

Week Six

The Factor of Dealing with Our Natural Disposition for Our Growth in Life and Our Usefulness in Service

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:22-26; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 2:15; 3:3-6; 4:5; 5:20;
Eph. 6:20

Outline

Day 1 & Day 2

- I. We must deal with our natural disposition for our growth in life and our usefulness in service:**
 - A. Our natural disposition denotes what we are in our makeup by birth, and our character is the outward expression of our natural disposition; natural disposition is what we are within, and character is what we express without.**
 - B. The inward natural disposition and the outward character are the extract, the essence, of our being; the self within is our natural disposition, and the self expressed is our character.**
 - C. The thing that most damages our usefulness in the Christian life and church life is our living according to our natural disposition; it is the real enemy of our growth in the divine life and the major factor that spoils our usefulness in the hand of the Lord.**
 - D. We must learn to take care of the “burl” in our makeup, our natural disposition; if we deal with this “burl,” we will grow quickly without any hindrances to our growth in life, and we will also become more useful to the Lord.**

- E. Disposition is implied in the terms used in Matthew 16:23-26—mind, himself, and soul-life; disposition includes all these elements; actually, we may say that our natural disposition is our self.**
- F. To deal with our natural disposition means to deal with our self, our soul-life (vv. 22-26), our old man (Rom. 6:6), and the “I” (Gal. 2:20); how useful you will be to the Lord or how much trouble you will make to the church depends upon how much your natural disposition is killed; the way to deal with our natural disposition is to realize and remember that we are crucified persons and remain under that realization and reality throughout the day (v. 20; 5:24-25; Rom. 6:6; 8:13b).**
- G. Our natural disposition is our self; it is in us, and it is us; practically speaking, to deny the self is simply to deny our natural disposition; as Christians, we have to live Christ by continually exercising our spirit to reject our self and live by another life, the crucified and resurrected Christ, signified by the tree of life—Gen. 2:9; Phil. 1:21a; Rev. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Tim. 4:7-8.**

Day 3

- II. We should not be limited by our natural disposition in the Lord’s work; instead, we should learn to live a life of opposing ourselves, our disposition; whatever we have and whatever comes out of us cannot be brought into the Lord’s service—Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:3-6; 4:5:**
 - A. The natural disposition of some brothers reflects a strong self-confidence; their self-confidence must be overthrown by continually rejecting their self and by relying on the resurrecting Triune God—1:8-9.**
 - B. The less a man is enlightened by God, the more he thinks that he will have no trouble obeying God; the quicker a man makes loud claims, the more it proves that he has never paid any price;**

those whose words pretend intimacy with God are probably farthest away from Him—Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14; Phil. 3:3.

- C. The natural disposition of some brothers is one of refusing to work as long as the circumstances are not perfect or the conditions are not adequate; we must reject the natural disposition that requires a particular environment before we can work—1 Pet. 4:1; 1 Cor. 9:23-27.
- D. We need to work together with God by a life that is able to fit all situations, that is able to endure any kind of treatment, that is able to accept any kind of environment, that is able to work in any kind of condition, and that is able to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of the ministry; we must learn the secret of experiencing Christ in everything and in every place—2 Cor. 6:1-2; Phil. 4:5-9, 11-13.

Day 4

- E. One type of natural disposition is that of the “hero”; this type must do everything in an impressive, perfect, and complete way; another type of natural disposition is that of the “non-hero”; the non-hero does not do anything in a thorough or complete way.
- F. Some responsible brothers have a strong element in their natural disposition that hinders them from coordinating and cooperating with others; these ones usually are very capable, and they can also easily stir up trouble in the church life; their disposition can even be one with a dominating attitude, a suppressing spirit, critical speaking, and a legalistic and unforgiving spirit.
- G. Other responsible brothers may have a natural disposition that wants everyone to like them and does not want to offend anyone; this limits their effectiveness in the Lord’s work, because when the Lord wants to speak an honest or frank word

of admonishment or warning to the saints through them, they will not do it—cf. Col. 1:27-29; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 10:5-13; Heb. 3:7-19; 12:25:

1. Furthermore, those with such a disposition can express the “strange fire” of natural affection toward the saints, even to such a degree that causes them to be lacking the proper discernment and the proper oversight in their care for the church, the saints, and the work—Lev. 2:11; 10:1-2; Num. 6:6-7; Phil. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:2; Heb. 13:17.
 2. A major part of the Nazarite vow is to separate ourselves from the deadness that comes through natural affection (Num. 6:6-7); also, the meal offering being without honey means that in Christ there is no natural affection or natural goodness (Lev. 2:11; Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 10:18).
- H. The source of any rebellion among us was the natural disposition of the persons involved; ambition for position (which comes from Satan) is the primary element of every fallen person’s natural disposition; the root of dissent is the self, the natural disposition—Isa. 14:12-13; Num. 12:1-2; 16:1-3; 1 Sam. 15:10-12; Matt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28; Luke 22:25-27; 2 Cor. 10:4-5.**
- I. Second Kings 4:8-10 gives the account of the Shunammite woman’s reception of Elisha by providing a meal for him whenever he passed by; he did not give one message or perform one miracle, but the woman identified him as “a holy man of God” by the way he took his meal; this was the impression that Elisha gave to others, so we have to ask ourselves, “What is the impression that we give to others?”—cf. 2 Cor. 2:15; 5:20; Eph. 6:20.**
- J. If the Lord breaks our outer man with our natural disposition, we will no longer present others with our strong self when we touch them; instead, our spirit will flow out whenever we touch men; it is impossible for us to break through the problems of our natural disposition, but it is possible for the Lord to do it—John 7:37-38; Luke 18:24-27; 19:2.**

Day 5

III. The Spirit deals with our outer man, our self, our natural disposition, by the killing element of the cross in the compound Spirit, by the discipline of the Spirit, by the shining of Christ as the Spirit, and by the church life, fruit-bearing, and lamb-feeding:

A. In order to deal with our natural disposition, we must deny the self and apply the killing power of the cross; we need to see and realize in our experience that the compound, all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit includes the precious death of Christ and the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death, which can kill our natural disposition—Exo. 30:23-25; Phil. 1:19; Rom. 8:13:

1. Christ as the compound Spirit is our medication to heal us, enliven us, and kill all the negative things within us; when we take Him as our medication, we enjoy “the putting to death of Jesus,” or the killing of Jesus—2 Cor. 4:10-11.
2. In the Spirit there is the killing element of the cross; when we reject ourselves in the morning to receive God into us, we have the sense during the day that a killing process is going on within us.

B. The goal of the discipline of the Holy Spirit is for us to be a broken man; God has to put us in a place of total inability and total helplessness before He can have a way in us; the purpose of the trials through which we pass is so that we can receive the benefit of knowing God for Him to be expressed—1:8-9; 12:9-10; Isa. 40:28-31; Hosea 6:1-3:

1. The breaking of the outer man is the breaking of our natural disposition; our natural disposition makes it hard for us to release our spirit; a person who is not broken by God cannot be entrusted with the Lord's work; what we are originally, including our natural appearance and taste, does not match God and is not compatible with God—Jer. 48:11.
2. Whatever we are by birth, whether good or bad, whether useful or not, is natural and altogether a hindrance to the Holy Spirit in constituting the divine life into our being; for this reason our natural strength, natural

wisdom, natural cleverness, natural disposition, natural shortcomings, natural virtues, plus our character and habits, must all be torn down in order that the Holy Spirit may form in us a new disposition, new character, new habits, new virtues, and new attributes.

3. In order to accomplish the work of reconstitution, the Holy Spirit of God moves within us to enlighten, inspire, lead, and saturate us with the divine life; He also works in our environment to arrange every detail, person, matter, and thing in our situation to tear down all aspects of our natural being in order that He might conform us to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:28-29.
 4. Everything in our environment has been measured to us by our God; He orders everything around us, the only purpose of which is to break our conspicuous, obtuse, and hard spots—Psa. 39:9; Matt. 10:29-30; Luke 12:6.
 5. If the outer man is not broken, the inner man will not be released; the earthen vessel has to be broken before the treasure can be released (2 Cor. 4:7); as long as the ointment is in the alabaster box, the fragrance will not be released (John 12:3).
 6. A person who is not broken cannot submit to others; only those who have experienced Christ as their life of submission know the rebelliousness of their natural disposition—Phil. 2:5-8.
 7. Anyone who is boastful has not been broken, anyone who blames others has not been broken, anyone who thinks he is something when he is nothing has not been broken, and anyone who competes with others has not been broken—3:3; 1 Cor. 6:7; Gal. 5:25-26; 6:3.
 8. Someone who has never been pressed, mistreated, depreciated, or wronged by others is raw, wild, and useless to God; we should not have the mistaken concept that all the saints will admire and respect us because we have been sent by God, called by God, and entrusted with His work; one who respects us today may deride and trample us under his feet tomorrow; this is the way of one who serves the Lord—John 2:23-25; Acts 14:11-13, 18-21; Mark 11:8-10; cf. 15:9-15.
- C. Deliverance from our natural disposition also comes from the inner shining of Christ as a great light; this shining is seeing what God sees—Prov. 4:18; 20:27; Psa. 18:28-29; Matt. 4:16; Luke 11:34-36; Acts 9:3-5; 22:6-10; 26:13-19; Eph. 5:13; Phil.**

2:15-16:

1. The greatest thing in the Christian experience is the killing that comes from the shining of the divine light; the shining is the saving, and the seeing is the deliverance; everyone who truly sees a vision of the Lord in His glory is enlightened in his conscience regarding his uncleanness—Isa. 6:1-8.
 2. The Lord grants us much light to expose us and to humble us; only this kind of shining will remove our pride, and only this light will stop our fleshly activities and break our outer shell with our natural disposition; the more we see God, know God, and love God, the more we abhor ourselves and the more we deny ourselves—Job 42:5-6; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:26.
 3. We should not try to be magnanimous or forbearing by the effort of our self, our natural disposition; rather, we should learn to prostrate ourselves in God's light, receive His breaking, and allow the environment to break us and tear us down.
- D. If we are not useful in the Lord's hand for taking care of people, it is due to our natural disposition; the church life, fruit-bearing, and lamb-feeding are three matters that kill our natural disposition; to deal with our natural disposition, we must love God by contacting God to be infused with Him as grace, and we must love people by contacting them to infuse them with God as grace—John 21:15-17; Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Pet. 4:10.**

Day 6

- IV. God's dealing with Jacob is a full picture of the Holy Spirit's discipline and His transforming work in the New Testament believers to deal with their natural disposition so that Christ may be formed in them, fully grown in them, unto maturity; this is God's blessing us and making us a blessing to others that they may be supplied with the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1a; Gen. 12:1-3; Ezek. 34:26; Num. 6:22-27:**
- A. Jacob's life shows that a natural person must pass through breaking in order to become Israel, a prince of God; what God**

tears down through our environment is our worthless self, our natural disposition; however, what God builds into us is Himself, the peerless, supereminent, and infinite One—1 Cor. 3:12.

- B. God destined Jacob to live a struggling life all his days; He sovereignly arranged every circumstance, situation, and person in Jacob's life and caused them all to work together for Jacob's good so that He could transform Jacob, a supplanter and a heel holder, into Israel, a prince of God—Gen. 25:26; 32:24-32.**
- C. The strongest manifestation of Jacob's maturity in life (the last stage of transformation) is the fact that Jacob blessed everyone; his supplanting hands became blessing hands; blessing is the overflow of God as life to others through the maturity in life—47:7, 10; 48:14-16; 49:1-28.**

WEEK 6 — DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 16:23-25 ...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.... 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.

I have used the words disposition and character in my ministry concerning the spiritual life because I was forced to find terms that would help the saints to understand the soul-life, the self, the “I,” and the old man. The terms natural life and natural have also been used related to the spiritual experiences of dealing with our self. The self is our soulish life, and the soulish life is something natural. In addition to these terms Paul mentions the old man in Romans 6:6. Each of these terms denotes a certain spiritual reality.... The soul-life is also called the old man. The self, the soul-life, and the old man are all something natural, something of the natural life.

We define these terms [disposition and character] according to their spiritual significance.... Within we have our disposition, and without we have our character. Disposition is what we are within, and character is what we express without. The inward disposition and the outward character are the extract, the essence, of our being. If our character and disposition were taken away, there would be nothing left to our being. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, “The Experience and Growth in Life,” pp. 129-130)

Today’s Reading

The terms character and disposition cannot be found in the New Testament, but the facts are implied in verses such as Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25. Matthew 16:26 and Luke 9:25 are parallel portions that use self and soul-life as synonyms. Matthew 16:26 says, “What shall a man be

profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life?” Luke 9:25 says, “What is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?” The soul-life in Matthew 16:26 is the self in Luke 9:25. The soul is the life of the self, and the matters of disposition and character are very much related to both the self and the soul.

To illustrate the differences in disposition, we may use different animals, such as a turtle and a rabbit. A turtle walks slowly, and a rabbit runs quickly. Each activity is related to a particular thing within the nature of each animal.... The turtle and the rabbit each has its own disposition, its own makeup.

Your disposition denotes what you are in your makeup by birth.... If you are slow, you were made slow by birth; being slow is your disposition. Likewise, if you are quick, quickness is your disposition. One may be silent or talkative; both are matters of inward disposition. Although our disposition is something made by God, it still needs to be dealt with by God. This seems to be contradictory—something given by God must be dealt with by God. However, this is very much according to the divine revelation, and it is also confirmed by our experience.

Character refers to our outward expression... [of] our inner being. The disposition is always explicitly expressed in our character.... Character is composed of about thirty percent nature and of about seventy percent habits. For example, if a child is placed in a Chinese home, he will be cast into a Chinese mold. The same child placed in a family of another nationality will resemble a person of that nationality when he grows up.

We cannot change our inward nature, but we can change or correct our outward character.... Many brothers have been trained in the military service. When they first entered the military service, they were not very punctual, but after some training and severe discipline, they were adjusted to be punctual.... This kind of training changed their outward character. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, “The Experience and Growth in Life,” pp. 130-131)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1973-1974, vol. 2, “The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church,” chs. 1-3, 5, 7-8

WEEK 6 — DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him...that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

The thing that most damages our usefulness in the Christian life and church life is our living according to our disposition.... Some brothers and sisters have a strong element in their disposition that hinders them from coordinating and cooperating with others. If certain brothers or sisters are assigned a certain work, no one else can be included with them to help in that work; they must do it exclusively. Such brothers or sisters are usually very capable, and they can also easily stir up trouble in the church life.

The Lord's work is a work of the Body and by the Body; therefore, coordination is desperately needed. The apostle Paul was very capable, but he also needed a number of others to help him and coordinate with him.... Even the Lord Jesus Himself needed to coordinate with others. Actually, most of us do not like to work with others. If we are lazy, careless persons, we may like others to labor for us. But if we are diligent persons, laboring all the time, we may not like others to work with us, because whatever they do interferes with what we are doing.

In our spiritual life, in our Christian life, in our church life, and in the Lord's work, we must learn to be people who are always opposing ourselves.... To oppose ourselves is to oppose our disposition. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, "The Experience and Growth in Life," p. 146)

Today's Reading

According to my observation over many years, the real enemy of our growth in the divine life is our disposition. Our disposition is also the factor that spoils our usefulness in the hand of the Lord.... I have learned that many saints eventually stopped growing in the divine life and could make no further progress... due to a particular, peculiar aspect of their disposition. They had given up the world and had sacrificed many things for the Lord. They also listened to the messages and loved them. However, a particular, peculiar aspect remained in their being. That part of their makeup became a stronghold that held them back from making progress in the growth in life.

Our particular traits can be compared to the grain in a piece of wood.... A piece of wood may be of good quality, but if it has a knot or burl, it cannot be sawed easily; it is not useful. The Christians who do not have any peculiarity, any peculiar traits, are the ones who grow the most and the fastest.... In the service the ones who are the most useful are the ones who always reject and deny what they are.

In the first few years of our spiritual life, we may have grown quickly. However, our growth may have slowed down or even come to a standstill because of our disposition.... We must learn to take care of the “burl” in our makeup, our disposition. If we deal with the “burl,” we will grow quickly and have a free way in our spiritual life without any hindrances to our growth in life. We will also become more useful to the Lord.

If all the saints, especially those who are being trained to serve the Lord full time, kill their disposition, everything will be very good. Otherwise, each trained one becomes a potential problem to the church. If we pick up the training and practice it with our ambition and capacity, trouble will be the result.... How useful you will be to the Lord or how much trouble you will make to the church depends upon how much your disposition is killed. Therefore, dealing with the disposition is a crucial matter. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, “The Experience and Growth in Life,” pp. 150, 153, 148)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, “The Experience and Growth in Life,” msgs. 13, 21-25

WEEK 6 — DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 3:5-6 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves...; but our sufficiency is from God, who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

What kind of person is useful to the Lord?... First, he must love and desire the Lord. Do not even talk about being used by the Lord if you do not love and desire Him.... Second, he must have a vision of the Lord and an encounter with Him. He needs to have a revelation that God's eternal purpose is to work Christ into us and to express Christ through us.... Third, his self, his person, must have been dealt with by the cross. He must realize that whatever he has and whatever comes out of him cannot be brought into the Lord's service.... Only when you have seen that you are fleshly and nothing but a thornbush, a leper, and a natural man will you treasure the experience of the cross. This can be called the revelation of the natural man or the revelation of the cross. After you have a heart to love the Lord, you must have at least two revelations, one concerning Christ and the other concerning the self, which also concerns the cross.

However, these three aspects are not sufficient. With these you can do something valuable but nothing extensive. You will surely dispense Christ and minister Christ, though perhaps only once a year, or to one person in six months. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 3, "Character," p. 577)

Today's Reading

The fourth aspect [is] the aspect of character... We do not minister our character to others, but we bear Christ to them by our character. For

example, a certain brother may be absent-minded and forgetful. Can his forgetful character replace the Christ whom he knows inwardly? Not at all. But his character greatly affects his service. He must make up this lack if he wants to be suitable for the Lord's use. He must learn to remember things. He should carry a pocket notebook to record things that need to be done. This is just a small example.

Since we have consecrated ourselves to the Lord and have given up our future and everything to serve Him, we should be very useful. Unfortunately, we are extremely limited by our disposition and, as a result, too little of our function is manifested. If we do not overthrow our old disposition, I am afraid that our usefulness in the hand of the Lord will cease.

The disposition of some brothers reflects a strong self-confidence. They believe that they can do anything and are thus blinded by their self-confidence. After working in one place for a year or two, they may have accomplished nothing.... However, they always feel that this is because of others' shortage and never their own.... You will be useful only if such confidence is overthrown.... If we can break through the constraints of our disposition, the effectiveness of our work will more than triple. Some people do not know how to utilize their environment ... [but] expect their environment to suit them. They refuse to work as long as the circumstances are not perfect or the conditions are not adequate. You must realize that in our work it is almost impossible to have a perfect environment.... It all depends on how flexible we are to adapt to our circumstances and adjust to all environments.... Reject the disposition that requires a particular environment before you can work. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 3, "Character," pp. 578-579, 588-589)

The ministers of the new covenant...worked together with God by a life (not by any gift) that was all-sufficient and all-mature, able to fit all situations, that is, able to endure any kind of treatment, to accept any kind of environment, to work in any kind of condition, and to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of their ministry. (2 Cor. 6:1, footnote 1)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1953, vol. 3, "Character," chs. 3, 5-7; CWWL, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 225-241, 449-454

WEEK 6 — DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 19:25-26 And when the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, Who then can be saved? And looking upon them, Jesus said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Our disposition is expressed in many forms. One type is that of the “hero.” Brothers or sisters who have this type of disposition must do everything in an impressive, perfect, and complete way. If they are to speak, they must do it in an outstanding way, or they will not speak. They are also very strong and quick in doing things.... Another type, the “non-hero” does not do anything in a thorough or complete way. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, “The Experience and Growth in Life,” p. 144)

Today’s Reading

Second Kings 4 gives us the account of the Shunammite woman’s reception of Elisha. The Bible says...”there was a wealthy woman..., who compelled him to have a meal. So whenever he passed through, he would turn aside and have a meal there. And she said to her husband, Now I know that this man who continually passes through unto us is a holy man of God” (vv. 8-9). Elisha... did not give one message or perform one miracle. Every time he passed through, he turned aside and had a meal there. The woman identified him as a man of God by the way he took his meal.

Today we have to ask ourselves, “What is the impression that we give to others?”... If the outer man is not broken, the impression that others receive from us will be nothing but the outer man. Every time we contact others, we may give them an unpleasant feeling that we are self-loving, stubborn, and proud or...clever and extremely eloquent. Perhaps we give others a so-called good impression.... God is not satisfied, and the church has no need of our so-called good impressions.

Brothers, God requires that our spirit be released, and the church also

requires that our spirit be released. We have a... crucial need: Our outer man must be broken. If the outer man is not broken, our spirit will not be released, and the impression we give to others will not be an impression of the spirit.

A brother once was speaking on the subject of the Holy Spirit, but all his words, attitude, and stories exposed him as a man full of the self. While others were listening, they were uncomfortable.... His words were on the Holy Spirit, but the impression he gave to others was of his self.... If our person is not dealt with, we will be of little use to God's work. If the Lord breaks our outer man, we will no longer present others with our strong self when we touch them. Instead, our spirit will flow out whenever we touch men. (CWWN, vol. 54, "The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit," pp. 238-239, 244-245)

In the four Gospels Peter's most difficult dealing before the Lord was related to his disposition. Even by the time of Galatians 2:11-21, Peter's disposition had not yet been thoroughly dealt with.... According to the record of the whole New Testament, however, Peter eventually broke through. In Galatians 2 Paul rebuked Peter to his face because Peter still lived in his disposition to some degree, but in 2 Peter 3:15-16 Peter highly commended Paul. If Peter had been still living in his disposition, he would not have made such a strong commendation of the one who rebuked him. Rebuking offends people, but Peter was not offended. This may indicate that the "burl," the troublemaking factor, had been removed from him.

By man's hand there is no way to remove the factor of the disposition, but in the Lord's hand there is a way. In Matthew 19:25 the disciples asked the Lord, "Who then can be saved?" The Lord replied, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (v. 26).... It is impossible for us to break through the problem of our disposition, but it is possible for the Lord to do it. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, "The Experience and Growth in Life," pp. 152-153)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 54, "The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit," chs. 6-8

WEEK 6 — DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

We have Christ as the treasure in a poor earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7). We may think that we are quite good, but in reality we are not good.... None of us is better than others; we are all descendants of Adam with the same fallen nature.

We need to realize that the natural life is the enemy of God and of Christ.... If we intend to follow the Lord, the first condition is that we deny ourselves and apply the killing power of the cross to the self constantly [cf. Matt. 16:24]. We need to... [let] the cross put the self to death. In order to follow the Lord, we do not need teaching; neither do we need to be adjusted in our behavior. Rather, we need to be put to death; we need to be broken. (CWWL, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 450-451)

Today's Reading

Our disposition is our self.... It is in us, and it is us. Our disposition makes it hard for us to release our spirit.... The breaking of the outer man is the breaking of our disposition.... It is easier to deal with our disposition when we are young. (CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, "The Experience and Growth in Life," p. 138)

Watchman Nee saw that what we are by nature means nothing; only what the Spirit constitutes within our being counts. Whatever we are by birth, whether good or bad, whether useful or not, is natural and altogether a hindrance to the Holy Spirit in constituting the divine life into our being. For this reason our natural strength, natural wisdom, natural cleverness, natural disposition, natural shortcomings, natural virtues, and natural

attributes, plus our character and habits, must all be torn down in order that the Holy Spirit may form in us a new disposition, new character, new habits, new virtues, and new attributes. In order to accomplish this work of reconstitution, the Holy Spirit of God moves within us to enlighten, inspire, lead, and saturate us with the divine life. He also works in our environment to arrange every detail, person, matter, and thing in our situation to tear down what we are naturally. He may arrange to place a certain person in our home in order to tear down our natural quickness or slowness. He may arrange certain matters to abolish our natural cleverness or dullness. He may arrange another situation to tear down our natural wisdom or folly. He uses all kinds of persons, matters, and things to tear down all aspects of our natural being in order that He may conform us to the image of Christ. (Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, pp. 115-116)

The Lord often chastises us, but we turn our attention to men and take the wrong track. Our attitude before the Lord should be as the psalmist said, “I did not open my mouth; for You have done this” (Psa. 39:9). We have to remember that it is not our brother, sister, friends and relatives, or any other person who is dealing with us. It is God who is dealing with us. We have to see this. We have to realize that the Lord has been disciplining us and dealing with us all these years. Because of our ignorance we have put the blame on others or even on fate. This is total ignorance of God’s hand. It is wrong. We have to remember that everything has been measured to us by our God. The amount, the length, and the intensity of what befalls us are all measured by Him. He orders everything around us, the only purpose of which is to break our conspicuous, obtuse, and hard spots. May the Lord be gracious to us and show us the meaning of His work in us. May He grant us much light to expose us and to humble us. (CWWN, vol. 54, “The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit,” p. 244)

Further Reading: Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, chs. 15-17; CWWN, vol. 57, ch. 25; CWWN, vol. 52, “The Character of the Lord’s Worker,” ch. 3

WEEK 6 — DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 25:26 And after that his brother came forth, and his hand was holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob...

47:7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

When speaking of the natural constitution, Jacob, in the book of Genesis, is the best representative.... The most outstanding characteristic in the entire life of Jacob is his natural endeavoring and scheming. All those who scheme are inevitably crafty. So also was Jacob. His craftiness was but the superficial expression; his natural constitution was his hidden characteristic. Before Jacob became matured, all his history revealed his natural constitution. He was able, resourceful, full of schemes, and very capable and skillful; he was truly one who was exceedingly strong in the natural constitution.

The afflictions, sufferings, and troubles that beset him were for the breaking of his natural constitution.... When Jacob's natural constitution was thoroughly broken, his life in God attained to a mature and full stage.... He was no more a supplanter (the meaning of Jacob) but a prince of God (the meaning of Israel). (CWWL, 1953, vol. 3, "The Experience of Life," pp. 413-415)

Today's Reading

God's breaking is not a matter of being cruel to us but of being gracious to us.... What He tears down is our worthless self. However, what God builds into us is Himself, the peerless and infinite One. The end of the Bible shows the New Jerusalem with the tree of life.... The New Jerusalem is a structure built with pure gold, pearl, and precious stones, all of which refer to God Himself. The New Jerusalem is just God Himself in essence, appearance, nature, and glory.

Jacob's life shows that a natural person must pass through breaking in order to become Israel, that is, a prince of God. For a person to be filled with God's element, he must pass through the process of breaking. This is what Jacob represents in the Bible.... His name Jacob means "heel holder, supplanter" (Gen. 25:26). He was a person full of schemes and plots, but he was broken, torn down, and dealt with by God again and again to the point that God changed his name and called him Israel (32:28), meaning "prince of God."...This means that after passing through God's breaking, Jacob was filled with the element of God. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," pp. 338, 336)

The record of Jacob's life... shows us that the purpose of God in His selecting, predestinating, and calling is to transform sinners into royal sons of God who bear God's image to express Him and exercise God's dominion to represent Him (cf. Gen. 1:26). God destined Jacob to live a struggling life all his days. Furthermore, God sovereignly arranged every circumstance, situation, and person in Jacob's life and caused them all to work together for Jacob's good, so that He could transform Jacob, a supplanter and a heel holder, into Israel, a prince of God.... God's dealing with Jacob is a full picture of the Holy Spirit's discipline and His transforming work in the New Testament believers (Rom. 8:28-29; 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). (Gen. 25:26, footnote 1)

The strongest manifestation of Jacob's maturity in life is the fact that Jacob blessed everyone, including Pharaoh (Gen. 47:7, 10), Jacob's two grandsons (ch. 48), and his own twelve sons (49:1-28). Jacob's supplanting hands became blessing hands (48:14-16). Maturity in life is a matter of being filled with God as life, and blessing is the overflow of life, the overflow of God through the maturity in life. To bless others is to bring them into the presence of God and to bring God into them as grace, love, and fellowship that they may enjoy the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (14:18-19; Num. 6:23-27; 2 Cor. 13:14). That Jacob blessed Pharaoh indicates that he was greater than Pharaoh (Heb. 7:7). (Gen. 47:7, footnote 1)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1953, vol. 3, "The Experience of Life," chs. 11-12; CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," chs. 19-20; Life-study of Genesis, msg. 67

<< **WEEK 6 — HYMN** >>

Hymns, #840 Freed from self and Adam's nature

The Church — Her Building

- 1 Freed from self and Adam's nature,
 Lord, I would be built by Thee
With the saints into Thy temple,
 Where Thy glory we shall see.
From peculiar traits deliver,
 From my independent ways,
That a dwelling place for Thee, Lord,
 We will be thru all our days.
- 2 By Thy life and by its flowing
 I can grow and be transformed,
With the saints coordinated,
 Builded up, to Thee conformed;
Keep the order in the Body,
 There to function in Thy will,
Ever serving, helping others,
 All Thy purpose to fulfill.
- 3 In my knowledge and experience
 I would not exalted be,
But submitting and accepting
 Let the Body balance me;
Holding fast the Head, and growing
 With His increase, in His way,
By the joints and bands supplying,
 Knit together day by day.
- 4 By Thy Spirit daily strengthened
 In the inner man with might,
I would know Thy love surpassing,
 Know Thy breadth and length and height;
Ever of Thy riches taking,

Unto all Thy fulness filled,
Ever growing into manhood,
That Thy Body Thou may build.

5 In God's house and in Thy Body
Built up I long to be,
That within this corporate vessel
All shall then Thy glory see;
That Thy Bride, the glorious city,
May appear upon the earth,
As a lampstand brightly beaming
To express to all Thy worth.