

WEEK 5

The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building Up of the Church

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:16-18, 21-28

OUTLINE

<< DAY 1 >>

I. Matthew 16 reveals the way to build up the church and also reveals the enemy of the building:

A. Christ, the Son of the living God, builds the church on Himself as the rock, with stones such as Peter, a transformed person (vv. 16-18).

B. The gates of Hades, Satan's authority or power of darkness, attack the church to frustrate the Lord from building up the church (v. 18).

C. In order to build the church, the Lord had to pass through death and enter into resurrection (v. 21):

1. The church was produced through Christ's death and resurrection (John 12:24).

2. The way to build up the church is to be crucified and resurrected (cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Gal. 2:20).

3. The church exists and is built up only in the realm of resurrection through crucifixion (Gen. 2:21-22; cf. Eph. 4:15-16).

D. Peter, with a good heart, rebuked the Lord and tried to prevent the Lord from going to Jerusalem to be crucified (Matt. 16:22):

1. It was not Peter but Satan who came out through one of the gates of Hades, the gate of Peter's self, to try to frustrate the Lord from building up the church (v. 23).

2. The self, the mind, and the soul-life are the main gates through which Satan comes forth to attack and damage the church (vv. 23-26).

<< DAY 2 >>

II. The building up of the church depends on the shutting up of the gates of Hades through the exercise of three keys (vv. 24-26):

A. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self (v. 24):

1. The flesh is the created body corrupted by sin, the nature of Satan (Rom. 6:12, 14; 7:8,

11, 17, 20); the self is the created soul plus the satanic mind, the mind of Satan.

2. When the mind, the thought, of Satan was injected into the human soul, the human soul became the self, the embodiment of Satan (Gen. 3:1-6; Matt. 16:22-23):
 - a. Before Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into her body, the thought, the mind, of Satan was injected into her soul.
 - b. After Eve's mind was poisoned by Satan's thought, her emotion was aroused, and then her will was exercised to make a decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.
 - c. By this time every part of the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will—had been poisoned.
 - d. The self is the embodiment of the soul-life, which is expressed through the mind; thus, the self, the soul-life, and the mind are three-in-one.
 - e. Behind these three is Satan, who manipulates the self in order to damage the church (v. 23).

« DAY 3 »

3. The self is the soul declaring independence from God:
 - a. The Lord does not have regard for what we do; rather, He has regard for our dependence on Him (7:21-23; cf. Josh. 9:14).
 - b. The enemy of the Body is the self; because the self is something independent, the self is the greatest problem, the greatest frustration and opposition, to the building up of the Body:
 - (1) We should depend not only on God but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters (Exo. 17:11-13; Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33).
 - (2) The Lord and the Body are one; hence, if we are dependent on the Body, we are also dependent on the Lord, and if we are independent of the Body, we are spontaneously independent of the Lord.
 - (3) When we are dependent, the self is gone, and instead of the self, we have the Lord's presence and are full of peace.
 - (4) Only when the self-life has been utterly dealt with by the cross are we able to touch the reality of the Body of Christ and come to know the Body.

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4. The following are some expressions of the self (see Hymns, #866, stanzas 5 and 6):

- a. With the self there are ambition, pride, and self-exaltation (Matt. 20:20-28; 1 Pet. 5:5; Rom. 12:3; Num. 12:1-10; 16:1-3; Phil. 2:3-4).
- b. With the self there are self-righteousness, self-justification, and exposing,

criticizing, and condemning others (Matt. 9:10-13; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Pet. 4:8; John 3:17; 8:11; Luke 6:37; Matt. 7:1-5).

- c. With the self there are introspection and self-despising (S.S. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 12:15-16).
- d. When we are in the self, we can be offended by the church, the leading ones, or the saints (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Col. 3:13).
- e. With the self there are disappointment and discouragement (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 4:1).
- f. With the self there are self-love, self-preservation, self-seeking, and self-pity (Matt. 13:5, 20-21).
- g. With the self there are murmurings and reasonings (Exo. 16:1-9; Phil. 2:14).
- h. With the self there is natural affection (friendship) based on natural taste and preference (Matt. 12:46-50; Phil. 2:2b; 1 Cor. 12:25).
- i. With the self there are the matters of being opinionated and dissenting (John 11:21, 23-28, 39; Acts 15:35-39; cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 40).
- j. When we are in the self, we are individualistic and independent (16:12).

5. If we exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self, it is impossible for us to be offended; blessed are those who are not offended (cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60):

- a. If we can be offended, it is proof that we are full of self.
- b. If my self has been locked up, I will not be offended no matter what you do to me or how you treat me (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

6. We need to learn to exercise the key of denying the self to lock up the self in every situation:

- a. Whether a situation is for us or against us, whether the brothers love us or hate us, we must lock up the self (2 Cor. 12:15).
- b. If the self is locked up, the church will be built up.

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B. We need to learn to exercise the key of taking up the cross (Matt. 16:24):

- 1. To take up the cross simply means to take up the will of God; the cross is God's will (26:39; John 18:11):
 - a. The Lord Jesus was not forced to go to the cross like a criminal; He was willing to go because the cross was God's will (Matt. 26:39).
 - b. The Lord Jesus was willing to be crucified so that through His death, His life might be released to produce and build up the church (John 12:24).
 - c. The cross was a great suffering to the Lord, but He cared not for the suffering but for the fulfillment of God's purpose (Heb. 12:2; Col. 1:24).
- 2. Let him...take up his cross (Matt. 16:24) means that we are not forced to bear the

cross but that we willingly take it up:

- a. Our husband, wife, and children are God's will and are therefore our cross.
 - b. The one church is God's will, and every brother and sister in the church is God's will; thus, to bear the cross is to bear the church and to bear all the saints so that we would have the genuine oneness (John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2).
3. We need not only to take up our cross but also to carry our cross, that is, to remain on the cross, keeping our old man under the termination of the cross day by day (Luke 14:27; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:31):
- a. We have received the divine life through the Lord's crucifixion; now, in order to be built up in this life, we need to willingly and happily take up the cross.
 - b. We should not care for our taste, feeling, or consciousness; rather, we should care only for God's will, which is that we would have the genuine oneness (John 17:21-23; Eph. 4:3, 13; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2).

« DAY 6 »

C. We need to learn to exercise the key of losing the soul-life (Matt. 16:25):

1. To save the soul-life is to please the self by allowing the soul to have its enjoyment; to lose the soul-life is to lose the enjoyment of the soul:
 - a. God created man as a soul (Gen. 2:7) with the need for enjoyment.
 - b. Receiving God into man's spirit and expressing God through the soul should be man's joy and amusement (cf. Neh. 8:10; Rom. 14:17).
 - c. The Lord Jesus lost the enjoyment of His soul in this age so that He might find His soul-life in the coming age (John 10:11; Isa. 53:12); we must do the same (John 12:24-26).
 - d. If we save our soul-life in this age, we will lose it in the coming age, but if we lose our soul-life in this age, we will find it in the coming age (Matt. 16:25).
 - e. We need to love the Lord Jesus and to hate and deny our soul-life, not loving our soul-life even unto death (1 Cor. 16:22; 2:9; Luke 14:26; 9:23; Rev. 12:11).
2. If we are willing to lose all our present soulish enjoyment for the Lord's sake, for the sake of the church, and for the sake of all the saints, others will be nourished by us and will be built up through us; this is not a suffering but a joy (Heb. 12:2).
3. The kingdom reward of sharing the King's joy in ruling over the earth in the manifestation of the kingdom depends upon whether we save our soul-life in this age or lose it (Matt. 16:25-28; 25:21, 23).

« WEEK 5 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

The “Me” in [Matthew 16:24] means a great deal. This “Me” is the pattern, the pathway. Furthermore, this “Me” is the crucified and resurrected “Me.” If we are not crucified and resurrected, there can be no church. The church comes into existence through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Not only our self, which is defiled, but even the Lord’s pure, sinless self had to be denied. If the Lord had not denied Himself and gone to the cross, He could not have been resurrected, and there would have been no church. We must follow after Him. This means that we must deny ourselves as He did and must allow ourselves to be crucified as He did. Without this, it is impossible for the church to be built up. Whenever we sense that we are feeding the self-life of another, we must say, “Lord, I will follow You. I will stop having so much contact with this brother.” If you do this, the building of the church will proceed. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, “The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church,” pp. 74-75)

Today’s Reading

How can the church be built up in a practical way? The answer is found in Matthew 16:21 through 26. According to biblical terms, the way to build up the church is to be crucified and resurrected. Unless Christ had been crucified and resurrected, He could not build up the church. The church came into existence through His death and resurrection. Verse 21...indicates that the way to build up the church is through death and resurrection. On the mount the Lord Jesus was transfigured. This transfiguration, however, was temporary. Through death and resurrection Christ was permanently transfigured. Resurrection is a form of trans-figuration. Through death and resurrection Christ has entered into a realm of transfiguration. The church...cannot exist in the natural life or with fleshly people. It can exist only in a realm of transfiguration. As long as we are in a natural realm or in a fleshly condition, we are through with the church.

Verse 22 says, “Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!” With a good heart Peter was telling the Lord that God should be merciful to Him....[In this verse] the self is emphasized.

Verse 23 says, “But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan!” Then in verses 24 and 25 the Lord said to His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.” According to these verses, the Lord is the pattern and the pathway. If anyone desires to come after Him, that is, take Him as the pattern and the pathway, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.

Matthew 16:18 speaks of the gates and verse 19 of the keys. In order to know what the gates and the keys are, we [again] need to consider verses 21 through 26. Satan comes out through the gates. The first gate is the self. This means that we ourselves are one of the gates of Hades through which Satan comes out. Satan may come out through the gate of self even when we have a good heart. Whether our heart is good or evil, self is the first gate through which Satan comes out. In addition to the self, verses 21 through 26 also speak of the mind and the soul, both of which are also gates through which Satan comes out. Thus, the self, the soul, and the mind are the main gates through which Satan comes forth. Many times Satan has come out through your mind because your mind has been an open gate for him. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, “The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church,” pp. 79, 70-71)

Further Reading: Life-study of Matthew, msg. 48

« WEEK 5 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:23-25 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men. Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

Throughout history the church has not been damaged mainly by Judaism or Gnosticism; it has been damaged mainly by the self. Martin Luther once said that although he was afraid of the pope, he was more afraid of the stronger pope, the self, within his own heart. Nothing damages and frustrates the building up of the church more than the self. Self is the embodiment of the soul, which is expressed through the mind. Thus the self, the soul, and the mind are three-in-one. Behind these three is Satan, who manipulates the self in order to damage the church life. We all need to heed this word for ourselves. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," p. 71)

Today's Reading

We need to receive the mercy of the Lord to regard all the saints as our brothers and sisters but none as our friends. For the Lord's building in the church life, everything natural must be extracted. There should be no natural affection, relationship, or feeling. Rather, we all must be fearful of natural affection and shun it. Whenever a brother loves me in a naturally affectionate way, I am frightened. That is the time for me to exercise the key to deny the self. I will lock myself and avoid that brother's affection. Whenever you discover that you are feeding a brother's self and that he is feeding yours, you must use the key to lock the gate of the self. If you do not lock up the self, Satan will come out through the door of the self. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," p. 73)

In Genesis 3:1b [Satan] asked the woman, "Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" This was a question put into Eve's mind, and this question stirred up her doubting mind. This is a strong point that we have to stress. Satan would always approach people by touching their doubting mind. Here Satan questioned something concerning God, and this questioning, no doubt, aroused the mind of Eve.

After Satan came to touch the female mind, he caused the human mind to doubt God's word (v. 4)...This means that the poison of the serpent got into her mind, because the word of Satan got into her. When the word gets in, the person gets in. Thus, the human mind was poisoned, contaminated.

Satan also stirred up the human emotion to dislike God. This is proved by verse 5, where Satan said to Eve, "God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil." This word was a word of evil, stirring up Eve's emotion to dislike God. Eve probably felt that God had kept some good thing from her. This is the subtlety of the enemy to poison the human emotion.

Satan seduced the human will to choose the tree of knowledge. After Satan's word in verse 5, verse 6 says, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise, she took of its fruit and ate." This is the seducing of the human will to make a decision to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

At this point, Satan had contaminated the entire human soul: the mind, the emotion, and the will. The mind was poisoned, the emotion was poisoned, and the will was poisoned; thus, the entire soul was contaminated. (CWWL, 1979, vol. 1, "Basic Lessons on Life," pp. 497-498)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," ch. 3; CWWL, 1979, vol. 1, "Basic Lessons on Life," Isn. 4

« WEEK 5 — DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

1 Cor. 12:20-21 But now the members are many, but the body one. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

The self is the soul being independent of God. Whenever the soul is not dependent on God but is independent of Him, the soul immediately becomes the self. This means that whenever we do something by ourselves without depending on God, we are in the self. No matter what we are and no matter what we do, as long as we are independent of God, we are in the self. God created man as a soul to be always dependent on Him. Man is a soul (Gen. 2:7), and as a soul he should depend on God for everything.

However, the soul has become the self. The self is simply the soul declaring independence from God. If we have the vision of the self, we will see what the self is—the soul declaring its independence from God. If we see this vision, we will realize that we can no longer be independent of God. Then we will say, “I must depend on God all the time. Whatever I do, I must depend on God. Whatever I am, I must depend on God.” (CWWL, 1965, vol. 3, “The Heavenly Vision,” pp. 194-195)

Today’s Reading

Because the self is something independent, the self is the greatest problem to the building up of the Body. We should be dependent not only on God but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters. Whenever we are independent of the brothers and sisters, we are in the self, in the independent soul. For us today, being independent of the Body is equal to being independent of God. This is a matter not of doctrine but of experience. If you check with your experience, you will realize that when you were independent of the brothers and sisters, you had the sense that you were also independent of God. Likewise, when you were isolated from the brothers and sisters, you had the sense that you were also isolated from God.

In order to be dependent on the Lord, we must be dependent on the Body. If we are dependent on the Body, then we will also be dependent on the Lord. You may wonder why you do not have a deep sense of the Lord’s presence. You do not have the Lord’s presence, because you are isolated from the Body, because you are not properly related to the members of the Body. Endeavor to be built up and to be right with the Body. If you are right with the Body and are built up in the Body, you will surely sense the Lord’s presence.

The Lord Jesus does not have regard for what we do; rather, He has regard for our dependence on Him. If we see this, we will pay attention not to what we do but to whether or not we are dependent on the Lord. We need to ask ourselves: Am I independent of the Lord or am I dependent on Him? If we are independent of the Lord, we are in the self. If we are dependent on the Lord, we are spontaneously dependent on the Body.

The Lord and the Body are one. If you are dependent on the Lord, you are dependent on the Body. If you are dependent on the Body, you are dependent on the Lord. If you are independent of the Body, you are spontaneously independent of the Lord and are in the self, no matter how many good things you intend to do. Furthermore, because you are in the self, you are incorporated with Satan. In this corporation the self is the general manager, and Satan is the president.

Oh, how we need to see the vision of the self! If we see this vision, we will hate our independence from the Lord and the Body. Then we will love the dependence on the Body, on the brothers and sisters, and on the Lord.

The enemy of the Body is the self. The greatest problem, the greatest frustration and opposition, to the Body is also the self. When we have the self, we do not have the Body. When we have the Body, we do not have the self. In order for the Body to be built up, the self, the independent soul, must be dealt with. The self is the independent “I,” the independent “me.” When we are independent, we are in the self, the Body is gone, and we do not have peace. (CWWL, 1965, vol. 3, “The Heavenly Vision,” pp. 195-198)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1965, vol. 3, “The Heavenly Vision,” chs. 3-4

« WEEK 5 — DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Luke 23:34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing...

Phil. 2:3 Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves.

It is a very serious matter to be offended. Do not casually say, "I have been offended in the church life. The elders and other leading ones have offended me." Although others may offend you, you will always be the first to suffer. On the one hand, I condemn all the offenses; but on the other hand, I must say that there is no excuse for your being offended. If we were not in ourselves, we could not be offended. If I exercise the key of self-denial to lock up the self, it will be impossible for me to be offended. The reason we are offended is that the self is so open and prevailing. Through the open gate of the self, Satan comes forth, and we are offended.

Whether the church is right or wrong, it is still the church. Although you may be offended by something or someone in the church, do not make any excuses for yourself. This frustrates the building up of the church. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," p. 72)

Today's Reading

We may talk a great deal about the building. However, when certain things take place to touch us, the self is open. Because we are open to Hades, something from Hades—Satan—comes out. How we need to use the key of self-denial to lock the self!...Blessed are those who are not offended.

There is no excuse for being offended. When the Lord Jesus comes and sets up His judgment seat, He will tell us to settle our account with Him. He may ask us why we were offended in certain places. But if we make excuses for ourselves, the Lord will not accept them. The problem is not the offense—it is the self....If you can be offended, it is a proof that you are full of self. If my self has been locked up, I will not be offended no matter what you do to me or how you treat me.

I am glad that in the churches we have the brothers' houses and the sisters' houses. But, through experience, we have realized that there are two kinds of results from living in such a house. Some form natural friendships; others become dissatisfied and disappointed....To be disappointed is a proof that you are in the self....If the self is locked up, we shall have the building. If you exercise the key of self-denial, others may be offended, but you will not be offended. Instead, you will be built up because the self in you has been locked up. We all need to use the prevailing key of self-denial to lock the self, the soul, and the mind. Otherwise, the building up of the church will be frustrated. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," pp. 72-74)

It is very difficult not to have self-confidence. If we did not have self-confidence, our will might be weak. But we have to realize that self-confidence is fleshly....When we use the term self-righteousness, we do not mean self-justice. Someone who is self-righteous always considers that he is right. We use self-righteousness in the sense of someone thinking that he is never wrong but always right....Self-justification is another characteristic of the flesh....The desire to convince others that we are right, to vindicate ourselves, is also of the flesh....Self-exaltation is another characteristic of the flesh. Thus, we can see that self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-justification, self-vindication, and self-exaltation are all aspects of the flesh....We must help the saints to realize that in the church service, we have to condemn self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-justification, self-vindication, and self-exaltation. There should be nothing of the self in the church service. When we have these aspects of the self, we are absolutely fleshly, and the Spirit, the holy anointing oil, has nothing to do with us. If we are so self-confident, self-righteous, self-justifying, self-vindicating, and self-exalting, we lose the Spirit. (CWWL, 1979, vol. 2, "Basic Lessons on Service," p. 129)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," ch. 4

« WEEK 5 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:24 ...If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

26:39 ...He fell on His face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.

The cross is a matter of suffering. Crucifixion was the method used by the Roman government to execute criminals. No doubt, to the criminal the cross was a suffering because he did not choose to be crucified. On the contrary, he was forced to be crucified. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, however, was altogether different. He was not forced to suffer crucifixion; He chose it. This was His own preference. He was not compelled to go to the cross; He was willing to do so because His cross was God's will. Hence, His crucifixion was for the fulfillment of God's will. The Lord was willing to take up the cross and be crucified for the fulfillment of God's purpose. In other words, Christ was not forced to die like a criminal. Rather, He was willing to be crucified so that through death His life might be released to produce the church.

When He was on the cross, the Lord suffered greatly. But that suffering was not forced upon Him. He took it willingly. In Matthew 26:39 the Lord prayed to the Father, "Not as I will, but as You will." At that same time He also prayed, "Your will be done" (v. 42). The Lord was willing to take up the cross, to go to the cross, and to remain on the cross until God's will had been fulfilled. This is the significance of the first mention of the cross in the Bible. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," p. 81)

Today's Reading

We are not forced to bear the cross, but...we willingly take it up. Notice, [in Matthew 16:24] the Lord Jesus did not say, "Let him deny himself and be crucified." No, He said, "Let him...take up his cross." We are not to be crucified, but we are to pick up the cross. However, certain brothers have said, "I have been crucified by my dear wife many times." Such brothers are not cross-bearers; they are criminals executed by their wives. If you say that your children are crucifying you, you are not a cross-bearer but an executed criminal. Today most Christians are criminals being executed; very few are cross-bearers. Let me ask you this question: Are you a criminal or a cross-bearer? We all need to say, "Praise the Lord, I am not a criminal. I am one who is willing to bear the cross. I have not been crucified by others; rather, I take up the cross and bear it."

Suppose a brother's wife causes him to suffer. Since no divorce is permitted, he has two choices regarding her. He may either suffer with her like a criminal being executed on the cross, or he may take her as God's will and as his lot and portion. He may say, "God has allotted her to me. It was not I who married her; it was God who gave her to me. This is God's will, God's ordination. Hallelujah, I am willing and happy to bear the cross! I am not a criminal but a happy cross-bearer." If we do this, the presence of the Lord will be with us, and we shall enjoy the riches of life. Furthermore, we shall have a strong testimony of being built into one.

If you make a selection among [the saints in] the churches, you are a wide open gate for Satan to come out. Thus, you must use the second key—the taking up of the cross. We need to say, "Lord, Your will is that there be one church in the universe and one church in every city. Lord, Your will is also that I be one with all my brothers and sisters. As long as anyone is a believer, I must accept him without choice or preference. My likes or dislikes do not mean anything." This is the unique way for us to be built together. Otherwise, our preferences and tastes will constantly fluctuate. Today I may feel positively toward you, but tomorrow I may feel negatively. Both in the church life and in married life there should be no fluctuation. What can keep us stable and steadfast is the bearing of the cross. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," pp. 81-83, 85-86)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," ch. 5

« WEEK 5 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:25-26 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?

To save the soul is to allow the soul to have its enjoyment. Thus, the self is the expression of the soul, and the soul itself is the enjoyment. To lose the soul means to lose the enjoyment of the soul.

With respect to the losing of the soul, the Lord did not speak about suffering....If you have had some experience with this matter, you will know that apparently the losing of the soul is a suffering, but actually it is a real joy. If a sister loses her soul by forgiving her husband, that will be a joy to her and to her family. It will issue in the building up of the proper family life. The same is true in principle with the building of the church. To lose our soulish enjoyment is a joy because as a result we see the building up of the church. If you are willing to lose your soul in a practical way, others will be nourished by you and built up through you. This is not a suffering; it is a joy. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," pp. 90, 94)

Today's Reading

Hebrews 12:2 says that the Lord endured the cross because of the joy that was set before Him....He went joyfully. His going to the cross was His losing of His soul....He knew that through His death many grains would be brought forth (John 12:24).

All the amusements that people seek outside of God are for the satisfaction of the soul. When they listen to music or enjoy certain sports, they are happy. Many in Hong Kong like to play mah-jongg. To them, that is the best entertainment and enjoyment....Anyone who has been regenerated in his spirit but still plays mah-jongg will eventually lose his soul at the Lord's coming....Such a Christian needs to lose his soul in the matter of playing mah-jongg. If he does not lose it now, he will lose it when the Lord comes back. The Lord will say to him, "Because you saved your soul so much, now you must lose it."...To save the soul is to preserve the soul in its enjoyment.

When [God] came in the flesh, He was rejected. This present age, the age of the church, is the age of the world's rejection of Christ. Because Christ has been rejected, at present He has no joy on this earth. As His followers, we share His destiny. Our destiny as followers of the Lord Jesus is not to be welcomed by this world; instead, it is to be rejected. Therefore, this age is not the time for us to have enjoyment for our soul; it is the time for us to lose this enjoyment. When the Lord Jesus comes back, that will be the time for Him to enjoy the earth. Satan will be bound, Christ will recover the earth, and the entire earth will be under His reign. At that time Christ will enjoy the earth, and all His followers will participate in this enjoyment. This is the meaning of Matthew 25:21 and 23, both of which say, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master." This will take place during the millennium when the Lord Jesus will reclaim the earth and enjoy it. By repossessing the earth, the Lord will have enjoyment. Then He will ask His followers, His partners, to enter into His joy. This will be the saving of our soul. In order to have the enjoyment in the coming age, we need to pay the price in this age by losing our soul. We need to say, "Lord, for Your sake I don't want to have so much pleasure or amusement."

The Lord burdened one brother to give a certain amount of money to another. But the enemy tempted him to lower the amount. When the brother was enlightened to see the tactics of the enemy, he said, "Satan, if you speak to me about this again, I'll give everything away. I am happy to have nothing in my savings account." To lose our pleasure at having a large savings account is to lose our soul. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," pp. 94, 104-105, 107)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1978, vol. 1, "The Exercise of the Kingdom for the Building of the Church," chs. 6-8

<< WEEK 5 — HYMN >>

Hymns, #279

1 First the blood, and then the ointment,
If we pass not through Golgotha,
If the blood has never cleansed us,
If for Christ we'd truly witness,
Through the cross, O Lord, I pray,
Make me any price to pay,
2 Christ, the Rock, must first be smitten,
Without death the Spirit's fullness
If with Christ we die completely,
He will clothe us with His power
3 First the altar, then the fire—
If our all has not been offered,
If to sacrifice we're willing,
He to us will be committed
4 First we must prepare the vessels,
Dig the valley full of ditches,
First we must go through the Jordan,
First in death we must be baptized,
5 When we see the ripened harvest
We may know that many seeds have
Ere the fruit of life may blossom,
If with Christ we've not been buried,
6 Since it must be thus, I pray, Lord,
Deal with pride and make me willing
I for greater power pray not;
All the meaning of the cross, Lord,
Cleansing, then anointing comes;
Ne'er to Pentecost we'll come.
Ne'er the Spirit's pow'r we'll know.
Self-life to the cross must go.
Put my soul-life all away;
Full anointing to receive.
That the living water flow;
Ne'er could dwell in man below.
Willing thus our all to lose,
And to win the world will use.
If no loss, there'll be no gain;
To the throne we'll ne'er attain.
All forsaking, God t'obey,
And through us His pow'r display.
That the Oil they may contain;
That they may be filled with Rain.
Ere anointed from above;
Then experience the Dove.
Of the golden countryside,
Fallen to the earth and died.
We must surely suffer death;
We'll not feel the Spirit's breath.
Help me go the narrow way;
Thus to suffer, Thee t'obey.
Deeper death is what I need.
Work in me—for this I plead.