, who did many evil things to Him. But during the last three hours, God laid all our sins upon Him, and then He judged Him, punished Him, and put Him to death. This is proved by Isaiah 53. God put Christ to death because, during the last three hours on the cross, Christ took our place. Through Christ's death, God's righteous requirements were fulfilled. Therefore, the Lord could utter the words, "It is finished" (John 19:30). By saying this, the Lord was indicating that the work of redemption was accomplished. As proof of this, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). Furthermore, the entire scene surrounding the place of Christ's death became serene and peaceful. A wealthy man asked for the body of Jesus and buried Him in a tomb (John 19:38). Thus, with His suffering over, the Lord rested in the tomb. The requirements of God's righteousness had been fulfilled by Christ's death, and God was satisfied. Three days later, as proof of this satisfaction, God raised Christ from among the dead. Hence, the resurrection of Christ is the proof that God is satisfied with His death on our behalf.

Before Christ died on the cross, it was still possible for God to change His mind about forgiving us of our sins. He could righteously have cast us all aside. But after Christ's death on the cross under the judgment of God, God cannot do this.

IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD TO CHANGE HIS MIND

Now that Christ has died and has been raised from among the dead, it is impossible for God to change His mind about forgiving us. Rather, we have the ground to say to Him, "O God, whether You love me or not, You must forgive me. Before Christ died on the cross, You could have changed Your mind. But because He has died and because You have raised Him from among the dead, You have no legal standing to refuse to forgive me. O God, You must forgive me now, for You have no right to change in this matter. You are bound by Your righteousness." In this way, righteousness is the power of the gospel.

Both love and grace may change, but righteousness is solid and steadfast. God is free either to love us or not to love us. However, He is bound by His righteousness. Now that Christ has died to fulfill God's righteous requirements, God has put Himself into a position where He is legally bound. Whether He loves us or not, He is bound by His own righteousness to forgive us. Thus, the foundation of our salvation is righteousness, not love or grace. Psalm 89:14 says, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne" (Heb.). The very foundation of God's throne is also the foundation of our salvation. Can the foundation of God's throne be shaken? Certainly not. Likewise, the foundation of our salvation cannot be shaken, for this foundation is not love nor grace, but righteousness.

The Bible does not say that love is the power of the gospel; neither does it say that grace is the power of the gospel. But it does reveal that the righteousness of God is the power of the gospel. If we consider ourselves, we shall realize that we are not lovable nor worthy of God's grace. We simply do not deserve anything from God. But God is righteous. He put Christ to death on our behalf, and He has recognized the death of Christ as the full payment of our debt. Furthermore, the resurrected Christ sitting at God's right hand is the receipt of payment. Since God has already issued this receipt, how could He righteously claim payment again from us? If He would do so, we could point Him to Christ and remind Him that He must take care of His righteous position, even the foundation of His throne.

We can boldly tell God, "If You don't deal with me according to Your righteousness, Your throne will be shaken. The important issue is not whether I shall be saved or perish; it is whether or not You will allow the foundation of Your throne to be shaken. God, for me to perish is a secondary matter. The primary matter is the righteous foundation of Your throne. God, I remind You of Your righteousness. Christ has died for my sins, and He is now at Your right hand as proof that You have received

His payment of all my debts. According to Your righteousness, You have no choice except to save me. Christ has died, You have accepted His death and have resurrected Him from among the dead, and now You are legally bound to forgive me. By resurrecting Christ You indicated that You were satisfied with His payment and You issued a receipt of payment. O God, if You were not satisfied with Christ, then You should have allowed Him to remain in the tomb. O Father God, I appreciate Your love and Your grace. But now I stand before You not so much in love or in grace, but in Your righteousness. Now, no matter what my condition is, You must forgive me."

Have you ever prayed to God in such a way? It pleases Him whenever someone prays like this. This is a prayer that appeals to God according to His righteousness. The gospel of Christ is the power of God because the righteousness of God is revealed in it.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS MANIFESTED AND SHOWN FORTH

In 3:21 Paul speaks a further word about righteousness: "But now without law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." To say that the righteousness of God has been manifested without the law means that the righteousness of God is not based on our doing; that is, it is not based upon our keeping the law.

God's righteousness is shown forth, in the forbearance of God, in His passing by of the sins that occurred before (3:25). This means that in view of the redemption of Christ that was to come, God passed by the sins of many saints in the Old Testament, such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and David. During the Old Testament age, God neither condemned ones such as these to the lake of fire, nor did He forgive their sins. Rather, he passed by their sins.

Their sins still existed, but they were covered by the type, by the blood of the sacrifices which typified the sacrifice of Christ. The Old Testament type in this matter may be likened to a promissory note. The type was not the actual payment of debt, but a sure promise that full payment would be made. Because Christ had not yet come to die on the cross, God gave sinners in the Old Testament a promissory note. The propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice, which foreshadowed Christ, satisfied all the requirements of God's righteousness. Hence, He could pass by the people's sin that occurred in the Old Testament age. Furthermore, in order to show forth His righteousness, He had to do this.

This is what 3:25 refers to. This verse reveals that the Lord Jesus is the propitiation place, the propitiation-cover, whom God set forth for showing forth His righteousness in passing by the sins of the Old Testament saints; for, as the propitiatory sacrifice, He has made the full propitiation on the cross for their sins and has fully satisfied the requirements of God's righteousness. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He fulfilled all the types of His sacrificial and redemptive death. At that time, the promissory note was replaced by the actual payment.

By forgiving us God shows forth His righteousness. He makes a declaration to the whole universe that because He is righteous, He must forgive us of our sins. Because His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was put to death by Him on the cross on our behalf, He is legally obligated to forgive us. Whether He is happy with us or not, He must forgive us according to His righteousness. God knows that whenever a person points to the resurrected and ascended Christ as the receipt for the payment for sin, God must forgive that one. In this matter, God has no choice.

LOOKING AT THE ASCENDED CHRIST

We should not look at ourselves, but look at the ascended Christ. Hebrews 1:3 says that after Christ made

purification for sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The ascended Christ seated at the right hand of God is the receipt for the payment for our forgiveness. This is a matter of tremendous significance, for it is the foundation of our salvation. Whenever our conscience condemns us because of our failures, we need to remember to stand upon the foundation of God's righteousness. You may be fervent for the Lord today. But in the future, you may fail Him and therefore become very disappointed with yourself, unable to believe that God could ever forgive you. If you remain under this feeling of condemnation and disappointment, you will not be able to rise up. Instead, you may become subject to the subtlety and deception of the enemy. At such a time you need to praise God for His righteousness. Tell Him that no matter how much you have failed, Christ is still at His right hand as the receipt for payment for all your debts. Our experience may fluctuate, but God remains righteous. Whenever we claim the blood of Jesus and appeal to God's righteousness, God has no choice except to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

Our experience of Christ rests upon the foundation of God's righteousness. We should never have confidence in ourselves, thinking that we cannot backslide or fail the Lord. Do not be like Peter who said that he would be faithful to the Lord, even though everyone else might deny Him. The foundation is not our fervency or victory; it is God's righteousness, the unshakable foundation of God's throne. God has shown forth His righteousness by passing over the sins of the Old Testament saints and by forgiving us of our sins in the New Testament age. By doing these things God has proved that He is righteous. Now this very righteousness is our foundation. The work of being designated sons of God is built upon this foundation. However, we must be clear that the foundation is not the process of designation; it is the righteousness of God.

CHRIST, THE END OF THE LAW UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 10:3 and 4 say, "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one who believes." Here we see that the Israelites made the mistake of seeking to establish their own righteousness. If we do this today, we also are wrong. Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness. He is the end of the law so that we may gain the righteousness of God.

CONSTITUTED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be constituted the righteousness of God in him" (Gk.). According to this verse, we are not only righteous in God's eyes, but we are being constituted righteousness. In Christ, we are becoming the very righteousness of God. This experience is subjective and rather deep. In 1 Corinthians we have the matter of objective righteousness, but in 2 Corinthians, subjective righteousness. This means that we are not only righteous before God, but that we are God's very righteousness.

This takes place through the work of transformation. God is in the process of transforming us with Christ. The more we are transformed by God in this way, the more we become the righteousness of God. As sons of Adam, we were sin. But as the members of Christ, Christ is being wrought into us to transform us gradually from sin into righteousness.

Righteousness means to be right with God in every way. It means that in no matter are you wrong or unfair in the eyes of God. Every part of your being is right according to God. You are as righteous, just, and fair as God is. This is not firstly a matter of outward behavior, character, or conduct, but a matter of our inward being. In the eyes of others, you may be quite good. But as you stand before God, you will realize that you are not good at all. You may

be better than others, but certainly you are not as good as God is. To be justified by God means to be the same as He is. When we were saved, we were covered by Christ as our garment of righteousness. This is objective righteousness. But now God is working to make our person, our being, the righteousness of God. This is not merely a garment put upon us objectively; it is the very element of Christ wrought into us subjectively. In this way we have not only the foundation, but also the building.

Becoming the righteousness of God inwardly and subjectively is also related to designation. The more we are designated the sons of God, the more we become the righteousness of God. This is a matter of Christ wrought into our nature, our element, our being, our substance. This is not a matter of something imputed to us objectively, but a matter of subjective transformation. Praise the Lord that we, the believers in Christ, are on the foundation of God's righteousness. Now this righteousness is being wrought into us to constitute us the very righteousness of God.

Concerning righteousness, there is a difference between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Christ is our righteousness objectively, whereas 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that Christ is being wrought into us to make us the righteousness of God subjectively. Concerning objective righteousness, from the time of our salvation we all are righteous already. But concerning subjective righteousness, we are under a process. In other words, positionally we are righteous in the eyes of God, but dispositionally we are not yet the righteousness of God.

STANDING ON GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Nevertheless, we must praise the Lord for our righteous position. No matter how poor our disposition may be, we still have the position of righteousness. Because we have this position and foundation, we have

the boldness to tell God that He has no right to forsake us. We can say, "Father God, even if You don't like me, You must still accept me. You put the Lord Jesus on the cross and judged Him on my behalf. Furthermore, You have raised Him from the dead and caused Him to sit at Your right hand as proof that You have received His death as payment for my sins. I believe that You love me, but even if You don't love Me, You still must receive me according to Your righteousness."

We have been saved by God's love and by His grace, but especially we have been saved by God's righteousness. God's love and grace may change in relation to us, but it is impossible for God's righteousness to change. Before Christ died on the cross, God could have changed His mind about us. At the last minute, He could have decided to let us all perish and to create a new human race for the fulfillment of His purpose. But as we have pointed out, now that Christ has died for our sins and has been resurrected for our justification, God cannot change His mind. God has signed the will, and He is legally bound by it. Therefore, for our salvation, we stand not on God's love nor on God's grace, but on God's righteousness.

The book of Romans speaks both of God's love and of His grace. However, Romans does not say that either love or grace is the power of the gospel. Rather, in this book Paul clearly declares that the power of the gospel is the righteousness of God. I am deeply grateful to God for His love and grace. But my standing is upon His righteousness, the foundation of His throne. His righteousness cannot be shaken. If we would be designated the sons of God for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, we all must know this unshakable foundation and stand firmly upon it.

Many Christians praise God for His love and grace, but not many praise Him for His righteousness. Praise Him that the foundation of our salvation is His righteousness! We also praise Him that He is transforming us in Christ into His very righteousness. Eventually, God will be able

to say, "Satan, look at My children. They are not only righteous before Me, but they have become My righteousness." Once we have been saved according to God's righteousness, we cannot be lost. If we are clear concerning God's righteousness in the gospel, we shall be at rest knowing that the righteousness of God is our eternal security.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-EIGHT

THE SELECTION OF GRACE

In 1:9 Paul says that he served God in the gospel of His Son. This gospel includes many wonderful items: sonship, designation, resurrection, justification, sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and manifestation. In this message we shall consider a further item--the selection of grace. If we would know the gospel of the Son of God thoroughly, we need to see that God's selection is included in it. This selection is the selection of grace. As 11:5 says, "So then at the present time also there is a remnant according to the selection of grace."

GOD'S SELECTION

In society, selection is related to birth, upbringing, education, and success in the world. Divine selection is absolutely different. We were selected even before we were born, in fact, before the foundation of the world. Human selection depends upon what people are in themselves. Those who are good, promising, or successful are likely to be selected. God's selection, on the contrary, does not depend upon what we are; it depends entirely upon God and His desire.

In chapter nine Paul used the case of Jacob and Esau as an illustration of God's selection. Before they were born, God had told Rebecca, "The greater shall serve the less" (9:12). God's choice was made before the children were born, before they had done anything good or bad. This was so that the "purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works, but of Him Who calls" (v. 11). Nevertheless, when he was in the womb, Jacob was

struggling to be born first. It was of God's mercy that Jacob was not successful. If he had succeeded, he would not have received God's selection.

In a very real sense, we all are Jacobs struggling to be first. From our very birth, we have had the concept that we must struggle in order to gain something for ourselves. Even though we may fail again and again, we keep on striving. We are just like Jacob, the supplanter, whom God predestined to be second but who still struggled to be first. Praise God for the restraining hand of His mercy that has kept us from succeeding in our endeavors! He restrains us because He had already selected us long before we were born.

SELECTION, PREDESTINATION, AND CALLING

God's selection is related to His predestination and to His calling. Of the three, selection is first, followed by predestination and calling. Firstly, God selected us. Then He marked us out, that is, predestinated us. Both selection and predestination took place before we were born. Then at a certain point in our life, God came in to call us.

Ephesians 1:4 and 5 prove that God's selection and predestination took place in eternity past: "According as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blemish before Him, in love, having predestinated us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Before the universe came into existence, God selected us and predestinated us unto sonship. We need to exercise our spirit in faith to believe this word written in the Scripture. On the day appointed by God, we were born. Eventually, also at the time appointed by Him, we were saved. Even though we may have had no intention of believing in the Lord Jesus, we came to believe in Him, because we had been selected and predestinated by God. This is the selection of grace in which God's mercy is manifested. As Paul says in 9:16, "So then, it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God, the One Who shows mercy."

GOD'S ARRANGEMENT OF OUR LIVES

If we look back upon our past, we shall worship the Lord. We shall realize that our steps have been not of ourselves, but of Him. Before we were born, He selected us and predestinated us and arranged everything related to us, including the time and place of our birth. Moreover, He appointed all our days and all the places where we are to be. According to God's arrangement, I was born in the twentieth century. Furthermore, I was born in an area where it was easy to have contact with Christians. This was altogether of God. Furthermore, my life with the Lord proves that our way is determined by Him, and my experience testifies it is not of the one who wills nor of the one who runs, but of the One who shows mercy. Everything that happens to us is a matter of divine mercy.

THE PROOF OF GOD'S SELECTION

I do not wish to enter into the theological debate concerning man's responsibility in relation to God's sovereignty. I simply desire to emphasize the fact of God's selection. We all have become Christians because of this selection. Many of us do not even know why we became Christians in the first place. Some of us may even have tried to stop believing in the Lord, but we were not successful in doing 80. On the one hand, it is wonderful to be a Christian; but on the other hand, it is extremely trying and difficult. We Christians are not only Jacobs, but also Jobs. Due to God's selection, we had no choice except to become Christians. Now that we have believed into the Lord Jesus, we simply cannot escape from Him. This proves that we have been selected by God.

Within us there is something that causes us to believe in the Lord, whether we want to believe in Him or not. This comes from the selection of grace. We may want to

get a "divorce" from the Lord, but He refuses to sign the certificate of divorce. God is not afraid of any attempt we might make to escape from Him. He knows that however hard we may try, we cannot get away. This is the strongest proof that we have been selected by God. How marvelous is the divine selection of grace!

GOD'S SELECTION AND THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

We see God's selection in a practical way in our preaching of the gospel. A number of unbelievers may attend the same meeting and hear the same message; however, only certain ones respond. This is difficult to explain. We can attribute it only to God's selection, predestination, and calling.

I remember a story told about D. L. Moody. One day a student expressed the concern that through his preaching of the gospel someone could be saved who had not been selected by God. Moody told him not to be troubled, but to simply continue to preach the gospel. Furthermore, Moody said that he should allow anyone who is willing to believe to receive the Lord. Moody went on to say that over the entrance of heaven there will be written the words, "Whosoever will may come," but that after a person passes through the entrance, he will see inscribed upon the inside of it these words: "Chosen from before the foundation of the world."

ALL A MATTER OF GOD'S MERCY

If we would properly serve God in the gospel of His Son, we must know that the gospel includes the selection of grace. The gospel is wholly a matter of God's sovereign mercy. Many years ago, I had some realization of this, but my realization is much stronger today. Through many years of experience, I have become strongly and deeply convinced that everything that happens to us is of God. All

is a matter of God's mercy. The more we see this, the more we shall spontaneously bear our responsibility before the Lord.

However, even the bearing of responsibility is of God's mercy. Why is it that some believers are willing to bear their responsibility and that others are not? The answer lies in God's mercy. In 9:15 Paul quotes the Lord's words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Because of God's mercy in His selection of grace, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond; we received a word about Christ as our life when others refused to receive it; and we took the way of the Lord's recovery today when others drew back from taking this way. Some can testify that although they are in the Lord's recovery today, those who brought them to this way did not come this way themselves.

Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy. We are not in the Lord's recovery because we are more intelligent than others or because we seek the Lord more than others do. Our being here is altogether due to the mercy of God. If you consider how the Lord brought you into the church life in the Lord's recovery, you will worship Him for His mercy. I believe that we in the Lord's recovery are among the remnant according to the selection of grace (11:5). Regarding the gospel, the ministry of life, and the church life in the Lord's recovery, God has had mercy upon us. How we must praise Him for His sovereign mercy!

We should have no trust in ourselves, and we should not think we are here because of anything that we are or that we have done. Our being in the Lord's recovery today is not of our willing nor of our running, but of God, the One who shows mercy. What a mercy that we are saved and that we are willing to take the Lord's way! Furthermore, it is a mercy that we are willing to be separated from today's evil age. The world is both attractive and attracting. Nevertheless, I can testify that I simply have no appetite for the things of the world. I am covered with a kind of divine insulation, an insulation that keeps me from the world system. This is another aspect of God's mercy.

WORSHIPPING THE LORD FOR HIS MERCY

If we would serve the Lord, we must know the Spirit, the life in the Spirit, and the righteousness of God. Furthermore, we must know God's mercy in the selection of grace. In the past I dreamed of a flourishing work in north China, even in inner Mongolia and Manchuria. But that dream was never fulfilled and instead by the Lord's mercy I am in this country today. I look to the Lord that He will deeply impress us with the matter of His mercy in selecting us. Do not put your trust in what you are able to do or in what you plan to do. Rather, bow down before the Lord and worship Him for His mercy. The more you worship the Lord for His mercy, the more you will be uplifted. Instead of striving to bear responsibility, you will find that, in His mercy, the Lord is bearing you. We all need to know the Lord in this way. What a mercy that He has selected us, predestinated us, called us, and placed us in His recovery! For our future we trust not in ourselves, but in Him and in His marvelous mercy. Everything regarding us has been initiated by the Lord. All is of Him; nothing is of us. I can testify that the more we worship God for His mercy, the more we are deeply in His heart and the more we are one with Him.

TRUSTING IN THE LORD'S MERCY

Do not strive to bear responsibility. Instead, worship God for His selection. If you do this, He will bear you in the bearing of responsibility. The more we try in ourselves to be responsible, the more we shall suffer inwardly. Our inward taste will be that of bitterness. But if we worship the Lord for His mercy and experience Him bearing us in bearing the responsibility, our inward taste will be as sweet as honey. One reason I am happy day by day is that I have learned to trust in the Lord's mercy and to worship Him for it. Years ago I used to ask the Lord to do so many things for me. But now I pray by thanking Him for His mercy. He said that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and compassion on whom He will have

compassion. If we enjoy the Lord's mercy and worship Him for His selection, we shall be in the heavenlies.

Our going on with the Lord is a matter not of our willing or running, but of God's mercy. Our willing is of no avail, and our running is in vain. God's mercy, however, works in a wonderful way. We are changeable, constantly fluctuating. It seems that, as far as we are concerned, our spiritual condition is like weather that is unstable. Hence, we need to see that the selection of grace does not depend on us, but depends on God's selection of us before the world began. What we are experiencing today is related to God's selection in eternity past. If we see this, we shall turn our eyes away from ourselves and from our circumstances and gaze steadfastly upon Him.

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

The gospel in which we serve God is a gospel of grace, not a gospel of works. As 11:6 says, "But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace." However, the fact that God's selection is wholly a matter of His grace does not mean that we are free to do whatever we want. If this is our attitude, then we either have not been selected by God or we are backsliders from God's selection. Oh, let us forget ourselves and our situation and keep our eyes upon the Lord. Again and again, let us say, "Lord, we praise You for Your selection of grace. O Lord, we worship You for Your mercy." This is the gospel revealed in the book of Romans.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE FIFTY-NINE

THE PRACTICE OF THE BODY LIFE

In this message we shall consider the practice of the Body life as it is presented in the closing chapters of Romans.

SONSHIP FOR THE BODY

We have seen that we are to serve God in the gospel of His Son (1:9). This gospel is a gospel of sonship. Sonship includes designation, resurrection, justification, sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and manifestation. We are presently undergoing the process of designation; that is, we are being designated sons of God by the power of resurrection. Sonship is for the Body. In order to be members of the Body of Christ, we must be sons of God.

We have pointed out that, in a very real sense, chapter twelve is the direct continuation of chapter eight, with chapters nine through eleven as a parenthetical insertion regarding the selection of grace. Chapter eight reveals that we are being conformed to the image of the Son of God (v. 29). This conformation qualifies us for the practice of the Body life.

The Body life is not simply a matter of believers coming together. Many groups have been formed for the purpose of having the Body life. The result, however, has been failure. These groups of believers did not realize that the Body life depends on sonship, which comes out of designation. If we are to have the proper practice of the Body life, we must be transformed according to the power of resurrection.

THE BODY PRESENTED, THE SOUL TRANSFORMED, AND THE SPIRIT BURNING

In chapter twelve Paul mentions the body, the soul, and the spirit. In verse 1 he says, "I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your most reasonable service." Our physical bodies must be presented to the Lord for His purpose of having the Body. Someone may have a heart for the Body life, but if he does not present his body, he is not for the Body life in a practical way. You may care for the meetings, but what does this accomplish if your body remains at home? If we fail to present our bodies to the Lord for the church life, we cannot have a practical meeting life. If you say that you have a heart for the church meetings, you need to ask yourself if you have presented your body to the Lord for the meetings. Where is your body at meeting time? The body is the container of our being, for the spirit is within the soul and the soul is within the body. We must present this container to the Lord for the sake of His Body.

Verse 2 speaks of the mind, which is the main part of the soul: "And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." When our mind is renewed, our soul will be transformed. Hence, our body needs to be presented, and our soul needs to be transformed.

In this verse Paul beseeches us not to be conformed to this age. The world, Satan's system, is a cosmos composed of many ages. The nineteenth century was one age, and the twentieth century is another age. Actually, there have been several distinct ages within the twentieth century itself. The present age is a section of Satan's world system. This age includes not only the secular world, but also the religious world. If we are conformed to today's religion, we shall be useless as far as the practice of the Body life is concerned.

For Paul in his day to be conformed to the present age

was primarily a matter of being conformed to Judaism. Judaism was a serious hindrance to the practice of the Body life in the first century. Just as Judaism was part of the age in Paul's time, 80 Christianity as an organized religion is part of today's age. If you are conformed to organized Christianity, you will be conformed to this age. Instead of being conformed to this age, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

In 12:11 Paul speaks of the spirit; he tells us to be "burning in spirit." Our spirit must be fervent; that is, it must be burned and burning. If we have a body presented, a soul in the process of being transformed, and a spirit burning, we shall be able to practice the Body life in a proper way.

TALK AND PRACTICE

Many talk about the Body life in Romans 12 without the actual practice of the Body life. For example, some have seen that in the Body of Christ we are "members one of another" (12:5). However, they cannot name any members to whom they are specifically related. Thus, their word about being members one of another is mere talk. We are not here for talk about the Body life; we are for the practice of the Body life.

The teaching in Romans concerning the Body life is in chapter twelve, but the practice is in chapters fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. These chapters deal with practical problems that occur in the church life. As we consider Paul's approach to these problems, we can learn something related to the daily practice of the Body life.

RECEIVING THE BELIEVERS

Chapter twelve is important concerning the doctrine of the Body life, whereas chapter fourteen is important concerning the practice of the Body life. In chapter fourteen Paul addresses the problem of receiving believers whose opinions and practices differ from ours. In 14:1 Paul says, "Now him who is weak in faith receive, not with a view to passing judgment on reasonings." Then Paul

proceeds to give two examples of matters about which believers may have different views. The first example concerns eating: "One believes that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables" (v. 2). The second concerns observing days: "One judges one day above another, another judges every day alike" (v. 5). These two matters are illustrations of the many things which have divided Christians. Take the example of baptism. Some insist on immersion, whereas others insist on sprinkling. If we have the proper practice of the Body life, we shall receive all true believers in Christ, whether they practice immersion or sprinkling.

Some say that we in the Lord's recovery are narrow. However, we are willing to receive all kinds of Christians. We receive those who practice immersion and those who practice sprinkling. Who then are the narrow ones--those in the Lord's recovery or those who accept into their fellowship only those who meet special requirements related to doctrine or practice?

The divisions among Christians come from differences over doctrine or practice. For example, believers have been divided over such things as head covering, footwashing, and the observance of the Lord's day or the Sabbath day. This fact should turn us afresh to Romans 14, where Paul instructs us to receive those who have the faith in Christ and not to judge them concerning secondary matters. If someone comes to us with a different opinion regarding a particular matter, we must still receive him as a brother in the Lord. As Paul says in 15:7, "Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

The importance of receiving the believers is illustrated by an experience we had during the early days of the church life in Los Angeles. Three other Christian groups desired to come together with us for the church life. One group had a background of Pentecostalism, and another group had a background of fundamental Bible teaching. When I learned of their desire and excitement over the

prospect of meeting together, I reminded them that throughout the centuries Christians have been divided by their opinions about doctrines and practices. Furthermore, I told them that if they would come together for the church life according to Romans 14, they would have to drop their opinions and receive all genuine believers in Christ, no matter how different they were in either doctrine or practice. They agreed to set aside their differences and meet together in oneness for the church life. In the meeting place we hung some banners. One read, "Variety versus Uniformity"; another, "Unity in Variety"; and another, "All One in Christ." After a very short period of time, however, those from a Pentecostal background began to insist on the practices of speaking in tongues and of playing tambourines in the meetings. Those from a Bible teaching background could not tolerate this and refused to go along with it. I asked those who opposed speaking in tongues and playing tambourines to bear with those who favored these things. However, they declined to do so. Then I asked those who advocated these practices to care for the feeling of the others. They also refused, insisting that there was nothing wrong with what they were doing. Eventually, due to the inability on both sides to accept believers with different doctrines and practices, these groups were not able to meet together in oneness for the practice of the church life.

A GENERAL ATTITUDE

The Lord can testify on our behalf that in our practice of the church life we have been general, receiving all different kinds of believers. For instance, we do not stop the saints from speaking in tongues, but neither do we insist on tongues-speaking. Nevertheless, we have been accused of narrowness. Actually it is those in the denominations who are narrow, for they do not receive all different kinds of Christians. Throughout the years we have been in Los Angeles, we have never rejected any genuine believer in Christ. Furthermore, we have not

adjusted others. On the contrary, we have been learning simply to minister life to all who come.

In Romans 14 Paul's attitude was very general. Doctrinally speaking, Paul knew that the believers were free to eat meat as well as vegetables. But he did not approach the question of eating in a doctrinal way. Instead, he expressed a general attitude toward all believers; he despised neither those who ate only vegetables nor those who ate everything. His attitude was the same with respect to observing days.

In order to have the proper practice of the Body life, we must have such a general attitude. We should neither impose a particular practice on others nor should we oppose a certain practice. Take the example of praising the Lord by shouting. Some may oppose this and condemn it as being disorderly, whereas those who favor it may seek to impose it on others. Both attitudes are wrong. If we prefer silence in the meetings, we should not impose our view on others. Likewise, if we prefer shouting, we should not impose this on anyone. The same is true regarding pray-reading. If some want to practice pray-reading, they should be free to do so. But if others do not care for this practice, it should not be forced upon them.

In the church life we must be general, able to receive all genuine believers. However, it is not easy to learn this lesson, because we all want others to be the same as we are. Let us not make demands of others or require that they change their way for our sake. Rather, let us have unity in variety and variety without conformity. Even though there may be such variety, we still are one in Christ.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHURCHES

There may be differences not only among believers in a local church but also between local churches themselves. For example, the church in one locality may practice pray-reading, but the church in another locality may not practice it. If you visit a church that differs in practice from the church in your locality, do not try to correct it or

to change anything. Wherever you are, you should simply be one with the church in that place. As long as it is a local church, you need to go along with it without imposing or opposing. I admit that it is easy to talk about this but that it is difficult to practice it. Nevertheless, we all must be willing to learn this lesson. Then we shall have not only the doctrine of the Body in Romans 12, but also the practice of the Body life in Romans 14.

A MATTER OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." According to this verse, the kingdom of God is a matter of the Spirit. As long as we have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, we should not be concerned about differences in doctrine or practice.

THE LOCALITY OF THE CHURCH

Romans 16:1 says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deaconess of the church which is at Cenchrea." This verse discloses a second aspect of the practicality of the Body life: the matter of the local church. If we would have the Body life in a practical way, we must not only receive the believers, but also pay attention to the church in the locality. According to Romans 16, the practicality of the Body life consists in the locality of the church. This chapter speaks not only of the local church, the church at Cenchrea, but also of the churches. In verse 4 Paul makes mention of the churches of the nations and in verse 16, of the churches of Christ.

SHOWING HOSPITALITY TO THE CHURCH

In verse 23 Paul says, "Gaius, my host, and of the whole church, greets you." Here Paul names a brother who provided hospitality to the whole church. Obviously, Paul is speaking of the local church, not of the universal church. It is important that Paul points out that Gaius was the host of the whole church, not of all the saints.

There is a difference between showing hospitality to the church and showing hospitality to the saints, for we may care for the saints without caring for the church. But Paul's concept in this book is related not mainly to the saints, but to the church. In our giving of hospitality, the church must be in our consciousness and concept. As you extend hospitality to others, what concept do you have? Do you hold the concept that you are providing hospitality to the saints or to the church? If you have the proper concept, you will realize that your hospitality is not simply to certain saints, but to the whole church.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE

In verse 5 Paul sends greetings to the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila. Using this verse as a basis, some say that the church in a house is different from the church in a city. However, if you consider this matter carefully in context, you will see that the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila was actually the church in the city of Rome. The church in Rome held its meetings in Prisca and Aquila's house.

If we would have the proper practice of the Body life today, we must be general in receiving all kinds of believers. As long as a person genuinely believes in the Lord Jesus, we must receive him, even though his opinion may differ from ours with respect to doctrine or practice. Furthermore, we need to be in a local church and honor the locality of the church. How I thank the Lord for chapter sixteen! In this chapter the Holy Spirit clearly indicates that for the practice of the Body life, we need to be the local church. Wherever we may be, we must be in the church in that locality.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY

THE DISPENSATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS PURPOSE

Romans is an all-inclusive book, a summary both of the Christian life and of the church life. It is impossible to exhaust the revelation conveyed and implied in this book. To say that revelation is implied means that it is not conveyed directly and explicitly, but that it is implied by what is directly conveyed. In the divine Word what is implied is often more important than what is directly stated. In this message we shall consider one of the implied revelations in the book of Romans: the dispensation of the Triune God for the fulfillment of His purpose.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

God's eternal purpose is to have a Body for Christ. This Body is the universal church. The universal church needs to be expressed in various localities in local churches. The dispensation of the Triune God for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose has much to do with the local churches. In order to fulfill His purpose, it is necessary for God to dispense Himself into His chosen people. This is the very thing that God is doing with us today.

TRIUNE FOR DISPENSATION

In order for God to dispense Himself into us, He must be triune. The Triune God is not for doctrine or for theology, but for dispensing Himself into His people in order to have a Body to express Christ.

The word dispense means to distribute. Suppose we have a large container of juice. In order for people to drink the juice, we must find a way to dispense the juice from the container into them. The best way is to pour the juice into cups and then distribute it among the people present. The juice used to be in the container, but now it is in the

people into whom it has been dispensed. When we speak of the dispensation of the Triune God, we mean that God distributes Himself to us and then dispenses Himself into our being just as the juice is dispensed from the container into those who drink it. In His dispensation, God actually enters into our being, fills our vessel, and becomes one with us. This is the dispensation of the Triune God for the fulfillment of His purpose.

For God to dispense Himself into His chosen people, He must be triune; that is, He must be God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Although our God is triune, we reject tritheism, which is the doctrine that the Three of the Trinity are three distinct Gods. We do not have three Gods--we have the unique Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

We have indicated that the Trinity of the Godhead is not for theology, but for dispensing. God does not desire to exist alone. He longs to dispense Himself into men created, chosen, and called by Him. Hallelujah, we are those men, and God wants to dispense Himself into us! This is implied in the book of Romans. Let us now consider the Triune God as revealed in this book and then consider God's dispensation.

GOD BLESSED FOREVER

Romans 9:5 speaks of "Christ, Who is over all, God blessed forever." Many Christians have read the book of Romans without noticing the declaration contained in this verse. This verse says that Christ is God, blessed forever. As God, Christ is over all things: man, angels, the heavens, and the earth. Christ is the very God who has been and will be blessed forever and who is over all. The Christ who is our Savior and our life is God Himself. It is a shame that Christians argue about the deity of Christ

and debate whether or not Christ is God. According to this verse, Christ is the God who is over all and blessed forever.

GOD SENDING HIS OWN SON

Romans 8:3 says that God sent His own Son. The God in 8:3 is, of course, the very God in 9:5. Christ is God's Son. How can we explain, then, that the unique God sent His own Son when Christ is both the Son of God and God Himself? According to 9:5, Christ is God. According to 8:3, God sent His own Son, who is Christ. This indicates that Christ is both God and the Son of God. This reminds us of Isaiah 9:6. This verse says that a child is called the mighty God and that a son is called the eternal Father. Here we see the mystery of the Triune God: God is three, yet He remains one.

THE DEATH OF GOD'S SON

We turn now to 5:10, which says that we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. This verse indicates that the Son of God once died. But how is it possible for the Son of God to die? To me, this verse would be more understandable if it spoke of the death of Jesus. However, it speaks of the death of God's Son. Whether we can understand this or not, it is a fact that, even when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the wonderful death of the Son of God. Furthermore, according to 5:10, now we are being saved in His life. This indicates that the One who died still has life. This implies Christ's resurrection.

DESIGNATED THE SON OF GOD IN RESURRECTION

Romans 1:3 and 4 say that God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead. All the titles related to Christ in these verses are related to God's dispensation. Apart from God's dispensation, there is no need for His Son to be Jesus Christ. It was for

dispensation that the Son of God needed to be a man (Jesus) and to be the anointed One (Christ). Furthermore, only through dispensation could the Son of God, Jesus Christ, become our Lord. Because Christ has been dispensed into us, He is not only *the* Lord, but *our* Lord.

According to verse 3, the Son of God came out of the seed of David according to the flesh. Here we have the element of the flesh. According to verse 4, Christ was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead. Here we have the element of the Spirit. Although Christ was already the Son of God, He still needed to be designated the Son of God in resurrection.

The various phrases in these verses imply the Triune God in His dispensation. Although the word dispensation is found neither here nor in the remainder of the book of Romans, the fact of dispensation is still implied. Everything related to Christ in 1:3 and 4 is for God's dispensation.

INTERCHANGEABLE TERMS

Now we come to chapter eight, a chapter that is inexhaustible in its revelation and spiritual significance. Verse 2 speaks of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. In this verse there are a number of things difficult to explain: law, Spirit, life, and Christ Jesus. Notice that here Paul does not say Jesus Christ, but Christ Jesus. In verses 7 and 8 Paul mentions God. Then in verse 9 he goes on to speak of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. As we shall see, in these verses Paul is speaking of the Triune God in His dispensation.

Paul uses the terms God, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ interchangeably. He begins with God, goes on to the Spirit of God, and then proceeds to the Spirit of Christ. But instead of stopping here, in verse 10 Paul speaks of Christ, saying that Christ is in us. In the span of a few verses, four divine titles are interchangeably used:

God, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ. These four terms denote one being, the Triune God Himself.

The Spirit of God is God Himself. Do not interpret this title to mean that the Spirit is something different from God. In the New Testament, phrases such as the love of God and the life of God mean that love and life are God Himself. In the same principle, the term the Spirit of God means that the Spirit is God. The same is true regarding the Spirit of Christ. This title means simply that the Spirit is Christ. According to the context, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God.

From the Spirit of Christ Paul proceeds to Christ. Thus, Paul takes us from God to Christ through the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Paul's thought goes from God to the Spirit of God, from the Spirit of God to the Spirit of Christ, and from the Spirit of Christ to Christ. Therefore, we have God, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ. However, these four terms all refer to the unique Triune God.

CHRIST IN US

Verse 10 says that Christ is in us. The preposition "in" here is most remarkable. Christ, the wonderful One, is actually in us! In order for Christ to be in us, God must be the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God must be the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ must be Christ. If God were simply God Himself, He could not get into us. There are two reasons for this. The first is that God is divine, infinite, and almighty. However, we are human, and God cannot come into us without human mediation. Second, we are sinful and unclean. Because of the fall, every part of our being is defiled. It is impossible for a holy God to dwell in such sinful people. To bridge the gap between divinity and humanity, God had to become a man named Jesus. Jesus means Jehovah the Savior. As such a One, He died on the cross for our sins, shedding His blood to cleanse us

from all defilement. Hallelujah, the infinite God became a finite man to die on the cross for us! This removed the barriers which hindered God from coming into man. Now in Christ the infinite, holy God can come into us. For this reason, in verse 10 Paul declares that Christ is in us.

It is significant that Paul does not say that God is in us, but that Christ is in us. The Spirit here joins God with Christ. The Spirit is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. How profound and inexhaustible are all these terms!

THE SPIRIT MAKING HOME IN US

Verse 11 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." According to verse 10, Christ is in us. But according to verse 11, the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in us; that is, His Spirit makes His home in us. In this verse we have the Triune God: He who raised Jesus from among the dead (the Father), Christ Jesus (the Son), and the Spirit. Here we see the Triune God dispensing Himself into us. Furthermore, He is making His home in us and even giving life to our mortal bodies. This is the full dispensation of the Triune God into our entire being.

IMPLIED REVELATION

In verse 11 we do not find the words triune or dispensing, but the fact of the dispensation of the Triune God is implied. The Triune God is implied here, and the dispensing of the Triune God into our being is also implied. We have pointed out that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all to be found in this verse. Furthermore, Paul's word about life being given to our mortal bodies implies a dispensation. This is not an explicit revelation; it is an implied revelation of the dispensing of the Triune God into the believers.

PROCESS AND DISPENSATION

In verse 11 Paul speaks of the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from among the dead. This implies not only God's dispensation, but also the process required to make this dispensation possible. Dispensation requires a process. Raising Christ up from among the dead was part of this process. Hence, in order for the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from among the dead to dwell in us, God had to become involved in a process. Paul does not say simply that the Spirit dwells in us. That would have been too direct. Rather, He says that the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus dwells in us. This implies the process that is involved.

The preparation of food for eating can be used to illustrate the process required for God's dispensation. Most of the things we eat must be processed before we eat them. For example, my wife does not buy a fish at the market and then bring it home and simply set it on the table at mealtime. No, the fish must be thoroughly prepared; only then can we eat it. In the same principle, the Triune God has passed through a process in order to dwell in us.

The process in verse 11 is indicated by the very indirectness of the verse. The entire verse is actually one long, indirect statement. In this verse three crucial matters are covered: the Triune God, the process, and the dispensation. In order for God to indwell us, He has to be the Triune God who has passed through a complete process.

This process involves incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Before the Son of God could die for us on the cross, He had to be incarnated as a man. By incarnation He put on humanity with flesh and blood and became a man called Jesus. Only in this way was He able to shed His blood on the cross for our sins. Hence, Paul's word regarding Christ's resurrection in verse 11 implies His incarnation and crucifixion. All this is related to the process.

Our God is no longer the unprocessed God. The One who dwells in us has been fully processed. The Spirit who

indwells us is the realization of the Son, who is the embodiment of the Father. The Father is embodied in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit indwells us. This is the Triune God who has been processed through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, who is dispensing Himself into us, and who is now dwelling in us.

Verse 11 indicates that the Triune God is being dispensed not only into our spirit, the center of our being, as indicated in verse 10, but even into our mortal body, the circumference of our being. This means that the dispensation of the Triune God is saturating our whole being. The more I experience and enjoy this dispensation, the more I am energized spiritually, psychologically, and physically. I can testify from experience that the dispensation of the Triune God is not mere doctrine. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead gives life to our mortal bodies. How amazing! Verse 11, therefore, implies a great deal: the Triune God, the process, the dispensation, and the saturation of our entire being with the divine life. This is the dispensation of the Triune God.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD ISSUING IN SONSHIP

Such a dispensation issues in sonship. It transforms sinners into sons of God. Once we were sinners, enemies of God, but now we are sons of God.

Verse 14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." We know that we are sons of God by the fact that we are led by the Spirit of God. Day by day, we are led by the Spirit who indwells us. Perhaps you may desire to go to a certain place, but instead the Spirit leads you to the meeting of the church. We often are inclined to do things that are contrary to God's nature, but the indwelling Spirit is stronger than we are. Eventually, He leads us, and we follow Him. Such experiences are a sign and a proof that we are sons of God.

Another proof is seen in verse 15: "For you have not received a spirit of slavery to fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father." As sons of God, we cry, "Abba, Father." Through the dispensing of the Triune God, we have truly become God's sons in life; we are not sons-in-law. If we were merely sons-in-law, we could not call, "Abba, Father," so sweetly. This is illustrated by a man's relationship to his father and to his father-in-law. When he calls his father "Dad," it comes naturally and feels very sweet. But if he uses this term with respect to his father-in-law, it does not come naturally or feel sweet. The fact that we are God's sons in life is proved by the sense of sweetness we enjoy whenever we call, "Abba, Father." As sons of God, we have within us the life of God, the nature of God, and the Spirit of the Son of God.

THE FIRSTFRUIT AND THE INTERCEDING OF THE SPIRIT

According to verse 23 we also have the firstfruit of the Spirit. The firstfruit of the Spirit is the first taste, the foretaste, of the Spirit. Today we have the indwelling Spirit as the foretaste of our enjoyment of God. This foretaste gives us the assurance that the full taste is coming.

Verse 26 reveals that the Spirit is also the interceding Spirit. Inwardly, the Spirit is constantly interceding for us. We may think that we alone are praying, only to discover that our prayer actually comes from the indwelling Spirit. Because we are one with Him and the Spirit is mingled with our spirit, we cannot always discern what is of us and what is of Him. As 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." When we pray, He prays, and when He prays, we also pray. Thus, our prayer is His prayer, and His prayer is ours.

THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF GOD'S DISPENSATION

According to verse 29, God's only begotten Son has become the Firstborn among many brothers. This is the issue of the dispensation of the Triune God into us. This

dispensation makes us the many sons of God, the many brothers of the Firstborn. These many sons of God and many brothers of the Firstborn are the members which constitute the Body of Christ. Therefore, the ultimate issue of the dispensation of the Triune God is to produce sons to be the members which constitute the Body of Christ. This is God's way to fulfill His eternal purpose. His purpose is accomplished neither by teaching nor by organization, but by the dispensing of Himself as the processed Triune God into our being.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-ONE

THE DISPENSATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD ACCORDING TO HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, THROUGH HIS HOLINESS, AND UNTO HIS GLORY

It is very important that we get into the depths of the book of Romans and not read it in a superficial way. In this message we shall consider the matter of the dispensation of the Triune God according to His righteousness, through His holiness, and unto His glory. Here we have four important words: dispensation, righteousness, holiness, and glory. As we pointed out in the foregoing message, Paul does not use the word dispensation in Romans. Nevertheless, the fact of God's dispensation is implied throughout this book. Righteousness, holiness, and glory, on the contrary, are dealt with by Paul explicitly. God's dispensation is according to His righteousness; that is, it is based upon His righteousness. Furthermore, it is through His holiness. This means that His dispensation is processed through holiness. Finally, this dispensation is unto God's glory. It issues in the glory of God.

RIGHTEOUSNESS THE BASE FOR GOD'S DISPENSATION

Many verses in Romans speak of God's righteousness. In 1:17 Paul says that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. In 3:21 he says that the righteousness of God has been manifested, and in 3:25 and 26 he speaks of the showing forth of the righteousness of God. In 5:17 Paul refers to the gift of righteousness and in 5:21 of grace reigning through righteousness. In 8:10 he says that our spirit is life because of righteousness.

These verses indicate that in the book of Romans righteousness is a footing, a standing, a base, for God's dispensation. The dispensation of the Triune God into us is according to God's righteousness. It is not according to the law nor according to virtue. It is uniquely according to the righteousness of God. Psalm 89:14 says that righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne (ASV). God's throne is based upon His righteousness. Without righteousness, even God's throne would have no footing. Therefore, righteousness is crucial.

The entire universe rests upon God's righteousness. If suddenly there were no righteousness, the universe would collapse. Furthermore, the Bible reveals that God's kingdom is built upon righteousness (Heb. 1:8). Human government is also based on at least some measure of righteousness. For example, if there were no righteousness in this country, the government would fall. In the same principle, if there were no righteousness in society or in our personal life, both society and our personal life would collapse. Righteousness is the supporting base upon which all things rest. The heavens, the earth, and everything in the universe are based upon God's righteousness.

In His economy the Triune God desires to dispense Himself into the three parts of man, into man's spirit, soul, and body. However, if God does not meet the requirements of His righteousness, He cannot carry out the dispensation of Himself into us. His dispensation must be according to His righteousness.

The Bible reveals that there is a relationship between God and man. In this relationship a number of transactions take place. These transactions must always be based upon righteousness. Therefore, for God's dispensation, the first basic requirement is God's righteousness.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, HOLINESS, AND GLORY

Three of the divine attributes--righteousness, holiness, and glory--place requirements upon us. Righteousness is

versus sin. I believe that we all are aware of the requirement of God's righteousness. But we may not be aware of the demands of God's holiness and glory; we may have no realization that glory is one of God's requirements. In 3:23 Paul points out that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. This means that we have not fulfilled the requirement of God's glory.

Genesis 3:24 indicates that as soon as man fell, he could not meet the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. This verse says that God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." The sword signifies God's righteousness; the flame, God's holiness; and the cherubim, God's glory. The sword kills, the fire consumes, and the cherubim observe. Because man had fallen and had become sinful, the way to the tree of life was barred by God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. Praise the Lord that through Christ's redemption the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory have been fulfilled and the way to the tree of life has been opened once again. In order for man to have a proper relationship with God, these three requirements had to be fulfilled.

THREE SECTIONS

God's righteousness, holiness, and glory form the basic structure of the book of Romans. Romans can be divided into several sections. After the introduction (1:1-17) and the section on condemnation (1:18--3:20), there are sections on justification (3:21--5:11), sanctification (5:12--8:13), and glorification (8:14-39). These sections are related respectively to God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. Therefore, these three divine attributes are related to the very structure of the book of Romans.

In which of these three sections are we today? The correct answer is that we are in the section of sanctification. We have passed through justification, but

we are not yet in glorification. We all are destined to spend the whole of our Christian life on earth in the section on sanctification. I have been in this section for more than fifty years. Do not be disappointed by the length of time you must spend in this section. The time may seem long to you, but it is not to the Lord, with whom a thousand years are as one day (2 Pet. 3:8).

Although we are not yet in the section on glorification, we may nonetheless enjoy something of glorification while we are in the section on sanctification. We may enjoy the foretaste or firstfruit of glorification. Sometimes when I am alone with the Lord, I experience a foretaste of the glorification to come. Every proper Christian should have experiences like this.

God's dispensation must be according to His righteousness. If Christ had not become a man with flesh and blood and if He had not died on the cross to take away our sins, it would have been impossible for God to dispense Himself into us. When some hear this, they may argue, "To say this is to be too legal and strict. Don't you know that God is love? He is not that strict and legal. Because God the Father loves me, He can simply come to me and dispense Himself to me, no matter how sinful I may be." Such a concept ignores the fact that God is a God of righteousness. As such a righteous One, He is more strict and more legal than any of us.

Yes, God is the Father and He does love us. However, according to the parables in Luke 15, we cannot come directly to the Father. The prodigal needs the shepherd (the Son) to seek him and to find him, and he needs the woman (the Spirit) to enlighten him so that he can wake up, repent, and decide to come home to the Father. Only through the Son's seeking and finding and through the Spirit's enlightening can sinners return to the Father. Without the Son's redemption and the Spirit's enlightenment, we cannot come home to Him. Furthermore, if the Son had not died for us, the Father would not have the ground to receive us. However, because of the redemptive death of His Son, the Father

has the ground to receive all who come to Him through Christ. This indicates that the Father's receiving of us must be according to His righteousness. Apart from the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ, there is no way for the righteous God to receive us and to impart Himself into us. If God were to dispense Himself into us without the requirement of His righteousness being fulfilled, He would place Himself in an unrighteous position. Therefore, the dispensation of the Triune God must be according to His righteousness.

God's righteousness required that we die because of our sin. However, if we had died, we would have perished. Because God does not want us to perish, He provided Christ as our substitute. Christ died on the cross for us according to God's righteousness to fulfill God's requirements. The purpose of Christ's death on the cross was not to enable us to go to heaven when we die; it was to fulfill God's righteous requirements so that He could dispense Himself into us.

Suppose you would like to dispense juice into a glass, but you find that the glass is not clean. If you fill a dirty glass with juice, the juice will not be fit to drink. Hence, before dispensing the juice into the glass, you must first cleanse the glass. In like manner, before God could come into us, His Son became a man and died on the cross for us, shedding His blood to wash us from our sins. This enabled us to become cleansed vessels, ready to be filled with the Triune God. Before God could dispense Himself into us, we had to be washed in the blood of Christ. This is according to God's righteousness.

BECOMING RIGHTEOUS BY DYING

We have pointed out that Christ died on the cross to fulfill God's righteous requirements. Now we must go on to see that God desires that we also go to the cross and die. If we are not crucified on the cross, God's righteous requirements cannot be fulfilled in us in a practical way. In the eyes of the righteous Father, nothing is more

righteous than for us to die on the cross. If we die, we are righteous in every way. However, if we refuse to die, we have no righteousness in our relationships with others and even with material things. We may treat people unfairly, and we may fail to handle our material possessions properly. Therefore, to be righteous before God, we not only need to be washed--we also need to die. When we die, we are spontaneously justified. A proper Christian is one who has died with Christ and who conducts himself daily according to this fact. If a believer lives in a natural way, he will be unrighteous. But if he experiences the death of the cross, he will be righteous in everything, with everyone, and in every way.

GOD DISPENSING HIMSELF ONLY INTO THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

We have laid stress on the fact that God's righteousness requires the death both of Christ and of ourselves. We were involved in the death of Christ. When He died, we died also, for we died in Him. This all-inclusive death was for the fulfillment of God's righteous requirements. Because God's righteousness has been satisfied, God is justified in dispensing Himself into His redeemed and crucified people.

God cannot dispense Himself into persons still living in their natural life, but can only dispense Himself into those who have died. If you are still alive in a natural way, still living in sin and in the world, God has no position to dispense Himself into you. Only the death of Christ and your death with Christ fulfills the requirement of His righteousness and gives God the ground righteously to impart Himself into you. This applies not only to the time we were saved, but also to our daily experience with the Lord. If we want to experience the dispensation of the Triune God, we must take our standing before Him as crucified persons. We must believe and declare the fact of our death with Christ on the cross. Since we are then dead

with Christ in a practical way, God will have the position to dispense himself into us with all His riches. This is God's dispensation according to His righteousness.

HOLINESS AND RESURRECTION

In 6:19 Paul speaks of "righteousness unto sanctification." This indicates that righteousness ushers us into holiness, into sanctification. The dispensation of the Triune God takes place through His holiness. God's holiness is related to the process of His dispensation. Just as the death of Christ is for righteousness, so the resurrection of Christ is for holiness. In fact, the resurrected Christ is the very element of holiness within us. This holiness germinates us, generates us, and sanctifies us. This is wholly a matter of life.

Romans 8:11 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." Notice that in this verse Paul firstly speaks of Jesus and then of Christ Jesus. The name Jesus is related to His death, and the title Christ Jesus is related to resurrection and the impartation of life. Thus, death is related to Jesus, and the giving of life is related to Christ.

The death of Jesus was for the fulfillment of God's righteousness, but the resurrection of Christ is for God's holiness. Righteousness is God's procedure, His way of doing things, whereas holiness is God's nature. God's righteous procedure is upheld by the death of Christ, but God's nature is imparted into us through the resurrection of Christ. When God's righteousness is upheld through the death of Christ, God is in a position to impart Himself into us through the resurrection of Christ. As the resurrected Christ comes into us, He imparts God's nature into us. This holy nature then germinates us, generates us, and sanctifies us. The resurrected Christ within us is the

element of holiness that enlivens us. This element germinates us, enlivens us, and then sanctifies us. This is sanctification. Sanctification involves a long process which begins when we are saved and continues throughout our Christian life. In this process we are transformed and even conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God.

Sanctification takes place through the process of resurrection. I have the assurance that we all have the resurrected Christ within us and that we are undergoing the process of sanctification through resurrection. This process is actually a person, the resurrected Christ Himself. Christ in resurrection is both our holiness and our sanctification. The difference between holiness and sanctification is that holiness denotes the very element of Christ, whereas sanctification denotes the action of that element. Hence, we are not only under the process of holiness, but also under the process of sanctification. The holy element is moving and active within us to sanctify us.

ASCENSION AND GLORIFICATION

Romans covers not only the attributes of righteousness and holiness, but also the attribute of glory. Glorification began at the time of Christ's ascension, and it will consummate at His coming back. Christ's ascension is for glory. Therefore, Christ's death is for God's righteousness, His resurrection is for God's holiness, and His ascension is for God's glory. When Christ comes back, the glorification of His saints will be consummated.

This thought is found in Romans 8. In verse 17 Paul says that if we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified with Him. In verse 18 he goes on to say, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us." The whole creation is eagerly expecting to "be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (v. 21). In verse 30 Paul says that those whom God has predestinated, called, and justified, He has also glorified. As we are being sanctified, we are also being

glorified. With sanctification we enjoy a foretaste of glorification.

We have pointed out that glorification began with Christ's ascension. As believers in Christ, we are ascended with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). Christ is both in us subjectively and in the heavenlies objectively. Christ has brought us into the heavenlies, and He has brought the heavenlies into us. When we realize the fact that we share in Christ's ascension, we experience not only sanctification, but also glorification. To be in ascension is to be in glory.

THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, HOLINESS, AND GLORY

We need the subjective experience of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. To be crucified with Christ is to experience righteousness, and to have Christ live in us is to experience holiness. According to His righteousness and through His holiness, the Triune God is dispensed into us in a full way unto His glory. This means that the result of God's dispensation is glory. When people contact us or visit our homes, they should be able to sense that we have died with Christ and that Christ is living in us. If this is our situation, then we shall exhibit God's righteousness, holiness, and even His glory.

How we praise the Lord for opening the depths of this book to us! In Romans 3 and 4 we see that Christ died for us and in Romans 6, that we died in Christ. This death was according to God's righteousness and for His righteousness. In Romans 6 through 8 we see that we are being sanctified through the living, acting, moving, and working of the resurrected Christ within us. After the resurrected Christ germinates us and generates us, He sanctifies us. Sanctification includes transformation and conformation. As the process of sanctification takes place within us, we begin to experience God's glorification. The issue of the dispensation of the Triune God into us is glory. If we daily take our stand of having died with Christ, we shall have the subjective experience of righteousness.

Then if we allow Christ to live in us, we shall have the subjective experience of holiness. The result will be glory, the expression of God from within us.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN HIS DISPENSATION

Just as righteousness is God's procedure and holiness is God's nature, so glory is God's expression. The ultimate goal of the dispensation of the Triune God is that God be expressed through the Body of Christ. When the Body of Christ has become the expression of God's glory, that will be the time of full glorification. As Romans 8 reveals, the universe is eagerly awaiting this time, anxiously waiting to enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. In this glory God will be expressed in a full way. This will be the ultimate issue of the dispensation of the Triune God.

Every local church today should be a miniature of such a glorious expression of the Triune God. We in the churches should be able to say, "Satan, look at the church. Here you can see God's righteousness, holiness, and glory." When Satan sees this, he will be forced to admit that this is the issue of the dispensation of the Triune God. Because we all have died in Christ and are therefore righteous in the eyes of God, there is no ground for Satan to accuse us or to condemn us. Now Christ is living in us to sanctify us, to transform us, and to conform us to the image of Christ. The issue of this process is glory. This should be the testimony borne by every church in the Lord's recovery. In every church there must be the base of God's righteousness, the process of God's holiness, and the goal of God's glory. This is the dispensation of the Triune God according to His righteousness, through His holiness, and unto His glory as revealed in the book of Romans.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-TWO

THE LIFE OF THE TRIUNE GOD DISPENSED INTO THE TRIPARTITE MAN

Before we consider the life of the Triune God dispensed into the tripartite man, we need to say a further word about the dispensation of the Triune God according to His righteousness, through His holiness, and unto His glory. We have seen that righteousness is God's procedure, holiness is God's nature, and glory is God's expression. God's dispensation, therefore, is according to His righteous way, through His holy nature, and unto the expression of Himself. God's expression is mainly in the church. Thus, the goal of the dispensation of the Triune God is that God may be expressed in the church.

THE HIGHEST RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the foregoing message we pointed out that God's righteousness is related to the death of Christ, which terminated all negative things. Because of the fall of man, everything in creation has become unrighteous. For example, it is unrighteous for mosquitoes to pester us. Furthermore, there is unrighteousness in every aspect of society. Adam was the head of the old creation. When he fell, everything under his headship became unrighteous in the eyes of God. The death of Christ terminated these unrighteous things and fulfilled the requirements of the righteousness of God. Hence, the death of Christ is the highest righteousness.

When Christ died on the cross, we died also, for we died in Him. We were identified with Christ in His death. This means that not only the death of Christ Himself is

righteous, but also our death in Christ is righteous in God's eyes.

HOLINESS IN ACTION

However, the death of Christ was not the end, for it ushered in the resurrection, in which we are germinated and generated. Moreover, with the resurrection of Christ there is the function of sanctifying, which includes transforming and conforming. Eventually, we by this process of sanctification shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God. This is the subjective experience of sanctification. Sanctification is the subjective activity of holiness; it is holiness in action. Sanctification is actually the resurrected Christ working God's holy nature into our being. This is vastly different from the concept of holiness found among so-called holiness people.

GLORIFICATION, THE ISSUE OF SANCTIFICATION

The issue of sanctification is glorification, the expression of God. Thus, the dispensation of the Triune God is unto His glory. The result of sanctification is glorification.

Glorification began on the day of Pentecost. The church was born not at Pentecost, but on the day of Christ's resurrection. First Peter 1:3 says that we were regenerated when Christ was resurrected. When He was resurrected, the one grain of wheat became the many grains to form the loaf, the church (John 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17). Hence, the church was brought forth on the day of resurrection. But what was it that happened on the day of Pentecost? On that day the church was glorified. If we had been present at the meeting of the church on the day of Pentecost, we would have exclaimed, "What glory!" We would not have spoken about righteousness or sanctification, for we would have had an overwhelming sense of glory.

The Lord Jesus began His prayer in John 17 with the

words, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You" (v. 1). How does the Son glorify the Father? He glorifies the Father in oneness. The oneness in John 17 is the church. The oneness of the saints is the proper church life. When the oneness is realized in a thorough way, the Son glorifies the Father in the church. This indicates that wherever there is the proper church life, there is the glorification of the Father, for the church life expresses the Father. Therefore, if we gather together as the church in a normal way, we should have the sense that there is glory in our meetings. The church life is altogether a matter of glorification. The church is God's goal; it is not God's procedure or His way. God's intention is to be glorified in the church.

THE MORE SANCTIFICATION, THE MORE GLORY

The glorification of the church that began at Pentecost has not yet reached its consummation. On the contrary, the process of glorification is still taking place. According to the condition of the church, there may be more glory at certain times than at others. How much glory is manifested in the church depends upon our degree of sanctification. The spectators at the basketball game may be very enthusiastic. However, with them there is no glory; there is only excitement, because there is no sanctification. The more we are sanctified through Christ's saturating our being with His holy nature, the more we shall express God when we come together as the church.

Sanctification is primarily an individual matter, whereas glorification is mainly a corporate matter. Suppose I lose my temper with my wife during the day. This damages my personal sanctification. Although I confess to the Lord and receive His cleansing, I may have no sense of the glory in the meeting that night, even though everyone else is conscious of it. Because I am short of sanctification, I cannot sense the glory which others can sense. I do not have the sanctification in my personal life

to give me a sense of glory in the meeting. However, suppose I stay in fellowship with the Lord all day, even when my wife gives me a difficult time. Everything that happens during the day only helps the process of sanctification. Therefore, in the meetings, I will be able to sense the glory. This illustrates the fact that the more sanctification we experience, the more we shall participate in the glorification.

Glory, the expression of God in the church, is God's goal in His dispensation. However, sanctification is the process, and righteousness is the supporting ground. Therefore, the dispensation of the Triune God is according to His righteousness, through His holiness, and unto the goal of His glory.

THE LIFE OF THE TRIUNE GOD DISPENSED INTO OUR WHOLE BEING

Now we come to the very precious matter of the life of the Triune God dispensed into the tripartite man. How marvelous that God is triune and that we are tripartite!

Romans 8:2 speaks of the life of the Triune God. Verse 10 reveals that this life has been dispensed into our spirit and has caused our spirit to become life. Furthermore, according to verse 6, this life can be dispensed into our mind and can cause our mind to be life also. Ultimately, as verse 11 discloses, the divine life can even be imparted into our mortal bodies. In these verses we see the three parts of man: the spirit, the soul (represented by the mind), and the body. The spirit is the center, the body is the circumference, and the mind is in between. From the center through the middle to the circumference, the life of the Triune God is being dispensed into our entire being.

THE LIFE THAT IS DISPENSED INTO US

The life that is to be dispensed into the three parts of man is the life of the Triune God. In 8:2 Paul speaks of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. In this phrase the Triune

God is implied. The Spirit and Christ, the Son, are mentioned explicitly, whereas God the Father is implied by the fact that the Spirit is the Spirit of God. Hence, here we have God, Christ, and the Spirit. However, the main point is not the Triune God, but life. To speak of the Spirit of life is actually to say that the Spirit is life. The life here is the very life of the Triune God.

When we were regenerated, we received another life, a life in addition to our natural life. There are various kinds of life: plant life, animal life, human life, and divine life. As humans, we all have a physical life and a psychological life. The physical life and the psychological life are indicated by the Greek words *bios* and *psuche* respectively. When Paul speaks of life in Romans 8, however, he uses still another Greek word, the word *zoe*. In the Bible *zoe* denotes God's life, the divine, infinite, uncreated, eternal life. This is the life we receive by believing in the Lord Jesus. As John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." In verses 2, 6, 10, and 11 of Romans 8, Paul uses this Greek word for life to indicate that the dispensation of God is to dispense *zoe* into our being. In other words, God desires to dispense Himself as *zoe* into all three parts of man's being.

The dispensation of the divine zoe into us began when we were regenerated. According to 8:2, this life is the Spirit and it is in Christ Jesus. But now, through God's dispensation, it also has something to do with us. Without this life, we are doomed to perish. Praise the Lord that when we were regenerated, *zoe* was dispensed into our spirit!

A LONG PROCESS

In order for the divine life to be dispensed into us, this life first had to pass through a long process involving incarnation, human living, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and descension. The life dispensed into us is actually the processed Triune God. In Genesis 1:1 this life could not be dispensed into man, for as yet it

had not passed through the necessary stages. But now it is fully possible for such a wonderful life to be dispensed into us. This life is present and available, and we can receive it simply by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.

OUR SPIRIT BEING LIFE

Romans 8:10 says, "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." That the spirit in this verse is not the Holy Spirit is proved by the fact that here Paul contrasts the body with the spirit. Paul says that the body is dead but that the spirit is life. We would expect him to say that the spirit is living. Instead, he says that the spirit is life, or *zoe*. When we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, this *zoe* gets into our spirit and causes our spirit to become *zoe*. Now not only the Triune God is life, but our spirit is also life.

If we see this, we shall have the boldness to declare to the whole universe and especially to Satan that our spirit is life. We shall proclaim that at least one part of our being, our spirit, is *zoe*. Oh, how we all need this revelation! May we see not only that we are saved and regenerated, but also that the innermost part of our being has become life.

Knowing that our spirit is *zoe* will be a great help to us in our daily living. When you are tempted to lose your temper, do not suppress your anger. Instead, simply declare, "My spirit is *zoe*!" Likewise, if your wife or husband gives you a difficult time, do not argue, but tell the one troubling you that your spirit is *zoe*. Saying this enables us to resist Satan's temptations. Praise the Lord, our spirit is *zoe*!

The reason that I am so lively and energetic is that my spirit is *zoe*. However, I spent years in organized Christianity and no one told me that my spirit is *zoe*. I was instructed in various religious practices, but I was not told that my spirit is life. But now I know that the divine *zoe* has been dispensed into my spirit, into the center of my being. Now I know that my spirit has become *zoe*!

NOT THE BRIGHT VIRTUE, BUT THE TRIUNE GOD AS LIFE

Confucius was a great ethical philosopher who taught his disciples to develop what he called the inner bright virtue. What he called the bright virtue is actually the conscience. The disciples of Confucius may have a bright virtue, but we have the divine life. In fact, the very divine Being Himself has come into us to be our life. There is no comparison between the bright virtue and the Triune God as the divine life.

Because we realized that our spirit was life, we were able to convince a number of philosophical teachers in China to believe in the Lord Jesus. They boasted that they knew how to develop the bright virtue within. After listening to them for a while, we would tell them that what they had was nothing in comparison to what we had. Some of them were very surprised and inquired honestly about this. We explained that as Christians we have the Triune God in us as our life. We told them that what they have may be a bright virtue, something created by God, but what we have is the very Creator of this bright virtue. We helped them see that this Creator has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Now He is both in ascension and available to come into anyone who calls on His name. As a result of such a testimony, many of those philosophical teachers opened to the Lord, called on His name, and received Him into them to be their life. Then they themselves testified about the difference between the bright virtue and the divine life. By preaching the gospel on a high level in this way, we brought a good number of professors, doctors, nurses, and lawyers to the Lord.

OUR MIND BECOMING LIFE

We have emphasized the fact that our spirit has become life because Christ dwells within us. But what about our soul and body? Consider verse 6: "For the mind

set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." Here we see that our mind can also be *zoe*. When we set our mind on the spirit, our mind, which represents our soul, becomes *zoe*. We do not need to follow the way of Confucius to cultivate the bright virtue. Instead, we simply set our mind on the spirit and our mind becomes *zoe*. This is the dispensation of the divine life into our soul.

In our daily living, we need to practice turning our mind to the spirit. Are you about to gossip? Turn your mind to the spirit. Are you tempted to lose your temper? Turn your mind to the spirit. Drop the ethical and religious teachings and come back to God's living Word, which reveals that the life of the Triune God is dispensed into our spirit to make our spirit life and also reveals that the mind set on the spirit is life. We have something higher than bright virtue, ethics, and morality--we have the Triune God dispensed into us. What can compare with this? This is not philosophy or religious teaching. It is the *zoe* life dispensed into our spirit and into our mind.

LIFE IMPARTED INTO OUR MORTAL BODIES

Verse 11 reveals even more of God's dispensation. Here 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." I marvel at the indirectness of this verse. This verse reveals that *zoe* can be imparted through the Spirit into our mortal bodies. Therefore, not only are both our spirit and our mind *zoe*, but even our body can be full of *zoe*.

SEEING THE VISION

We all need to see the vision of the dispensing of the life of the Triune God into the three parts of our being. If we see this divine vision, our natural concept of ethics and morality will be shattered. We need to say to the Lord, "Lord, I thank You. Since You came into me, my spirit has

become life. Now if I set my mind on my spirit, my mind also will be life. O Lord, how I praise You! Through Your indwelling Spirit, Your *zoe* life can be dispensed even into my mortal body. Lord, I worship You for this, I enjoy this, and I am one with You in this dispensation." This is the dispensation of the life of the Triune God into the tripartite man. Through such a dispensing the Triune God becomes one with the tripartite man, and the tripartite man becomes one with the Triune God. It is through this dispensation of the divine life that we become sons of God. Furthermore, it is by this dispensation that we are transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. This is the Christian life and the church life.

MEN OF LIFE

Let us turn from religious, ethical, and philosophical teachings and come back to the simple yet profound revelation in the holy Word concerning God's economy. Our God is the Triune God who has passed through incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Now He is the all-inclusive Spirit to be the divine *zoe* for our participation, experience, and enjoyment. Firstly He dispenses Himself into our spirit, the center of our being. From the center, He spreads into our mind and saturates it with *zoe*. Then He expands into our mortal body and thereby makes our whole being *zoe*. In this way, we become men of *zoe*. Hallelujah, we are not men of religion, morality, or ethics--we are men of life!

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-THREE

NOT AN EXCHANGED LIFE, BUT A GRAFTED LIFE

God's economy is a matter of the dispensing of the divine life into our being. As a result of this dispensation, we, the chosen people of God, have both the human life and the divine life. Every kind of life, even the lowest plant life, is a mystery. No scientist can fully explain how a little seed grows into a beautiful flower. Within the seed there is an element of life that brings forth a flower with a certain shape and color. How wonderful!

THE MOST WONDERFUL CREATED LIFE

Among the various forms of created life, the most wonderful is the human life. Contrary to the opinion of many, the angelic life is not more wonderful than the human life. It is wrong to think that angelic life is better than human life. God did not ordain the angelic life to contain the divine life. Rather, He created the human life to be the vessel for the divine life. Although you may consider yourself inferior to the angels, God considers you better than angels. Nevertheless, subconsciously some, especially sisters, may desire to be angels. The Bible, however, does not speak of God's love for angels, but it reveals His love for man. Angels are simply God's servants. In His eyes, the most wonderful life among all His creatures is the human life.

Genesis 1:26 says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Hence, the angels were not created in the image and likeness of God, but man was. Do you realize that you were made in the image of God and according to God's likeness? We are not descendants of

apes, but are descendants of the man created in the image of God. Simply by having the image of God and by bearing the likeness of God, we look like God. This is the clear revelation in the holy Word. Because man was created according to God, the human life is the best of all created lives. Therefore, we can be proud of the fact that we are human beings. Praise the Lord that we are men and not angels!

IMAGE, LIKENESS, AND REALITY

One day, through the incarnation of Christ, God Himself became a man. In this way God identified Himself with man. Jesus, God incarnate, was both God and man. The incarnation of Christ not only brought God down to man's level, but it also uplifted man to God's level. By creation man had both the image of God and the likeness of God, but he did not have in him the reality of God. The incarnation brought the reality of God into man. The Lord Jesus had not only God's image and likeness; He also embodied the reality of God, for God was in Him. In principle, the same is true of everyone who has been regenerated. As regenerated persons, we not only bear the image of God and have the likeness of God, but we also have within us the reality of God.

A VESSEL TO CONTAIN GOD

The Bible reveals that man was created as a vessel to contain God. In 9:21 Paul speaks of vessels to honor and in 9:23, of vessels of mercy prepared unto glory. God Himself is the real honor and glory. Therefore, the fact that we are vessels to honor prepared unto glory means that we have been designed to contain God as our honor and glory.

We may use a glove as an illustration of man as a vessel, a container, of God. Because the purpose of a glove is to contain the hand, the glove is made in the likeness of the hand. The hand has a thumb and four fingers, and the glove also has a thumb and four fingers. Although the

glove is not the hand, it is made in the likeness of the hand in order to contain the hand. In the same principle, man is a vessel to contain God. For this reason, he was made according to the likeness of God.

If you put your hand into a glove designed for it, your hand will feel comfortable in the glove. In like manner, God feels comfortable in man. However, He would not feel comfortable in an animal or even in an angel. Only in man does God feel at home, at rest. Heaven may be God's temporary dwelling place, but His real home is man.

We are all "gloves" designed to contain God as the divine hand. We were made in a form that is suitable to be the place of God's dwelling. God has a mind, a will, and emotions, and we do too. As humans, we should not be jellyfish, beings without a strong will. A proper human being must not only have a mind and a will, but also be full of emotion. We should find it easy to laugh or to weep. We should not be like statues incapable of expressing feeling no matter what the situation may be. The Bible reveals that God is rich in emotion. He hates, He loves, and He becomes angry. According to John 11:35, the Lord Jesus, God incarnate, wept. Therefore, to be a vessel to contain God, man was created with emotions. Emotion is extremely important, for God Himself is rich in emotion; He is not a God of stone.

All of man's virtues are created according to God's attributes. For example, human kindness is an image of God's kindness. The same is true of gentleness. Man's gentleness is according to the likeness of the gentleness of God.

THE CAPACITY TO BE GODLY

We are "gloves" in the likeness of the divine hand. This means that we do not have the thumb, but the form of the thumb; not the fingers, but the likeness of the fingers. For example, our gentleness is a container for God's gentleness. Our gentleness is only the form, whereas God's gentleness is the substance, the reality. Because we

were created according to the likeness of God, we have the capacity to be godly, that is, to be like God. Animals can never be godly, for they are not in the likeness of God and cannot contain Him. But in our love, kindness, and gentleness we can show forth godliness, God-likeness.

In His creation of man, God made man as a vessel to contain Him with the intention of coming into this vessel and filling it with Himself. When God enters into the vessels created by Him, He finds that the vessels are a proper match for Him. He has emotion, and His container has emotion also. Therefore, in the container God has a place to put, to dispense, His own emotion. In this way human emotion and divine emotion become one. The divine emotion is the content, and the human emotion is the container and the expression.

Although this revelation is in the Bible, not many have seen it. We praise the Lord that in His recovery this revelation has been made more than clear. No more are we veiled to the fact that man is a vessel to contain God and that God feels at home in such a wonderful vessel. If we see this, then we shall be able to understand the subject of this message: not an exchanged life, but a grafted life.

DISPENSATION, NOT EXCHANGE

We have seen that when the divine life enters into the human life, the divine life becomes the content and the human life becomes the container and the expression. But there is no exchange, or trade, of lives. This means that we do not exchange the human life for the divine life. Instead of exchange, there is a dispensation. The empty glove is filled with the hand. Using another figure of speech, we may say that man is like a tire that needs to be filled with air. The air is dispensed into the tire and fills it, but the air is not exchanged for the tire. In like manner, the divine air, the heavenly *pneuma,* is dispensed into us, but it is not exchanged for our human life. Rather, as we shall see, it is dispensed into us and mingled with us.

Some Christian teachers regard the Christian life as an exchanged life. According to this concept, our life is poor

and Christ's life is superior. Therefore, the Lord asks us to give up our life in exchange for His. We yield our life to Him, and He replaces it with His own life. However, our Christian life is not an exchanged life. It is altogether a matter of the divine life dispensed, infused, into our human life. This is a basic concept in the Scriptures.

VESSELS OF HONOR AND GLORY

In the book of Romans Paul uses three illustrations to show the dispensation of the divine life into us. In each illustration we see that the Christian life is not an exchanged life. The first illustration is that of vessels. When a certain content is placed in a vessel, an exchange does not take place. On the contrary, there is a dispensation of the content into the vessel. The vessel may be earthy, not at all honorable or glorious, whereas the content is altogether honorable and glorious. When such a content is dispensed into the earthy vessel, the vessel becomes a vessel of honor, a vessel of glory. This is not exchange; it is dispensation.

A UNION OF LIFE

Paul's second illustration is that of married life. Marriage is not an exchange of life, but a union of life. In marriage, the husband becomes the very person of the wife. For this reason, the wife takes her husband's name as her own.

In weddings throughout the world the bride's head is covered. This indicates that in the marriage union there can be just one head. Hence, marriage is a union of two persons under one head. In such a union there is no trade or exchange, but identification. The wife is to identify herself fully with her husband. In this union, this identification, the wife is one with the husband, and the husband is one with the wife. This is a union of life, not an exchange of life.

In 7:4 Paul speaks of our being married to Christ: "So that, my brothers, you also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you might marry

another, even Him Who has been raised from among the dead." Christ is our Husband, and we are His Bride. Between the Bridegroom and the Bride there is no exchange of life. Instead, there is a wonderful union. We are one with Him in person, in name, in life, and in existence. If a man and wife are to have a proper marriage, they must learn to be one in such a way. Likewise, our Christian life is a life of identification with Christ and oneness with Him.

GRAFTING

Because neither the illustration of the vessel nor that of married life picture anything organic related to God's dispensation, Paul goes on to use a third illustration--the grafting of one tree to another. In 11:17-24 Paul uses the illustration of branches from a wild olive tree being grafted into a cultivated olive tree. As a result of grafting, the branches from the wild olive tree and the cultivated olive tree grow together organically. Each tree has its own life, but now these lives grow organically together and have one issue.

A surgeon may do what is called a skin graft. In this procedure healthy skin is transplanted from one part of a patient's body to a wound or burn elsewhere in his body to form new skin. After the graft is completed, the transplanted skin will grow organically with the tissue to which it has been grafted. This growth is possible because both the skin and the tissue have life. The organic element in the life enables them to grow together.

In Romans Paul uses the illustrations of vessels, married life, and grafting. The illustration of the vessels shows that we are God's containers with God as our content. The illustration of marriage shows that a man and a woman with different minds, emotions, wills, personalities, characters, and dispositions are joined to form one unit. The illustration of grafting shows that two lives are joined and then grow together organically.

A stanza in a hymn written by A.B. Simpson (*Hymns*, #482) speaks of grafting:

This the secret nature hideth, Harvest grows from buried grain; A poor tree with better grafted,
Richer, sweeter life doth gain.

No doubt, when Mr. Simpson wrote this hymn, he had Romans 11 in mind. I do not believe that A.B. Simpson would teach that the Christian life is an exchanged life. According to this hymn, he realized that it was a grafted life, a life in which two parties are joined to grow organically.

THE GRAFTING OF SIMILAR LIVES

In order for one kind of life to be grafted to another, the two lives must be very similar. For example, it is not possible to graft a branch from a banana tree to a peach tree. However, it is possible to graft some branches from a poorer peach tree to a healthy, productive peach tree, for the lives of these two trees are very close to each other. We may apply this principle to the dispensation of the divine life into man. The divine life cannot be grafted with the life of a dog because there is no resemblance whatever between these lives. But because our human life was made in the image of God and according to the likeness of God, it can be joined to the divine life. Although our human life is not the divine life, it resembles the divine life. Therefore, these lives can easily be grafted together and then grow together organically.

In the line of the hymn by A.B. Simpson, the poor tree is grafted to a better tree to gain a richer, sweeter life. The life of the poor tree does not disappear. Rather, it grows together as one unit along with the life of the rich, sweet tree. Once again we see that this is not an exchanged life, but a grafted life.

UPLIFTED THROUGH GRAFTING

Furthermore, according to the natural law ordained by God, it is not the poor life that affects the richer life, but the richer life that affects the poor life. In fact, the rich life will swallow up all the defects of the poor life and thus transform the poor life. In the same principle, when we are

grafted into Christ, Christ swallows up our defects, but He does not eliminate our own life. On the contrary, as He swallows our defects, He uplifts our humanity. He uplifts our mind, will, emotion, and all our virtues.

DISPENSING, MINGLING, AND ABIDING

In John 14:20 the Lord Jesus said, "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." The day spoken of here is the day of Christ's resurrection. In this verse the Lord was saying that on the day of His resurrection His disciples would know that He is in the Father, that they are in Him, and that He is in them. This is not an exchange of one life for another--it is a mingling of lives. The Lord is in us and we are in Him. This is the mingling that comes from the dispensing, the infusing, of the life of the Triune God into us.

The mingling spoken of in John 14:20 is like the mingling of the oil with the fine flour in the meal offering (Lev. 2). The fine flour is in the oil, and the oil is in the fine flour. This is mingling.

Mingling leads to mutual abiding. Therefore, in John 15:4, the Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you." This mutual abiding of us in the Lord and the Lord in us is what we mean by a mingled life. Moreover, this mingled life is a grafted life.

ONE LIFE WITH ONE LIVING

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." Here the Lord says that He lives because of the Father. This word indicates that two

Persons live by one life and have just one living. The Son and the Father are two, but They do not live two lives, nor do They have two livings. They have one life with one living. The Son lives by the Father, and the Father lives through the Son. In this verse the Lord also says that he who eats Him will also live because of Him. This indicates that just as the Son and the Father are two Persons with one life and one living, so we and the Son should have one life with one living. Once again we see that this is a grafted life, not an exchanged life.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul speaks of his own Christian experience. In this verse Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ and that Christ now lives in him. Again we see two persons, Christ and Paul, with one life and one living.

SWALLOWING UP OUR DEFECTS AND SHORTAGES

We have pointed out that the better life swallows up the defects and shortages of the inferior life. This means that the divine life will swallow up the defects and shortages of our human life. This is possible because in Christ's life there is the killing power of His crucifixion. Remember, Christ's life has been processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Now His life includes all these ingredients. We may use antibiotics as an illustration of this. Just as antibiotics kill disease germs, so the killing element in the life of Christ terminates the negative things in us.

We may prefer simply to yield up our human life and have it be replaced with Christ's life. We may feel that our life is full of "germs" and would therefore like it replaced by the divine life. This may be our way, but it is not God's way in His economy. His way is for Christ's life to swallow up all the defects, shortages, and "germs" within us. The more we tell the Lord Jesus that we love Him and that we want to be one with Him, the more we shall experience the killing power in the spiritual antibiotics.

All the elements we need are available in Christ's life.

In His life there is the killing element as well as the nourishing element. You may be discouraged about your disposition. But Christ's life will kill the negative element in your disposition and then, instead of casting your disposition away, He will uplift it and use it.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INCARNATION

In their so-called prophesying, many of those in the Pentecostal denominations or in the charismatic movement are fond of imitating the Old Testament prophets who frequently said, "Thus saith the Lord." Although this expression is used by the Old Testament prophets, it is not used by the New Testament writers. Paul wrote many Epistles, but he did not say at the end, "Thus saith the Lord." Rather, he said, "Grace be with you," "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit," or simply, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." The reason for this difference is very significant. In Old Testament times the incarnation of Christ had not yet taken place. The incarnation is a matter of God coming into man and being one with man. In the birth of Jesus, God accomplished the incarnation of Himself in man. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we who believe in Christ may share in the principle of incarnation. This means that through regeneration, Christ is born into our being and becomes one with us. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:17, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." This means that as long as we have been born again, we are one spirit with the Lord. Now we all have the ground to declare that we are one spirit with Christ. On the day we believed we were not only saved, but we were also married to Christ in spirit, and a union between us and Him took place. As we continue to contact Him, the superior elements of the divine life swallow up the inferior elements of our human life. Then what we say and do is spontaneously also the saying and doing of Christ. Therefore, there is no need for us to use the expression, "Thus saith the Lord." Because we have been grafted into

Christ and are living in oneness with Him, our speaking is spontaneously His speaking.

First Corinthians 7 illustrates this. Verse 25 says, "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my opinion, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (Gk.). Paul had no commandment of the Lord regarding this matter, but he spoke as one who loved the Lord and lived out the Lord in a practical way. Then he proceeded to give his opinion. After doing so, he said, "I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (v. 40). As we read 1 Corinthians 7 today, we receive the whole chapter as the oracle of God, as part of God's holy Word. Thus, Paul's speaking became God's oracle because Paul was one with the Lord. According to the principle of incarnation, Christ had been incarnated into Paul, and Paul lived not an exchanged life, but a grafted life. This enabled him to speak in oneness with the Lord.

GOD'S REVELATION AND OUR EXPERIENCE

May we all be impressed with the fact that the Christian life is not a matter of exchange, but a matter of grafting. A lower life, our human life, is grafted into a higher life, the divine life. The higher life swallows the defects and infirmities of the lower life. As this takes place, the higher life spontaneously enriches, uplifts, and transforms the lower life. How marvelous! This is not our doctrine or opinion; it is the divine revelation in the Word of God. Furthermore, this revelation can be supported by our Christian experience. Therefore, according to God's revelation and according to our experience, we see that as Christians today we have a wonderful grafted life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-FOUR

TRANSFORMATION AND CONFORMATION BY THE GRAFTED LIFE

(1)

In recent messages we have seen the matter of the dispensation of the Triune God and the matter of the grafted life. In this message we shall consider the function of the grafted life. In order to see this, we need to ask the Lord to remove all the veils that keep us from receiving a true understanding of this book. We may read the book of Romans again and again, but we may not know that we are covered by layer upon layer of veils. Because many readers of this book are veiled, they do not see the dispensation of the life of the Triune God, the grafted life, nor even the tripartite man in Romans 8. Therefore, we need to be unveiled and then come to this book as if we had never read it before.

OUR DESTINY

The grafted life is related to transformation and conformation to Christ. In 12:2 Paul speaks of transformation: "And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." The world, the satanic system, is composed of various ages, each with a certain pattern and style. Satan's design is to conform us to this present age. Although Paul mentions Satan's goal of conformation on the negative side, he does not here speak of the object of transformation. He simply exhorts us to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

The goal of transformation is in Romans 8. Verse 29 says, "Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be

the firstborn among many brothers." As the called and justified ones, our destiny has been determined beforehand by God. Before the foundation of the world God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. This means that conformation to Christ is our destiny and also our destination. Do you know where we are going? Our destination is the image of the Son of God. Our destiny is not heaven--it is to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

A GRAFTED LIFE

If we would understand the significance of transformation and conformation, we need to realize that the book of Romans speaks of a particular kind of life--a grafted life. A grafted life is a mingled life, a life which is the product of the mingling together of two lives. In 11:24 Paul speaks of the grafting of two olive trees, not of two entirely different kinds of trees. Hence, the grafting in Romans is that between two trees of the same family. The difference is that one is a cultivated olive tree and that the other is a wild olive tree.

In chapter five of Romans, Paul begins to speak about life. In verse 10 he says that we shall be saved in Christ's life. Furthermore, according to 5:17, we shall reign in life. In 6:4 Paul speaks of walking in newness of life. In chapter eight he mentions the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (v. 2). He goes on to say that our spirit is life (v. 10), that the mind set on the spirit is life (v. 6), and that the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from among the dead desires to impart life into our mortal bodies (v. 11). The life spoken of in all these verses is a grafted life.

THE GRAFTING OF SIMILAR LIVES

We have pointed out that a grafted life is a mingled life. This grafting can be effective only if the lives to be grafted are similar. That there is a similarity between the human life and the divine life is proved by the fact that God created man in His image and according to His

likeness (Gen. 1:26). He did this purposely so that the human life would be very much like the divine life. Once again we use a glove as an illustration. In form, in likeness, and in function the glove is the same as the hand. Otherwise, the hand could not fit into the glove. We are all gloves made according to the likeness of the divine hand. How we need to worship God for making us in His image and according to His likeness. Praise Him for making us vessels to contain Him! God created us in this way intentionally so that He could put His Son into us.

Because the human life and the divine life are similar, it is possible for them to be put together. This means that the divine life and the human life can be "married." On the day we were saved we were married to Christ (Rom. 7:4). Hence, to be a Christian is not only a matter of salvation or regeneration, but also of being married to Christ. The life in Romans 8 is a grafted life, a mingling of two different yet similar lives. Transformation and conformation are by such a grafted life. Through my more than fifty years as a Christian, I have learned that the life which is transforming me and conforming me to the image of the Son of God is a grafted life.

QUALIFIED TO COME INTO US

From the time God created us in His image and according to His likeness, we were ready to receive Him into us as life. We had a spirit to receive Him and a soul to express Him. Although we were ready, God was not yet ready. He was not yet qualified to come into man. In order to become qualified for this, He had to put on humanity; that is, He had to be incarnated. In Old Testament times, God could come upon the prophets, but He could not come into them. Many Christians today only know how God comes upon people, not how He enters into them. In a very real sense, they are Old Testament believers.

The New Testament reveals that through the incarnation of Christ, God came into humanity. He entered into mankind through a narrow gate, having been

born of a virgin in a manger in Bethlehem. For thirty years He lived in the home of a carpenter. One day He came forth to begin His ministry. No one could recognize that this man was God Himself. Contacting some young fishermen in Galilee, He said, "Follow Me," and they followed Him, although He seemingly had nothing. He had such drawing power that His followers were beside themselves with love for Him. They were drawn to Him because there was something magnetic about Him. They had a marvelous time the three and a half years they were with Him. However, one day He suddenly told His disciples that He was going to leave them by being crucified. This word deeply troubled them, especially Peter. Then the Lord told them that it was profitable for them that He go away. Otherwise, the Spirit of reality could not come to be in them (John 16:7). Up until that time, the Lord had only been among them; He had not yet come into them. After His resurrection, He could be in them, and they could be in Him (John 14:20). Nevertheless, Peter and the other disciples probably preferred to have the Lord remain among them rather than have Him go so that in resurrection He could come into them.

When I was a young Christian, I used to wish that I had been alive when the Lord Jesus was on earth. I wished that I could have seen Him, heard Him, and touched Him in the flesh. I even complained to the Lord about this and asked Him why He had not caused me to be alive during the time He was on earth so that I could have physically been in His presence. I did not yet realize that it is far better to have Christ in me than just to have Him with me. Do you prefer to have the Lord among you physically or in you as the Spirit? With your mouth you may claim that you prefer to have Him in you, but within you, you probably prefer to have Him with you, as He was with the early disciples. If the Lord Jesus would suddenly appear in a physical way, we would be amazed. This proves that we prefer a Christ among us to a Christ in us. However, if Christ were still just among us, His life could

not be grafted together with ours, because He would not be in us. He could perform miracles among us, but we would remain the same, without change or transformation. We could embrace Him, but we could not be grafted into Him. Therefore, in order that we may be mingled with Him, Christ prefers to be in us. He wants us to abide in Him so that He may abide in us (John 15:4). This is the mingling that produces the grafted life. It is this life that transforms us and conforms us to the image of Christ.

In order to be qualified to enter into us, Christ had to pass through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Furthermore, as the Spirit, He had to descend upon us. Then the only thing remaining is for us to call upon Him in faith. When we say, "O Lord Jesus, I believe in You," His qualified life enters into our prepared life, and the two lives are joined. In this way our life is grafted into His.

TWO COMPLICATED LIVES

Perhaps you have been a Christian for many years without realizing that the Christian life is a grafted life, a mingling of the divine life with the human life. Both the divine life and the human life are complicated. The divine life is actually Christ Himself. As God, Christ is the Creator of all things. One day, He was incarnated and took on human nature. What a mystery that divinity and humanity could mingle together as one unit! Following incarnation, Christ passed through human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. All these elements are now included in the divine life. This life has power to kill all negative things; it also has the resurrection power to generate, germinate, transform, and conform. This complicated and qualified life is the very life we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus.

But what about the human life with which such a marvelous divine life is mingled? Our created life has become fallen, corrupted, darkened, worldly, and satanic. It is thus filled with evil, negative, demonic elements.

John 3:16 tells us that God loved the world. For years I could not understand why the Bible does not say that God loved mankind. In the eyes of God, fallen man has become the world. This means that the fallen, corrupted, worldly, and satanic mankind is the system of Satan. Before we were saved, we were part of this system. As evil as this system is, the Bible still declares that God loved the world. The reason God loves the world is that in it there is the life which He created in His image and according to His likeness to contain Himself as life.

Both the divine life and the human life are complicated. The divine life is complicated in a positive sense, whereas the human life is complicated in a negative sense. According to His economy, God desires to graft this human life that is complicated in a negative sense into His life that is complicated in a positive sense. When we believed into the Son of God and called on the name of the Lord, the life that is complicated positively entered into us, and our life that is complicated negatively was grafted into it.

TERMINATED, RESURRECTED, AND UPLIFTED

In the foregoing message we pointed out that, according to the principle ordained by God, the lower life cannot subdue the higher life, but the higher life swallows up the negative aspects of the lower life. The divine life is like an all-inclusive dose of medicine. Included in this dose is the killing power of the crucifixion of Christ that puts to death the negative elements of our human life. Furthermore, Christ's resurrection power resurrects and uplifts all the proper elements in our human life, the elements which God created in His image and after His likeness. God created man with a mind, emotion, and will. However, all these parts of our being became corrupted through the fall. When the divine life enters into us and we are grafted into this life, the killing power it contains terminates the corruption in our mind, emotion, and will. Then it resurrects the elements originally created by God in His image and after His likeness for the fulfillment of

His purpose. The divine life does not annul what has been created by God. On the contrary, it resurrects our created life and uplifts it.

Teachers of the Bible may say that as those who have been crucified with Christ, we must reject our soul. However, the more we try to reject the soul, the more it is present with us. For example, after we are saved, we may become very tender in our emotion. According to my experience, the more I denied my soul with its mind, emotion, and will, the more I discovered that my mind had become keener, my emotion more active, and my will stronger. Before I was saved, I was like a jellyfish, but now my will is extremely strong. How can we explain this phenomenon? Have our mind, emotion, and will not been crucified and denied? Yes, they have. Remember, the Bible says not only that we have been crucified with Christ, but also that we have been resurrected with Him. Crucifixion and burial are not the end. Once our soul has been crucified and buried, it is resurrected, for it has been grafted into the divine life. Because the divine life and the human life have been grafted together, the killing power in the divine life crucifies us, and the resurrection power in it uplifts us.

Our crucifixion with Christ, accomplished more than nineteen hundred years ago, is realized and experienced today through the divine life within us. The same is true of resurrection. Both the effectiveness of crucifixion and the power of resurrection are included in the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. From the time we believed in the Lord Jesus and were grafted into His all-inclusive life, the various ingredients of this life have been working within us. The more we tell the Lord Jesus that we love Him, the more we offer ourselves to Him to contain Him, and the more time we spend with Him in the Word and in fellowship, the more the ingredients of the divine life work to terminate us and to resurrect us. This causes our mind to become sober, our emotion to become warm, and our will to become strong. The corrupted element of our human life is crucified and buried, but the positive

element is uplifted in resurrection. Hence, it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20). Here we see the function of the grafted life. The function of this life is to bring about the transformation which results in conformation to Christ. As we inwardly experience crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, we are transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. Transformation and conformation are the result of the inward working of the grafted life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-FIVE

TRANSFORMATION AND CONFORMATION BY THE GRAFTED LIFE

(2)

As believers in Christ, our relationship with the Lord is wholly a matter of life. Beginning with 5:10, Paul has much to say about life. In this verse he says that "we shall be saved in His life," and in 5:17, that we "shall reign in life." In 6:4 he says, "Even so we also should walk in newness of life." In 8:2 Paul speaks of the Spirit of life, and in 8:10 he says that our "spirit is life because of righteousness." Furthermore, the mind set on the spirit is life (8:6), and the divine life is imparted into our mortal bodies through the Spirit of Him who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead (8:11).

GOD'S GOAL

Through the growth and function of the divine life within us, God will reach His goal to produce many sons to form the Body to express Christ. Today Christ, the Son of God, is no longer simply the only begotten Son, but also the firstborn among many brothers (8:29). As the firstborn Son, He is the prototype and pattern of sonship for all who believe in Him. Eventually, all the sons of God will form a living organism, the Body, to express Christ.

Through the expression of Christ in the Body, the Father is glorified. This is related to righteousness and sanctification. Righteousness is the beginning, the foundation, sanctification is the process, and glory is the consummation. The process by which we are brought fully into glory is altogether a matter of transformation in life.

THE HUMAN LIFE AND THE DIVINE LIFE

The life by which we are transformed is a grafted life,

the mingling of the human life with the divine life. According to God's sovereignty in creation, the human life is similar to the divine life, just as a glove is similar to a hand. Unless there is a hand, the glove has no purpose and is useless. In the same principle, unless it contains God, the human life is purposeless and useless. The human life was created in the image of the divine life and according to the likeness of the divine life for the purpose of containing the divine life. If it does not contain the divine life, the human life is like an empty glove that has no purpose. The meaning of human life is to contain the divine life.

The human life is complicated. Not only was it created by God, but it has become fallen, corrupted, and mixed with devilish, satanic things. Nevertheless, the good element created by God remains. For this reason, God loves the complicated human life.

In order to be received by the human life, the divine life had to pass through a process involving incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Through incarnation Christ put on a physical body so that He could shed His blood for our sins on the cross. On the cross, He not only accomplished redemption, but also terminated all the negative things in the universe. After crucifixion and burial, He entered into resurrection with His divine elements and was then able to germinate, generate, and transform us. Furthermore, in His ascension Christ has been exalted, glorified, and enthroned and has been given the headship, the lordship, and the kingship. Now the divine life is fully qualified and prepared to be received by the human life.

On the day we received the divine life into us, a wonderful marriage took place in our being. This was the marriage of the human life and the divine life. By means of this marriage we have become very special people. This is the reason that in 1 Corinthians 3 Paul tells us that all things are ours. The heavens are for the earth, and the earth is for man. We who have a life that is married to the divine life are the center, the focal point, of the universe.

Within our being we have experienced the grafting of the human life to the divine life. The mingling of these two lives will produce proper sons for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Through this mingled and grafted life we shall be fully transformed and conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son.

THE PROCESS AND THE GOAL

Transformation and conformation are two very significant words. They are windows through which we can see into the depths of the revelation implied in the book of Romans. Transformation is related to the life process, and conformation is related to the life goal. It is crucial that we all have a full understanding of this process and this goal. What I intend to share regarding this is the product of more than fifty years of Christian experience considered in the light of God's holy Word.

THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

The New Testament says explicitly that we have been crucified with Christ and resurrected with Him (6:6; Gal. 2:20; Eph 2:5-6; Col. 3:1). When I was young, I tried to figure out how I could have been crucified with Christ and buried with Him when His crucifixion and burial took place more than nineteen hundred years ago. Eventually, I read a book that pointed out that with God there is no time element. We are bound by time, but God, being eternal, is not bound in this way. Although it was helpful for me to see this, it had no practical effect on my life. I could believe that I had been crucified and resurrected with Christ, but I was troubled and dissatisfied by the fact that there was still no practical effect in my living. I simply could not be satisfied with doctrine or theory.

Later, I began to see that in the life-giving Spirit there are many elements, many ingredients. In Exodus 30 we have the compound ointment, an ointment composed of olive oil, which signifies the Holy Spirit, compounded with four spices. These spices mainly signify Christ's humanity, death, and resurrection. In Old Testament times, before

the Spirit was compounded, the Spirit was merely the Spirit of God, signified by the oil. The Spirit had not yet become the ointment, the compound Spirit produced through the addition of the spices. But through the process of Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, Christ's humanity, death, and resurrection have all been compounded with the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit today is the compound Spirit, the compound ointment with the elements of humanity, death, and resurrection.

AN ALL-INCLUSIVE DOSE

Suppose you have a glass of plain water. Then a number of nourishing ingredients are added to the water to form a delicious drink. Thereafter, it is impossible to take in the water without drinking these ingredients. Sometimes a mother may add medicine to such a drink for a sick child. Although the child may refuse to take the medicine itself, the child will drink it when it is part of such a compound beverage. In this way, the medicine, added to a sweet-tasting drink, gets into him and spontaneously works within him.

Today the life-giving Spirit is an all-inclusive dose of divine "medicine," full of ingredients. This dose is actually the processed Triune God Himself as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. In this Spirit are divinity, humanity, and Christ's incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Therefore, when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, this all-inclusive Spirit with all these marvelous ingredients comes into us.

GROWING TOGETHER WITH CHRIST

Now we come to a crucial point. In 6:5 Paul says, "For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." As believers in Christ, we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death. The likeness of Christ's death refers to baptism. Furthermore, we shall also be in the

likeness of Christ's resurrection. This also implies the matter of growing together with Christ, as understood from the first part of this verse. Therefore, Paul is saying that if we have grown together with Christ in the likeness of His death, we shall also be growing together in the likeness of His resurrection, that is, in the newness of life mentioned in the previous verse.

Romans 6:5 includes two steps of our growth in Christ. The first step has already taken place, whereas the second is progressive. On the one hand, we have grown together with Christ, but, on the other hand, we shall be growing in the likeness of His resurrection. We have grown in baptism, and we shall be growing in the newness of life.

According to 6:5, Paul regarded baptism as a step in our growth in life. However, few Christians view baptism as related to growth. Nevertheless, to be baptized is to grow together with Christ. According to the Greek word used here, we have "co-grown" with Him. This means that as we were being baptized, we were growing together with Christ. In order to understand transformation by the grafted life, it is vital that we grasp this point. After our baptism had been completed, we had grown together with Christ in the likeness of His death.

When we repented, called on the name of the Lord Jesus, and believed in Him, the divine life that is complicated in a positive sense came into us, and there was a marriage, a grafting, of the human life with the divine life. Immediately, this grafted life began to grow. This means that we began to grow in our Christian life together with Christ. Furthermore, as we were baptized in water, we continued to grow together with Him. Baptism is the best soil for spiritual growth. When we were placed in the water, we were like a seed planted in soil. Then we came forth in resurrection, having grown together with Christ in baptism. Such a baptism is certainly not a mere ritual or formality.

As a believer experiences a proper baptism, the divine Spirit within him puts to death the old man with his

worldly, sinful elements. Then he rises out of the water a new person. In this way he takes a major step in the growth in life. From that time onward, the believer continues to grow in Christ in the likeness of His resurrection, that is, he walks day by day in newness of life. This is real growth, not mere outward activity. The more a believer grows, the more the divine life works within him to crucify him and to resurrect him. Through such growth we experience the application of our crucifixion with Christ, which was accomplished more than nineteen hundred years ago. No longer is our crucifixion with Christ a mere theory, doctrine, or belief that has no practical effect on our living. On the contrary, it is applied to us in a full way. Therefore, day by day we grow in the likeness of Christ's resurrection, and we walk in newness of life.

A LIFE OF BAPTISM

The Christian life is a life of baptism. On the one hand, baptism has been accomplished. But on the other hand, baptism continues until we are fully transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. Hence, until this goal has been attained, we continue to live a life of baptism. This means that we are daily under the application of the death of Christ as we experience the effectiveness of Christ's death, which is now one of the ingredients, the elements, in the all-inclusive Spirit. If our husband or wife gives us a difficult time, we can experience at that very moment the application of Christ's death. Instead of exchanging words, we can experience the putting to death of the negative element within us. This takes place not by doctrine or by a particular practice, but by the killing element in the death of Christ included in the all-inclusive, divine life.

A HEAVENLY ANTIBIOTIC

The divine life is a heavenly antibiotic. To argue with our husband or wife is to have a "cough." Whenever we exchange words with our husband or wife, we are

"coughing." The death of Christ is the only antibiotic that can eliminate the germs that cause this illness.

The heavenly antibiotic not only crucifies us, but also resurrects us and renews the faculties of our mind, emotion, and will. This resurrection and renewing is the genuine growth and transformation.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

The process of transformation is both organic and metabolic. It is organic because it is related to life, and it is metabolic because it is related to a process in which old elements are discharged and new elements are added. To change someone's complexion by makeup is neither organic nor metabolic. But a change in complexion that comes through eating nourishing food is both organic and metabolic. Such a change may be considered a physical transformation.

If we would be transformed, we must constantly look to the Lord, pray, read the Word, and call on the name of the Lord. In this way we eat, drink, and breathe the rich supply of Christ into us. This supply will produce a metabolic change in which the old, negative elements are discharged and replaced by new, positive elements. This metabolic change is transformation.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul speaks of beholding and reflecting with an unveiled face the glory of the Lord and of being transformed into His image by the Lord Spirit. As we gaze upon Christ and reflect Him, we are transformed into His image from glory to glory, that is, from one degree of glory to another. This is from the Lord Spirit, the very life-giving Spirit mentioned in verse 6. Verse 17 clearly says that the Lord is the Spirit. In order to bring out the connection between verses 6 and 17, Darby places verses 7 through 16 in parentheses, indicating thereby that verse 17 is the continuation of verse 6. Hence, the Lord is the Spirit who gives life. As we behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, we are transformed by this Spirit. The more we behold Him, the more we receive His supply and are transformed metabolically.

GROWTH AND SANCTIFICATION

Transformation includes growth and sanctification. As we are transformed, we grow and are sanctified. Eventually, transformation will issue in conformation. The more we are transformed, the more we are conformed to the image of Christ. Through this process of transformation and conformation, we are brought fully into the divine sonship to be members of the Body of Christ. As we have pointed out, to gain such a Body to express Christ is the goal of God's eternal purpose.

I am burdened that all the saints may have the full enjoyment of the all-inclusive, divine life and experience transformation and conformation. We do not need teaching or self-effort--we need a vision. I pray that the Spirit will enlighten the saints and unveil these matters to them so that they may experience them in their daily living.

When we see the vision of transformation and conformation by the grafted life, 6:8 will become real in our practical experience. Our having died with Christ will no longer be a mere fact that we believe; it will become our daily experience through the operation of the divine life within. This life both puts us to death and resurrects us. In this way we grow, we are sanctified, and we are transformed.

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE

Every kind of life has four basic features: the life-essence, the life-power, the life-law, and the life-shape. Every life has its own essence. Although the essence of a certain life may be abstract and mysterious, the life itself is powerful in a very substantial way. Consider a carnation seed. After a carnation seed has been sown into the soil and grows, it eventually breaks through the surface of the ground and begins to grow visibly. Every life has also its law, the principle that governs its function and development.

Because of the life-law that controls its growth, a carnation plant will not produce roses, but carnation flowers. There is no need for us to pray about it; the law of life in the carnation plant functions automatically to direct its development. Furthermore, every life has its particular life-shape. For example, a Washington apple has a characteristic form. Farmers need not teach apple trees to produce fruit with a certain shape. The life in the apples automatically forms them. This is true of every kind of life.

SHAPED INTO THE PATTERN OF THE FIRSTBORN SON

Conformation denotes the shaping of life. As the divine life grows within us and transforms us, it spontaneously shapes us into the pattern, the image, of the firstborn Son of God. Many Christians, blind to this reality, try to shape themselves into the likeness of Christ. Such self-effort never works. Concerning this, only one thing is prevailing--the divine life that grows in us, sanctifies us, transforms us, and shapes us. There is no need for us to shape ourselves, to perform, or to strive to improve our behavior. What we need is a fuller experience of the grafted life. The divine life has its essence, power, law, and shape. As those who are undergoing the process of transformation, we are being shaped gradually into the image of the Son of God by the function of the all-inclusive, divine life that has been mingled with our human life. Therefore, we can be at peace.

DISCHARGING THE NEGATIVE ELEMENT

As the divine life works within us to transform and conform us, it discharges the negative element within us. For this reason, we do not need anyone to adjust us. The divine life works in us to gradually eliminate whatever is negative or natural.

RESURRECTING GOD'S CREATION

Secondly, the divine life resurrects us. No matter how fallen we are, we are still God's creation. Whatever God creates is good. Instead of giving up His creation, God will

reclaim it and restore it by the resurrection power of the divine life. As the divine life discharges the negative things, it works to resurrect God's original creation. God created us with a mind, emotion, will, soul, heart, and spirit, and He intends to bring all these aspects of our being into resurrection. Before we were saved, we may have been dull in the mind, unbalanced in the emotion, improper in the will. But the more we contact the Lord and experience Him, the more our mind becomes clear and sober, the more our emotion becomes properly balanced, and the more our will becomes adjusted. This is not our natural character, but a resurrected character. Praise the Lord that the divine life within us resurrects all the parts of our being created by God.

UPLIFTING OUR FACULTIES

As the divine life resurrects our faculties, it uplifts them to the highest level. This will produce in us a highly developed character. Christians should not be of low character. Wherever we may be, we should display the highest character, because our natural faculties have been uplifted by the divine life. In order to experience this in a full way, we need to be faithful to contact the divine life within us. If we are faithful to do this, our character will be uplifted.

SUPPLYING THE RICHES OF CHRIST

Furthermore, as the divine life discharges, resurrects, and uplifts, it supplies the riches of Christ to our inward parts. For this reason, many who love the Lord become very keen in their mentality. Although certain brothers and sisters may give themselves to attend all the meetings of the church, they are still outstanding students in school because their resurrected and uplifted faculties are supplied with the riches of Christ.

SATURATING OUR BEING

Finally, the divine life will saturate our whole being. This saturation is much better than inspiration.

Eventually, our entire being will be soaked with the divine life. This brings about transformation. The riches of Christ saturate our being and cause a genuine metabolic change. By this saturation of the divine life we are conformed to the image of Christ.

The divine life is prepared and able to do such a work within us. But we need to exercise ourselves concerning what the Lord has shown us. We need to be faithful to contact Him, to pray to Him, to read the Word, and to breathe Him in. To do these things is to set our mind on the spirit (8:6). When our mind is set on the spirit, no part of our inward being will be separated from the spirit. This will give the divine life a freeway to discharge the negative element, to resurrect, uplift, and supply our faculties, and to saturate every part of our being. Concerning this, we need to pray for ourselves, for others, and for all the local churches. May we be faithful to live and walk according to what we have seen in these messages.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-SIX

GOD CONDEMNING SIN IN THE FLESH

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:1-11

TWO KINDS OF CONDEMNATION

In this message we shall consider 8:1-11. In 8:1 Paul says, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." It is easy for us to take this verse for granted and assume that we understand it, perhaps thinking that the condemnation here is the same as that spoken of in chapter three. But the condemnation described in chapters two and three has been removed before 8:1. Hence, the condemnation in this verse is of another kind, a condemnation that is within us. The condemnation in chapters two and three is something before God, not something according to our inward sense or consciousness. It is an objective condemnation, a condemnation according to God's law. Before we were saved, we probably did not have any realization that in the sight of God we were condemned according to His righteous law. When we believed in the Lord Jesus, that condemnation was removed by Christ's redeeming blood. Hallelujah, this condemnation has been washed away by the blood of Jesus! Therefore, we no longer have this condemnation.

We should not confuse the condemnation in chapters two and three with that in 8:1. The condemnation in this verse is subjective; it is something inward that is according to our inner sense and also according to our Christian conscience. This is clear when we realize that 8:1 immediately follows chapter seven. If we read chapter seven carefully, we shall see that it describes a war within the various parts of our being. We know that as human beings we are made of more than one basic part. As a

result of the fall, the various parts of our being are not in harmony with one another.

In chapter seven Paul, the writer of the book of Romans, tells us that a war is raging among his inward parts. One part wills to keep the law of God perfectly and to the uttermost. This part desires to delight in God, to please God, and to satisfy God. Thus, in 7:22 Paul says, "For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man." However, when this part of our being is exercised to do good and fulfill the law, another part rises up to fight. This part always defeats that part which delights in the law of God. Therefore, 7:23 says, "But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive in the law of sin which is in my members." The good part is defeated every time. We may take sides with this good part and stand with it against the other part, but we always suffer defeat and lose the battle.

We have pointed out that in 7:23 Paul speaks of being made a captive in the law of sin which is in his members. Is it not a pitiful situation to become a captive in this way? Yet we must realize that as Christians we may be captured every day by this law of sin. We are not captured by giant enemies outside of us, but by small enemies within us, for example, by our temper. Often we speak of losing our temper. Actually, it is more accurate to speak of being captured by the law of sin. It is not a matter of losing our temper; it is a matter of being a captive in the law of sin in our members.

Romans 7:24 says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" This cry is related to the condemnation in 8:1. This is not the condemnation that is objective and before God; it is the condemnation that is subjective, the condemnation within us. Furthermore, this condemnation is not a problem to God, but it becomes a problem to us.

Not many unbelievers experience this kind of condemnation. However, nearly all seeking Christians have a problem with it. When you did not seek the Lord but instead loved the world, you did not have this

problem. But when you began to love the Lord and seek Him, you spontaneously made up your mind to improve, even to be perfect and love the Lord to the uttermost. This decision gives rise to the war described in Romans 7. Making up our mind to do good or to improve ourselves stirs up the law of sin in our members. It causes all the little enemies within to rise up and fight against us. There are many enemies within us. However, if a Christian does not love the Lord very much, or if he does not make up his mind to please the Lord, these enemies will not bother him. But as soon as he makes up his mind to do good, the enemies rise up.

In verse 25 Paul goes on to say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve as a slave the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." This is the conclusion of chapter seven. In this chapter we are not given the way to be delivered from subjective condemnation. Therefore, chapter eight is necessary.

NO CONDEMNATION

Paul begins chapter eight with a word concerning condemnation: "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Once again I would say that the condemnation here is inward. Here the writer can praise and declare that there is no longer any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. When some read this verse, they may say, "I am in Christ Jesus. But how come I don't have such a cry of victory? Instead, I am still sighing and moaning." The reason is that actually and practically we may be in 7:24 and not in 8:1. When we enjoy the Lord in a church meeting, we may have a sense of victory. We are then in 8:1. But after the meeting, we may be defeated again and ourselves once more in 7:24.

We need to pay attention to the tense of 8:1. This verse is in the present tense, not in the future. Paul does not say, "There will be no condemnation"; he says that there is now no condemnation. When a problem comes up, we should remember this and declare, "There is now no

condemnation." For example, when you come home after a meeting and your husband or wife is about to bring up a troublesome matter, you need to remember that at that very moment there is no condemnation. If we declare 8:1 in the midst of our daily situations, we shall see how effective the word of God is.

We need to proclaim God's word to the enemy, to the demons. Wherever we go, we must declare the word of God. In particular, we must declare that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. Satan will lie to us and say that we are defeated, even though we are in Christ. Do not accept this lie, and do not believe it. Instead, declare the word of God. Declare that to those who are in Christ there is now no condemnation.

HOW GOD DEALT WITH SIN

Paul's shout of victory in 8:1 is not vain. He has a definite base, ground, to make such a statement. In verse 2 he says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." In the next verse he goes on to say, "For, the law being impossible in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." According to this verse, God sent His own Son not only in the likeness of the flesh of sin, but He also sent Him concerning sin.

In 8:3 sin does not refer to sinful deeds such as stealing. Of course, stealing is a sin. But this is not the sin this verse refers to. In order to understand the word sin in this verse, we must go back to chapter seven. According to chapter seven, sin must be a person, for it can war against us, deceive us, kill us, and capture us. Verse 11 says, "For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me." The fact that sin can deceive and kill indicates that it is not only something personified, but that it is a person. According to chapters five, six, seven, and eight, sin is not merely a thing or a matter; it is a powerful, living person who can capture us and even kill us. To be sure, this sin is much more

powerful than we are. Who, then, is this person called sin? Who is this living sin which can deceive us, capture us, and kill us?

Concerning this sin, God sent His Son in the likeness, in the form, of the flesh of sin. This indicates that sin dwells in a certain element, and this element is man's flesh. Our flesh is thus the habitation of sin. Sin dwells in our flesh. Furthermore, sin has actually become one with our flesh, making our flesh virtually the incarnation of sin.

Most Christians know the meaning of the word incarnation. Incarnation refers to one thing which formerly was outside another thing entering into that thing and becoming one with it. The Lord Jesus is God. But one day He was incarnated; He came as a man. In this way, man became Christ's incarnation. In the same principle, sin has become one with our flesh, making it the very incarnation of sin. We cannot say exactly when this incarnation took place, but we know that it is a fact. Thus, our flesh is called "the flesh of sin" because sin has become one with the flesh.

Now we must see that when God the Father sent God the Son concerning sin and to deal with sin, even to abolish it, He sent Him not in the reality of the flesh of sin, but in the likeness, the appearance, of the flesh of sin. This means that He sent Him in the likeness of the flesh, which had become sin's incarnation. In the likeness of the flesh of sin, God sent His Son concerning sin and to deal with sin, to condemn it.

In order to understand verse 3, we need to identify the subject and the predicate. The subject is God, and the predicate is condemned. This verse tells us that God condemned sin. He condemned the enemy that deceives us, wars against us, defeats us, captures us, and kills us. Where did God condemn this sin? He condemned it in the flesh. Now we must ask another question: In whose flesh did God condemn sin? The answer is that God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ, the One who was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin. In this flesh God condemned sin. According to John 1:1 and 14, the Word, which is God, became flesh. In this flesh, the incarnation

of the eternal Word, God condemned sin through

crucifixion. When the man Jesus was crucified in the flesh, that was the time God condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore, in the flesh of Jesus Christ and through His all-inclusive death, God condemned sin.

Verse 3 does not end with a period, but with a comma. This indicates that verse 4 is the continuation of verse 3. According to these verses, God condemned sin in the flesh so that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit."

Romans is a book on both the Christian life and the church life. Regarding the Christian life and the church life, chapter eight of Romans is crucial. If we do not have the experience revealed in this chapter, it is impossible for us to have a proper Christian life and a proper church life. Among the millions of today's Christians, few have a proper Christian life and proper church life because very few know the crucial secret found in chapter eight.

TWO WORLDS, TWO REALMS

In the universe there are two worlds, two realms, a spiritual world and a physical one. In this spiritual world there are demons, evil spirits, and many negative things which bother us. Paul had a revelation of the spiritual world. In Colossians 2:14 and 15 he points out that when the Lord Jesus was crucified, He stripped off the rulers and the authorities, making a display of them openly and triumphing over them. Those who crucified the Lord Jesus did not know what was taking place in the spiritual world while the Lord was on the cross. But the demons and the evil angels realized that the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross meant their defeat. According to Colossians 2:15, God the Father came in to clear the way so that Christ's crucifixion would not be frustrated. Therefore, through the death of Christ on the cross, the rulers and authorities were defeated. This indicates that during His crucifixion Christ was fighting against the evil powers. The evil powers could not prevail against Christ on the cross.

After the Lord Jesus died, He was buried. In a sense,

the evil angels were glad that Christ was buried. When He was about to rise up from the dead, the enemies of God once again tried to frustrate Him. The evil powers did their best to hold Him, to retain Him, in death. But according to Acts 2:24, it was impossible for Christ to be held by death. He arose from among the dead and ascended into heaven. When He ascended, He stripped off the evil powers and captured them. My purpose in mentioning this is to point out that the Christian life is not only related to the physical world, but is also involved with the spiritual world.

Our problems in the Christian life are not mainly with the physical world, but with the spiritual world. Even sin is not actually a physical matter. On the contrary, it is something spiritual and exists in the spiritual realm. Therefore, if we would overcome sin, we need spiritual power, spiritual strength. Mental power, which is actually related to the physical world, cannot release us from the power of sin. Sin is spiritual, and it can be overcome only by means of spiritual power. Concerning this spiritual power, Romans 8 is vital.

WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

In 8:4 Paul refers to both the physical world and the spiritual world. He says that we "do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." The expression "according to flesh" refers to the physical realm, but the expression "according to spirit" refers to the spiritual world. The Christian life is complicated. On the one hand, we have a physical part related to the physical world; on the other hand, we have a spiritual part--our spirit--which is related to the spiritual world. We need to see that the Christian life is involved with both worlds and that these worlds exist within us. We have the flesh, and we also have the spirit. We need to consider whether we are living in the flesh, in the physical world, or in the spirit, in the spiritual world. Are we walking according to the flesh or according to the spirit?

In 8:3 we see that concerning sin God did a great thing:

Through the incarnation of the Son of God, God dealt with the problem of sin, condemning sin in the flesh. Verse 3 includes both the incarnation and the crucifixion. God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin: this refers to Christ's incarnation. Then God condemned sin in the flesh; this is related to Christ's crucifixion.

God condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. Notice that in verse 4 Paul says fulfilled, not kept. If he had said kept instead of fulfilled, this verse would mean that we must keep the law. However, here Paul refers not to keeping the law, but to the fulfilling of the righteous requirements of the law in those who walk according to spirit. This means that the requirements of the law are fulfilled not in those who keep the law, but in those who walk according to spirit.

Romans 8 is deep, profound, and very experiential. Without adequate spiritual experience, we cannot understand this chapter. According to verses 3 and 4, God sent His incarnate Son concerning sin. Through the death of His Son on the cross, God condemned sin in the flesh. His purpose in condemning sin was that the righteous requirement of the law of God may be fulfilled in us, not by our efforts to keep the law, but by our walking according to spirit. Thus, we are not law-keepers; we are those who walk according to spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-SEVEN

THE PROCESSED GOD BEING THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:1-11

In 8:1 Paul says, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." In verse 2 Paul goes on to explain why there is no condemnation: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." Here Paul speaks of the law of the Spirit of life. It is important that we learn how this law works, how it frees us from the law of sin.

All that Paul covers in the remainder of chapter eight is related to the working of the law of the Spirit of life. If we read this chapter carefully, we shall see that its subject is not actually the Spirit, but the law of the Spirit of life.

Many Christian teachers say that the Spirit is the subject of Romans 8. This understanding is too shallow. Actually, Romans 8 talks about the law of the Spirit of life. This will become clear to us if we read Romans 8 carefully in the light of what Paul says concerning the law in chapters five, six, and seven. It would also be helpful to trace Paul's thought concerning this matter backward from chapter eight to chapter five. The revelation in these chapters is marvelous. It is crucial for us to see that the subject, the topic, of Romans 8 is not merely the Spirit, but the law of the Spirit of life.

THE TRIUNE GOD PROCESSED TO BECOME THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN US

At this point we need to ask what the law of the Spirit of life is. We must even go on to ask this crucial question: Who is this law? If we read chapter eight carefully and compare it with chapters five, six, and seven, we shall see

that the law of the Spirit of life is the processed Triune God becoming the life-giving Spirit to dwell in us. This means that the processed Triune God is Himself the law of the Spirit of life. Just as sin is a person--Satan--so this law is also a Person--the Triune God.

Romans 8 speaks of the process, even the processes, through which the Triune God has passed to become the life-giving Spirit dwelling in our spirit. In verse 3 Paul refers to incarnation and crucifixion: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The phrase, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin," is related to incarnation. God's sending His Son concerning sin and condemning sin in the flesh point to Christ's crucifixion. Furthermore, verse 11 also implies crucifixion? for it speaks of the Lord Jesus being raised from among the dead. However, what this verse clearly reveals is the process of resurrection: "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." In verse 34 Paul refers to the ascension when he tells us that Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Therefore, in this chapter we have four processes through which the Triune God has passed: incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

Romans 8 also reveals the Triune God. In verse 2 we have the Spirit of life. In verse 3 we have God, the Father, sending His Son. Thus, in verses 2 and 3 we have the Spirit, the Father, and the Son. Verses 9 and 10 speak of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ. Verse 11 mentions all three of the Triune God: the Spirit, He (the Father) who raised Christ Jesus, and Christ, the Son. Therefore, Romans 8 is a chapter concerning the processed Triune God.

IMPARTING LIFE TO EVERY PART OF OUR BEING

In 8:1-11 we see that, after having passed through the various processes, the Triune God became a life-giving

Spirit, the Spirit who gives life. In verse 11 Paul clearly says that the One who raised Christ from among the dead gives life to our mortal bodies "through His Spirit Who indwells you." This Spirit now dwells in our spirit.

As the life-giving Spirit, the processed Triune God dwells in us to give us life in a threefold way. The first aspect of this giving of life is found in verse 10: "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness." This verse says that if Christ is in us, our spirit is life. Christ here is the very Triune God who has become the indwelling Spirit. Because this Christ is in us, our spirit is life, for as the life-giving Spirit, Christ dwells in our spirit, and His indwelling makes our spirit life. This is the first aspect of the giving of life revealed in Romans 8.

The second aspect is found in verse 6: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." The mind is the leading part of our soul. As such, it represents our soul. This means that when the mind becomes life, our soul becomes life. First our spirit is life, and then our soul also becomes life.

Finally, life is imparted to our mortal bodies. According to verse 11, He who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead gives life to our mortal bodies through the indwelling Spirit. Therefore, life is imparted to us in a threefold way: Our spirit becomes life, our mind becomes life, and life is imparted to our mortal bodies. For this reason we can say that, according to Romans 8, the Triune God is dispensed into the tripartite man and gives life to man's spirit, soul, and body.

A SCIENTIFIC CONCEPT OF LAW

The Triune God, who has been processed and who has dispensed Himself into us as tripartite human beings, is Himself the law of the Spirit of life. When Paul speaks of law in Romans 8, he uses this term in a scientific way, even though, when the book of Romans was written, science had not yet developed. By law in 8:2 Paul denotes a working principle which operates spontaneously.

This concept of law is also found throughout chapter seven. For example, in 7:21 Paul says, "I find then the law that, at my willing to do the good, the evil is present with me." Here law denotes a principle which works automatically and naturally. This understanding of law is scientific.

In Romans 7 and 8 there are two scientific laws: the first, an evil law, is called the law of sin and of death; the second, a good law, a marvelous law, is called the law of the Spirit of life. These two laws are mentioned in one verse, in 8:2, where Paul says, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." These two laws are actually two persons. The law of sin and of death is the person of Satan, and the law of the Spirit of life is the Person of the Triune God.

In order to become the law of the Spirit of life operating in us, the Triune God had to be processed and dispensed into us, and then He had to dwell, reside, in us. The Greek word for dwells in 8:9 and 11 comes from a root which means house. The Triune God has been processed and dispensed into us, and now He houses Himself in our tripartite being. Now this One is a wonderful, positive law, the law of the Spirit of life. The negative law, the law of sin and death, is also a person--Satan, the Devil, the one who has the power of death. He is the evil law. Therefore, these two laws are two persons.

In order for Satan and the Triune God to become, respectively, the negative and positive laws operating in us, it was necessary for both persons to enter our being. If Satan had not come into man, he could not be the law of sin and death within man. In the same principle, if the Triune God had remained outside of us, He could not be to us the law of the Spirit of life. Praise Him that because He has been processed and dispensed into us, and He houses Himself in us, He has become to us the law of the Spirit of life! Hallelujah, we have such a marvelous law within us!

As living beings, we all live according to definite laws. For example, breathing is a law. Do you breathe by a deliberate activity or by the law of breathing? Do you say

to yourself "I realize that I need air; therefore, I must exercise myself to breathe"? This would be to breathe by activity. However, we breathe by the law of breathing, not by activity. This means that we breathe without even being conscious of what we are doing. We are breathing continually, day and night, no matter where we may be. We do not make up our minds to breathe, and neither do we call attention to the fact that we are breathing. Furthermore, parents do not command their children to breathe. On the contrary, breathing is an automatic principle which works spontaneously in our physical bodies. As long as we are alive, we shall continue to breathe. Breathing is a law.

Likewise, digestion is a law. After you eat a meal, do you make a decision to digest the food you have eaten? Do you make a certain effort to digest your food? No, digestion is not an activity; it is a law. Like breathing, it is a natural, spontaneous, automatic principle that works in our physical bodies. These examples of breathing and digestion should help us to understand what we mean by a law.

Sinning is also a law. This means that we commit sin because of the automatic working of the law of sin. No one has ever attended a school called the school of sin. Likewise, no one needs to be taught to steal or lie. Parents know that as children grow up, they lie without being taught to lie. Lying comes from the automatic function of the law of sin and death. Sins such as hatred and jealousy also come from the working of this law.

We praise the Lord that another law, the Triune God as the law of life, has been installed into us! How wonderful that, after being processed, the Triune God has been installed in us and works within us not by activity, but by law! He is now a law operating within us. He is working in us not merely as the mighty God, but as a law which operates automatically.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE WORKING IN US

This working of the Triune God as a law within us can be illustrated by the electricity which has been installed in

our homes. Since electricity has been installed in our homes, there is no need for us to call the power plant when we need electrical energy to operate a certain appliance. Would it not be foolish to telephone the power plant and beg someone to turn on the lights or operate our appliances? If we did this, the people at the power plant would say that there is no need for us to call them. Instead, we should simply turn on the power that has already been installed. No one who has even the most elementary knowledge of electricity would ever call the power plant and beg for electrical power. Those who have the knowledge that electricity has been installed will simply turn on the switch and apply the power.

Often we Christians are like persons who call a power plant for electricity when all that is needed is to turn on the switch. The Triune God has been installed into us. Nevertheless, when we are bothered by our temper, we may cry out, "O God, merciful Father, have mercy on me and help me not to lose my temper. I don't want to lose my temper again. Please deliver me from this." This kind of prayer is never answered. In fact, the more you pray in this way, the more trouble you will have with your temper. If we continue to pray such prayers, the Lord may say, "Foolish child, don't you know that I have been installed into you and that I am working in you as a law? There is no need for you to cry to Me or even pray about this."

Our God today is not only the mighty One, the Redeemer, and the Savior. He is even more than just our life and our life supply--He is a law working within us. Now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus because the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death. How wonderful that such a law is working within us! Therefore, instead of crying to the Lord about certain things, we should simply "switch on" and be at rest.

Let us again use electricity and electrical appliances as an illustration. Suppose it is very hot when you go to bed at night, and you need the air conditioner to cool the room. You do not pray for cool air. You simply switch on the air conditioner and go to sleep, enjoying the cool air supplied

by the air conditioner. In like manner, we may enjoy the wonderful law of the Spirit of life, the very law who is the Triune God who has been processed and dispensed into us and who now dwells in us. As such a law, He is seeking the opportunity to work for us. The problem is that we are not knowledgeable concerning this law. We do not know that we have this law within us, and we do not know how to cooperate and coordinate with it. As we shall see, the way to cooperate with this law is to walk in the spirit and simply be in spirit.

In a message to come we shall point out that since we are already in the spirit, there is no need for us to get into the spirit. Rather, we should simply remain in the spirit. Thus, instead of turning to the spirit, we should stay in the spirit. Many times we have sung, "Turn to your spirit." It is better to change the words of this hymn and sing, "Stay in your spirit." Hallelujah, we have the processed Triune God as a law within us, and we have a regenerated spirit! As long as we stay in the spirit, this law works in us automatically.

To be in the spirit is to have the divine electricity turned on. By staying in the spirit we keep the switch on; we never turn it off. This is the way to cooperate with the processed Triune God who is the law operating in us. As the life-giving Spirit, He has been dispensed into us and He dwells in us. By His indwelling, He has made our spirit life, He is causing our soul to become life, and He is imparting life to our mortal bodies. We are now enjoying life in a threefold way by the working of this wonderful law, the law of the Spirit of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-EIGHT

GOD CONDEMNING SIN IN THE FLESH THAT WE MAY BE IN THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:3-9

Romans 8:3 says, "For, the law being impossible in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The expression "God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin" refers to the incarnation, the first step of the process through which the Triune God has passed. Here in verse 3 the subject is not the Son of God; the subject is God. In this verse Paul does not say that the Son of God came in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Rather, he says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. This means that, according to this verse, it is God who takes this action. He sent His Son through incarnation in the likeness of the flesh of sin.

Following the first step of this process, incarnation, God went on to condemn sin by crucifixion. When the Son was crucified in the form, the likeness, of the flesh of sin, God condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore, the death of the Son on the cross was God's condemnation of sin.

THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW FULFILLED IN US

The two steps of incarnation and crucifixion have an aim, revealed in verse 4: "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." The word "that" at the beginning of this verse means "in order that," showing the purpose of the action taken in the preceding verse. God sent His Son and condemned sin in me flesh for

a particular purpose. This means that something has issued from the incarnation and crucifixion. The issue, the result, of these two steps is that the righteous requirement of the law is spontaneously fulfilled in us. There is no need for us to try to keep the requirements of the law. The fulfillment of the righteous requirements of the law is an issue of the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ. Because the incarnate Christ has been crucified on the cross, the requirements of the law can be fulfilled in us automatically.

In verse 4 Paul says that the requirements of the law are fulfilled "in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." This indicates that God sent His Son and condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in a people who do not walk according to flesh, but walk according to spirit.

In eternity God intended to accomplish His purpose. We may say that God had an open highway set before Him and that He would move on this highway to fulfill His intention. However, an enemy called sin came in to block the way. Therefore, God sent His Son and condemned sin in the flesh in order to remove this obstacle from the highway. Through the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ, God condemned sin and removed it. As a result, the highway was opened again. The result, the issue, of the removing of sin and the reopening of the highway is that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us.

Notice that here Paul does not say that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in the Son of God. On the contrary, he says that they are fulfilled in us, the people who have been chosen, redeemed, visited, reached, and touched by God. Those designated by the pronoun "us" in verse 4 are all very important people because the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in them. Who are these people? They are God's chosen ones, His selected ones.

Do you realize that God has selected you? Out of the billions of people who have lived on earth from the time of Adam, God has selected you. We may use a simple

illustration to help us understand God's selection. You may go to a supermarket to shop for apples. There you may find a large pile of apples. Out of the many apples in this pile, you choose a dozen for purchase, selecting the apples you like. In a somewhat similar way, God has selected us. Instead of placing a high value on ourselves and thinking of ourselves as precious, we may despise ourselves and hate ourselves. God, however, does not hate us. In eternity He liked you and selected you. If you were to ask Him why He likes you, He may reply, "I simply like you." We are God's selected people. Furthermore, we are those whom He has redeemed, reached, and touched. According to the four Gospels, it is a great matter to be touched by God. Being touched by Him makes us different. I can testify that He touched me more than fifty years ago, and immediately I became a different person. We are among the "us" in verse 4; we have been touched by God.

WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

We must believe God's word and not consider our situation or look at ourselves. Romans 8:4 says "fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." When we read these words, we may say, "Most of the time I walk according to flesh, not according to spirit." If someone asked you if you are walking according to spirit or according to flesh, you probably would not have the boldness to say that you walk according to spirit. In your realization, you do not have sufficient ground to say with confidence, "I walk according to spirit." Instead, after hesitating you would probably reply, "Sometimes I walk according to spirit, but most of the time I walk according to flesh."

With respect to the matter of walking according to spirit, we need to remember that there are two worlds, two realms, the physical realm and the spiritual realm. In the spiritual realm God does everything by speaking. Once God speaks a certain thing, the matter is settled. In 4:17 we are told that God calls things not being as being. This means that by speaking He calls things into being. For

example, according to Genesis 1:3, God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

SPEAKING IN FAITH

As children of God, we need to realize that when we speak something out of a sincere heart, our situation will be according to our speaking. Suppose someone asks you if you have been saved. You should answer definitely, "Yes, I am saved." You should not hesitate and say, "Let me think about this for a while. According to certain evidences, maybe I am saved." If you say that you may be saved, then perhaps you are saved. But if you say that signs indicate that you may not be saved, then perhaps there may be some question. Now that we are children of God, we should be careful of our speaking, for we are what we say we are. In a previous message I pointed out that we are what we eat. Now I wish to point out that we are what we say.

The Bible refers to the believers as saints. Are you a saint? If you consider this question and say, "Well, I'm not a saint like Theresa or Francis. I really don't think I'm very holy. How can I say that I am a saint?" If you talk like this, your condition is still that of a pitiful sinner. But if you answer by declaring, "Yes, I am a saint!" then you are truly a saint.

We must learn to speak not in our natural sincerity, but in faith. Paul tells us that we speak because we have a spirit of faith: "And having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, therefore I spoke; we also believe, therefore also we speak" (2 Cor. 4:13).

We Christians are good at hesitating, doubting, considering, and thinking matters over again and again. Suppose someone asks you if you love the Lord. You may be very slow to give an answer. You may ponder the question, not wanting to say anything that is not according to what you really are. You may think that you are being careful and humble. Actually you are being deceived by the enemy and cheated by him. In faith, we need to declare with boldness that we love the Lord.

Concerning being in the spirit and receiving the Spirit, many of us have been wrongly educated. Some teach that in order for a Christian to receive the Spirit, he must repent, confess his sins, and pray with fasting. Then, after a period of time, he will suddenly receive the Spirit. Because of the influence from our religious background, we may hesitate to answer when someone asks us if we have received the Holy Spirit. If we have been properly instructed in spiritual things, we shall be able to respond immediately, "Yes, I have received the Holy Spirit!"

THREE QUESTIONS

At this point I would like to ask three questions. First, do you walk according to spirit? Second, are you according to spirit? Third, are you in spirit? To walk according to spirit is to do things according to spirit. But to be according to spirit means that our being is according to the spirit. In addition to walking according to the spirit and being according to the spirit, we need to be in spirit. Do you have the confidence to say that you *walk* according to spirit, that you *are* according to spirit, and that you are *in* spirit? Do you not sometimes lose your temper? How, then, can you say that you are in spirit? How can you claim to walk according to spirit and to be according to spirit when you are still troubled by your temper? The way to answer such questions is to say, "Yes, I am in the spirit! However, when I lost my temper, I made a temporary mistake. But immediately I repented and received God's forgiveness. Therefore, I still have the boldness to declare that I am in spirit."

In 8:4 Paul speaks of walking according to spirit, and in verse 5, of being according to spirit. In order to walk according to spirit, we must first be according to spirit. This means that walking according to spirit issues from being according to spirit, for what we do always comes out of what we are.

In verse 9 Paul speaks of being in spirit. A person who is according to spirit is a person who is in spirit. Being according to spirit is a result of being in spirit. Therefore,

walking according to spirit comes out of being according to spirit, and being according to spirit comes out of being in spirit. This indicates that our basic need is to be in spirit. If we are not in spirit, we cannot be according to spirit. Furthermore, if we are not according to spirit, we cannot walk according to spirit. Once we are in spirit, we shall be according to spirit, and once we are according to spirit, we shall walk according to spirit.

My burden in this message is not on walking according to spirit or simply on being according to spirit; it is on being in spirit. The little word "in" is very meaningful and significant. To repeat, we walk according to spirit because we are according to spirit, and we are according to spirit because we are in spirit. We all should be able to testify, "I walk according to spirit because I am according to spirit, and I am according to spirit because I am in spirit." Wherever we are and whatever we do, we should be in spirit. If we remain in the spirit, we shall not lose our temper, and we certainly shall not lie. Oh, it is a great matter to be in the spirit!

TWO CRUCIAL FACTS

Do you realize that you are in the spirit? Romans 8:9 gives us the boldness to say that we are in spirit: "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." The words "if indeed" are a correct translation. However, the word "if" refers to a condition, to something that is conditional. The word "since" also refers to a condition, but to a condition which has already been fulfilled and has become an accomplished fact. For example, I may say to a brother, "If you come, I will give you a Bible." The word "if" as used here indicates a condition to be fulfilled. But I may say, "Since you have come, I shall give you a Bible." In this sentence the word "since" indicates a condition which has been fulfilled and is now an accomplished fact. To say, "If you come," indicates a condition to be fulfilled. But to say, "Since you have come," indicates a condition which has been fulfilled. The

meaning in verse 9 is that of the second case--a condition which has been fulfilled. Thus, here Paul is saying that we are in spirit, *since* the Spirit of God dwells in us. It is a fact that the Spirit dwells in us. This is not a condition to be fulfilled, but a condition which has already been fulfilled and has become a fact. Therefore, since the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are in spirit.

I have the full assurance that, as believers, God's Spirit dwells in us. This is a fact which no one can deny. According to 8:9, we may have the assurance not that the Spirit of God will dwell in us, or simply that He has dwelt in us, but that He is dwelling in us right now. Oh, it is a marvelous fact that the Spirit of God dwells in us! Because of this fact, we can boldly say that we are in spirit.

Even though we fail and make mistakes, the Spirit of God continues to dwell in us. For example, we may sometimes lose our temper, but this does not change the fact that God's Spirit dwells in us. His indwelling is continual, without any break. Now since the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are in the spirit. This also is a fact. Thus, in verse 9 there are two crucial facts. First, it is a fact that the Spirit of God dwells in us and that we have the Spirit. Second, it is a fact that we are in spirit.

POSITION AND CONDITION

On the one hand, in verse 9 Paul says that we are in spirit since the Spirit of God dwells in us. On the other hand, he says that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. Suppose we said, "Since the Spirit of God dwells in me, I am *of* the Spirit." Suppose we also went on to say, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not *in* Him." These changes of prepositions would make a great difference.

It is wrong to say that since the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are of the Spirit. It is also wrong to say that if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not in Him. Here the preposition "of" refers to position, whereas the preposition "in" refers to condition. If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we are not of Christ. This is a matter

of position. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ is not of Christ, and he does not belong to Christ. As believers, we do not have any problem concerning position. We have the Spirit of Christ, and we are of Him. However, we may have a problem related to condition, as indicated by the preposition "in." We all can say with confidence that we are of Christ and belong to Him. But, as we have pointed out, we may hesitate before we say that we are in spirit.

Our position of being of Christ never changes. For this reason, it is wrong to say that sometimes we are of Christ and that at other times we are not of Christ. No, we are always of Christ, just as we are always of the family in which we were born. No matter where you may be, you are of your family. This is a matter of position, and it is not subject to change. But although we are always of a particular family, we may not always be in that family. To be in a family, like being in spirit, is conditional. We must admit that sometimes we have a problem concerning being in spirit. To repeat, we never have a problem with the position of being of Christ. However, sometimes we have a problem with the condition of being in spirit. In this message we are dealing with the condition, not with the position. The matter of position has been settled once for all. Hallelujah, we all are Christ's! We all are of Him. But our condition with respect to being in spirit may not be fixed or stable. Therefore, in the next message we shall consider how to stabilize our condition of being in spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF ROMANS

MESSAGE SIXTY-NINE

BEING IN THE SPIRIT TO EXPERIENCE THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:4-16, 23, 26-27

In 8:9 Paul says, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." In the foregoing message we pointed out that to be of Christ is a matter of position, but to be in spirit is a matter of condition. The position that we are of Christ is settled once for all; however, the condition of being in spirit may fluctuate. For this reason, we need to consider how to stabilize our condition of being in the spirit.

DECLARING THAT WE ARE IN THE SPIRIT

One way to stabilize this condition is to declare that we are in the spirit. Learn to say, "I am in spirit!" In the past I encouraged you to call, "O Lord Jesus." Now I am encouraging you to say, "I am in spirit." Sometimes we can contact the Lord simply by saying "O"; it is not always necessary to say, "O Lord Jesus." In the same principle, we do not always need to say, "I am in spirit," for it may be adequate simply to say the word "in." If you are about to lose your temper, exercise yourself to say "O" or "in." This will help you to remain in the spirit. According to verse 9, we are in the spirit since the Spirit of God dwells in us. Now we can remain in this condition by declaring the fact that we are in the spirit.

Among Christians today, there are many teachings concerning how to experience the Spirit. I can testify that these teachings may hinder us from experiencing the work of the Spirit. In Romans 8 Paul does not say, "In order to

be freed from the law of sin and death, you must fast and pray. The law of sin is terrible, and it is too powerful for you to overcome. That is why I cried out, 'Wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me?'" Paul did not teach the believers in this way. Neither did he teach that believers must confess all their sins to both God and man before they can experience the Spirit.

To understand the matter of being in the spirit as mentioned in verse 9, it will be helpful to consider how we were saved. When we heard the proclamation of the gospel, we recognized it and acknowledged it. There was no need for us to say, "From now on I must behave myself in a way that pleases God. In the past I have done many sinful things. If I confess my sins and make up my mind to improve my behavior, then I'll be saved." This is wrong. This mistaken concept can affect a person's Christian life for years. After a person hears the proclamation of the gospel, he should simply utter a strong, "Amen!" and say, "Thank You, Lord Jesus." Anyone who has the heart to accept, to acknowledge, what has been proclaimed to him through the preaching of the gospel will certainly be saved.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

Such an acknowledgment of God's salvation not only helps a person to be saved; it is also a great help to that one's Christian life in the future. Every aspect of the Christian life requires this kind of acknowledgment. Whenever a person acknowledges God's salvation, says amen to the gospel, and thanks the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of God enters into him immediately. This is proved by Ephesians 1:13 and 14: "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, Who is the pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory." Here we see that when the gospel is preached, proclaimed to us, and we acknowledge it, we are immediately sealed with the Spirit of God. From that time onward, the Spirit enters us and dwells in us. This means

that the fact of being indwelt by the Spirit of God begins from the time we acknowledge the gospel. This is true even if a person in a weak way makes this acknowledgment, says amen, and thanks the Lord for the proclamation of His salvation. At that very moment, the Spirit of God comes into him and begins to dwell in him.

If a preacher of the gospel is one with God and according to God, he will go on to explain to a newly saved one that, since he has believed in Christ and received the Spirit, he should remain in the spirit. He may tell the new believer, "Right now you are not only of Christ and of the Spirit, but you are also in the spirit. Just stay in the spirit from now on. Whenever the thought or the desire comes to you to do something that is contrary to the Lord, you should declare, 'I am in the spirit.' This will be a great help to you in your Christian life."

The well-known chorus of a gospel song says, "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long." If we speak the fact that we are in the spirit, our story and song will be that we are in spirit. All day long we may praise the Savior that, because the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are now in the spirit. This will be a very effective inoculation against all the "bugs" sent by the enemy to trouble us in the Christian life.

DISTRACTED FROM THE SPIRIT

Many Christians have received teachings that distract them from the spirit. Some have been taught in this way: "Now that you are a child of God, you must behave yourself and glorify God. The Devil, however, is busy. He never sleeps. He will tempt you, seduce you, and cause you to do many evil things. Formerly, you were under his control. Now that you have become a child of God, he will not let you go. Instead, he will do many things to trouble you. Therefore, you need to fast, pray, and exert all your effort to live a proper Christian life." We have learned

from experience that this kind of teaching distracts us from the spirit. The more we make up our mind to behave ourselves for the glory of God, the more we become like the wretched man described in Romans 7.

Defeated Christians who seek the advice of preachers may be exhorted to pray more or to read the Bible more. But even these activities, when they are simply our own doings, can cause us to "switch off" the spirit. The divine electricity has been installed into us. Once it has been switched on, we should not turn the switch off. However, by their innocent doings, many Christians have turned off the switch. As a result, some begin to doubt if they have truly been saved, or if they really have the Spirit. This may cause them to go from one Christian group to another seeking help. This is the situation among many of today's Christians.

This kind of situation is very different from the good news of the gospel. The gospel is this: God selected us, predestinated us, and marked us out in eternity. Then one day the Son of God came to accomplish everything for our salvation. He has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection and has become the life-giving Spirit. When you heard the proclamation of the good news and acknowledged it, this life-giving Spirit entered into you and began to dwell in your spirit. Now just stay in the spirit. Do not do anything that will take you away from the spirit. On the contrary, just declare that you are in the spirit. Proclaim this wonderful fact: "The gospel was a proclamation, and I have acknowledged it. Now the Spirit of God dwells in me, and I am in the spirit." If we declare this in faith, nothing will be able to defeat us. On the contrary, everything will be under our feet. This is the glad tidings, the gospel of Christ, and the gospel of God. How marvelous!

Those who have been Christians for a long time may still have memories of defeats and failures. Thus, when they hear about proclaiming the fact that since the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are in the spirit, they may ask questions about different things. They may wonder about

this and that. We need to forget all these matters and proclaim that we are in spirit. Do not say, "How about my problems at work or at home?" Instead, say, "I am in spirit."

The small word "in" has very great significance. According to 8:1, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ. According to 8:9, since the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. There is no need for us to try to do so many things. We should simply acknowledge the facts and proclaim them.

When I was a young Christian seeking the Lord, I bought many books on subjects such as how to pray, how to be holy, and how to overcome sin. I was always interested in "how to": how to be spiritual, how to be victorious, how to please God, how to preach the gospel. However, eventually I learned that these books could not help me. Instead of reading books on how to do this or that, it is better to read and pray-read Romans 8 verse by verse. This will fill you with enjoyment. You need to give special attention to verse 9, concentrating on the words "in the spirit." Again and again, we need to pray over and declare the fact that we are in the spirit.

THE MINGLED SPIRIT

It is difficult to determine if the word spirit in the phrase "in the spirit" should be capitalized. The reason for the difficulty is that this word refers to the mingled spirit, to the divine Spirit mingled with our regenerated human spirit. Verse 16 refers to these two spirits: "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." This verse does not say that the Spirit witnesses and our spirit witnesses also. It says the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. To say that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit is deeper than saying that the Spirit and our spirit witness, for it indicates that the two spirits are one. To say that the Spirit and our spirit witness means that these spirits remain two. But to say that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit indicates that the two spirits have been mingled and have become one.

THE WORK OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

Now let us go on to consider from Romans 8 the various aspects of the blessed work of the Spirit. First, the Spirit is the indwelling Spirit (vv. 9, 11). It is a great matter to have the Spirit indwelling us. Suppose the President of the United States came to your city and stayed for a while in your home. That would be considered a great honor and privilege. But we have someone much higher than the President dwelling in us--we have the Spirit of God dwelling in our spirit!

The second function of the Spirit is to give life. As the Spirit indwells us, He is not idle. Rather, He is active to impart life to us. The indwelling Spirit is the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit who gives life.

The third function of the Spirit is found in verse 13: "For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." According to this verse, the Spirit not only gives life, but also kills, puts to death. Positively, the spirit gives life; negatively, He kills and clears away all the negative things within us.

Fourth, in verse 14 we have the function of the Spirit's leading: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The indwelling Spirit leads us, and His leading is so sweet. Many of us can testify that it is the Spirit who leads us to the church meetings when we may be inclined to do something else. Praise Him that He is the One leading us!

Romans 8:15 gives us the fifth function of the Spirit: "For you have not received a spirit of slavery to fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father." The Spirit cries, "Abba, Father," in a very sweet way. Whenever we cry, "Abba, Father," we sense sweetness and comfort. Truly the Spirit is the crying Spirit.

As we have already pointed out, according to verse 16, the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. Hence, He is the witnessing Spirit. Because of the witness of the Spirit, we have the confirmation and testimony within us that we are

children of God. There is a living One, the indwelling Spirit, witnessing in us that we are children of God.

Seventh, verse 26 says, "And in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness; for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Here we see that the Spirit functions by joining in to help us in our weakness. If we were not weak, the Spirit would not join in to help us. But simply because we are weak, He becomes our partner helping us in our weakness and sharing our weakness. This is a wonderful blessing which human words cannot explain adequately.

Eighth, in verse 27 we have the interceding of the Spirit: "But He Who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He intercedes for the saints according to God." The interceding of the Spirit is also mentioned in verse 26, where we are told that the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. According to these verses, the Spirit's interceding takes place not in the heavens, but within us. Notice that verse 27 says that God searching our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit. This indicates that He has mingled Himself not only with our spirit, but even that He has mingled His mind with our heart. God searches our heart to know the mind of the Spirit. This means that the mind of the Spirit is one with our heart.

At this point let me ask a question: Is it the Spirit who groans, or are we the ones groaning? Verse 26 says that the Spirit intercedes with groanings which cannot be uttered. Surely we are the ones groaning. But our groaning is the Spirit's interceding. This indicates once again that we and the Spirit, the Spirit and we, are one. Our groanings become the Spirit's interceding. Furthermore, the Spirit's mind is involved with our heart. How wonderful that the Spirit is not only mingled with our spirit, but His mind is mingled with our heart and His interceding is in our groaning! How marvelous that He is one with us in this way!

Eventually, according to verse 23, we have "the

firstfruit of the Spirit." What we are enjoying today is just the firstfruit, not yet the full harvest. The firstfruit is an example, a foretaste, a guarantee, of the full taste which is coming. As verse 23 indicates, this full taste is related to the redemption of our body. Today we are enjoying the Triune God in our spirit and, at most, also in our soul. Our body has not yet been brought into the full enjoyment of the Triune God. Therefore, we need the redemption of our body. While we are enjoying the firstfruit of the Spirit, we are expecting in the future to enjoy the full taste, the redemption of our body.

It is not an insignificant matter to remain in the spirit. When we stay in the spirit, we enjoy the Spirit's indwelling, life-giving, killing, leading, crying, witnessing, joining in to help in our weakness, and interceding. Eventually, we enjoy Him as the firstfruit of the Triune God, who will become our full taste. This is not a mere teaching; it is an unveiling and also a proclamation of the facts for our enjoyment.

When you read of all these aspects of the work of the Spirit, there is no need to fast and pray. Instead, just say amen to each function of the Spirit: "In the spirit, amen. Indwelling, amen. Life-giving, amen. Putting to death, amen. Leading, amen. Crying, amen. Witnessing, amen. Joining in, amen. Interceding, amen. Firstfruit, amen. Amen, I am in the spirit, enjoying the work of the Spirit in me." I encourage you to amen every verse in Romans 8, especially the phrase "in the spirit." If you proclaim the fact that you are in the spirit and say amen to each aspect of the work of the Spirit, you will experience a change in your Christian life. This will transform you, build you up, and give you the growth in life.