

**KNOWING, EXPERIENCING, AND LIVING
THE ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST
FOR THE GENUINE CHURCH LIFE**

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

**Being Brought Back to Christ Himself
for the Genuine Church Life**

RK Hymns: 542

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:8, 14-18; Phil. 3:3-16; Col. 1:15-18; 3:10-11

- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,
Eph 3:15 Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named,
Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,
Phil 3:4 Though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:
Phil 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;
Phil 3:6 As to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.
Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
Phil 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.
Phil 3:16 Nevertheless whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk.
Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
Col 1:16 Because in Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and unto Him.
Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and all things cohere in Him;
Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

I. We, believers in Christ and children of God, need to be freed from all distractions and brought back to Christ Himself—Eph. 3:8, 14-18; Col. 3:10-11:

- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,
- Eph 3:15 Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named,
- Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- A. God wants Christ to be the center of all things and to have the first place in all things—Christ being all and in all—1:15-18.
- Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation,
- Col 1:16 Because in Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and unto Him.
- Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and all things cohere in Him;
- Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- B. Christ is wonderful; He is the wonder of the entire universe, and every item of what Christ is, is wonderful—Isa. 9:6; Judg. 13:18; Eph. 3:8.
- Isa 9:6 For a child is born to us, / A Son is given to us; / And the government / Is upon His shoulder; / And His name will be called / Wonderful Counselor, / Mighty God, / Eternal Father, / Prince of Peace.
- Judg 13:18 And the Angel of Jehovah said to him, Why do you ask about My name, since it is wonderful?
- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- C. God's will, which is His eternal purpose and desire in the universe, is that Christ be everything to us and be wrought into us as our life and everything—v. 17a.
- Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...
- D. Paul wrote his Epistles because he was clear that many good things, such as doctrines, ethics, morality, teachings, and culture, are distractions from Christ—Phil. 3:4-8:
- Phil 3:4 Though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:
- Phil 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;
- Phil 3:6 As to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.
- Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
1. The apostle Paul shows us that these things are not Christ Himself, and he indicates that if they distract us from Christ, they are versus Christ—1 Cor. 7:35.
- 1 Cor 7:35 But this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a noose upon you but that you may be comely and may wait on the Lord without distraction.

2. When we turn away from all distractions and turn to Christ, we will be brought back to Christ Himself so that we may know Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, express Christ, and be constituted with Christ—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 3:9-10.
 - 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 in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
 - Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
 - Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- E. In Philippians 3:3-16 Christ is presented as the goal of the believers' pursuit:
- Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,
 - Phil 3:4 Though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:
 - Phil 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;
 - Phil 3:6 As to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.
 - Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
 - Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
 - Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
 - Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
 - Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.
 - Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
 - Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.
 - Phil 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.
 - Phil 3:16 Nevertheless whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk.
1. On account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul counted all things to be loss—v. 8a.
 - Phil 3:8a But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, ...
 2. Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse in order to gain Christ—vv. 7, 8b.
 - Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
 - Phil 3:8b ... on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
 3. Paul's earnest desire was to be found in Christ—v. 9.
 - Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
 4. The necessary condition of being found in Christ is not having our own righteousness but the righteousness of God through faith in Christ—v. 9.
 - Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

5. Paul aspired to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings—v. 10.
Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 6. In Philippians 3:10 Paul speaks of being conformed to Christ's death; this indicates that Paul desired to take Christ's death as the mold of his life.
Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 7. Paul experienced Christ as the drink offering and became a drink offering that was poured out upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith—2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6.
Phil 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you all.
2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand.
- F. We need to see a heavenly vision of God's intention to make Christ everything to us:
1. If we receive new mercy and grace from the Lord, we will be able to drop all the good things—even the best things—and stretch forward to lay hold of Christ Himself—Phil. 3:7-8, 13.
Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
Phil 3:13 Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before,
 2. We need to pray that Christ will be everything to us in our daily life—Col. 3:17:
Col 3:17 And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
 - a. As we are doing various things, we should apply Christ in what we are doing.
 - b. Every day we need to pray for new experiences of Christ—the One who dwells in us to be our life and everything; this is our great need today— Eph. 3:17a.
Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...

II. The issue of our being brought back to Christ Himself is the genuine church life—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27; Rom. 16:1, 4-5, 16, 20:

- 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,
- Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;
- Rom 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.
- Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
- Rom 16:20 Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
- A. The genuine church life is Christ realized, experienced, and expressed by all the saints in a corporate way—Eph. 3:16-21:
- Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are

Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
 Eph 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us,
 Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

1. God planned the church for the purpose of expressing Christ; thus, the church is the expression of Christ—vv. 9-11, 21.

Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Eph 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,

Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

2. The church life is nothing other than the all-inclusive Christ with His unsearchable riches experienced and enjoyed by us and expressed through us—vv. 8, 21.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

3. If we would have such a church life, we need to be constituted with Christ until all that we are and have is simply Christ Himself, who is all and in all; this is the essence and the substance of the church life—Col. 1:12; 2:9-10, 16-17; 3:4, 10-11; 4:15-16.

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light;

Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,

Col 2:10 And you have been made full in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority.

Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,

Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.

Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

Col 4:15 Greet the brothers in Laodicea, as well as Nymphas and the church, which is in his house.

Col 4:16 And when this letter is read among you, cause that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.

B. The genuine church life is the life of Christ, Christ Himself—3:4; John 11:25:

Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

1. The genuine church life is not a matter of teaching or doctrine; rather, it is a life in which Christ Himself is realized, experienced, enjoyed, expressed, and exhibited by us—Phil. 3:10.

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

2. The genuine church life can be realized only by the experience of Christ in our daily life—Rom. 8:9-11, 17.

Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

- Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
- Rom 8:17 And if children, heirs also; on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other, joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.

C. The way to realize the genuine church life is to experience Christ as everything to us—Col. 1:27; 2:17; 3:1, 4, 10-11, 15-17:

- Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,
- Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.
- Col 3:1 If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
- Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- Col 3:17 And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1. The genuine church life comes from the genuine inner enjoyment of Christ— Eph. 3:17a.

Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...

2. The development of Christ into our inward being issues in the genuine church life— 4:13, 15-16.

Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

3. In order to have a church life to express Christ according to God's eternal purpose, our soul must be subdued and saturated with Christ as the Spirit— 1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 3:17a; Gal. 4:19; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17.

1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...

Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

1 Cor 15:45b ...the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

2 Cor 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

D. The genuine church life requires us to take up our cross and follow Him—Matt. 10:38:

Matt 10:38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

1. We, His believers, were crucified with Christ, and now we must bear the cross—Gal. 2:20; Matt. 16:24.

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 in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Matt 16:24 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.

2. The self must be crossed out so that Christ can come to be the reality of the church life—vv. 23-24; Rom. 6:5.
 - Matt 16:23 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.
 - Matt 16:24 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.
 - Rom 6:5 For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection,
 3. There is no other way to realize the genuine church life but to deny our natural life and the soul-life and follow the Lord in our spirit—Matt. 16:24-27.
 - Matt 16:24 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.
 - Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
 - Matt 16:26 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?
 - Matt 16:27 For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings.
- E. The genuine church life is through the inner experience of the indwelling Christ— Eph. 3:16-17a; 4:12, 16; 2:21-22:
- Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
 - Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...
 - Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
 - Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
 - Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
 - Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
1. The entire New Testament is filled with the revelation of the indwelling Christ—Rom. 5:10, 17; Gal 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; 1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 30; Phil. 1:20b-21a; Col. 1:27.
 - Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,
 - Rom 5:17 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 will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.
 - Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,
 - Gal 1:16 To reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood,
 - 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 in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
 - Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
 - 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
 - 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - 1 Cor 1:24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
 - 1 Cor 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

- Phil 1:20b ...but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,
2. In Ephesians 3:16-21 Paul prayed that we would be strengthened with power into the inner man with the result that Christ could make His home in our hearts and thereby occupy, possess, permeate, and saturate our whole inner being with Himself—vv. 16-17a.
- Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- Eph 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us,
- Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.
3. When Christ is able to make His home in our hearts, occupying all the inward parts of our being, we will be able to have the genuine church life—2:21-22; 4:12, 16.
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- F. In order for us to have the genuine church life, we need to experience and enjoy the riches of Christ—3:8:
- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
1. The genuine church life is not an organization; it is in our spirit, which is nourished with the riches of Christ until we are filled unto all the fullness of God—v. 8.
- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
2. The genuine church life is a corporate life of seeking believers who are filled with the riches of Christ unto all the fullness of God, that is, unto the expression of the Triune God—v. 19.
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
3. It is through the inner experience of the indwelling Christ that we apprehend with all the saints the unlimited measure of Christ and have the genuine church life for the building up of the Body of Christ—vv. 17-18; 2:21-22; 4:16.
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
4. If we all experience and enjoy the riches of Christ, the genuine church life as the fullness, the expression, of Christ will be produced spontaneously—3:8, 17a; 2:22.
- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
- G. All the saints need to experience something of Christ in their daily life and come together with the Christ whom they have experienced to exhibit this Christ, to share Him with one another, and to enjoy Him with God the Father for His pleasure; this is the genuine church life—1 Cor. 14:26; Heb. 10:25.
- 1 Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.
- Heb 10:25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

BEING RECOVERED BACK TO CHRIST HIMSELF

Scripture Reading: Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17; Phil. 3:7-8

THE CENTRAL THOUGHT OF GOD

In this chapter I have the burden to share something concerning God's intention. God's intention is His eternal purpose, which comes out of His heart's desire (Eph. 1:9-11; 3:9-11). As Christians, we must be very clear concerning God's eternal purpose, for to know God's eternal purpose is to know the central thought of God's intention, which has everything to do with the all-inclusive Christ. In the all-inclusive Christ we have God, man, the Creator, the creature, the Redeemer, redemption, the divine life, the human life, and many other positive matters. God's intention from His heart's desire is to work this wonderful all-inclusive Christ into us (Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-17).

Christianity as a religion has missed the mark of God's purpose and has lost sight of the central thought of God. Many Christians know God and have experienced His salvation to some extent, but few know that God's central purpose is to work Christ into us. This is because not many believers realize that the purpose of God's salvation involves more than cleansing us from our sins, saving us from hell, and rescuing us from sorrow. As believers in Christ, we realize that God loves us, that we are sinful, and that our destiny apart from Christ is to go to the lake of fire. We also recognize the fact that we need certain things of God, such as peace and joy. However, we may never have realized that God's intention and the purpose of His salvation is to work the all-inclusive Christ into us as our strength, light, guidance, health, knowledge, wisdom, and everything. It was for this purpose that God created us as vessels in His image to contain Him as our content (Gen. 1:26; 2:7, 9; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7).

DISTRACTIONS FROM CHRIST AS REVEALED IN PAUL'S EPISTLES

In the years immediately following Christ's ministry on the earth, many Christians became distracted from Christ and were drawn away to the Old Testament law, Jewish religion and tradition, doctrine, philosophy, and supernatural gifts. Although these things may be good, they are not Christ Himself. Paul wrote his Epistles for the purpose of dealing with these distractions. He wrote the Epistle to the Galatians in order to deal with the problem of the law (1:6; 2:16; 3:2, 18, 24-25; 4:9-10, 21; 5:1-4). Although the law was given by God Himself, Paul had to deal with it strongly because it had

become an element that distracted the Galatian believers from Christ. When the Hebrew believers became distracted by Judaism, Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which he dealt with the Jewish religion (1:4; 3:3; 4:14; 8:6-7). Although Judaism was the best religion, both it and its accompanying regulations, rules, and forms had become factors that distracted people from Christ. Paul also wrote to the Ephesians to warn them against becoming distracted by doctrines and teachings and to exhort them to hold to the truth, which is Christ Himself (4:14-15). He wrote the Epistle to the Colossians to deal with human philosophy, or worldly rudimentary teachings, which distracted the believers from Christ (2:8, 16-18, 20-21). First Corinthians reveals that the Head, Christ, gave the gifts to His Body to bring people to Himself and to build up the church as the Body of Christ (12:1, 4-11, 27-28; 14:4b-5, 12, 26, 31). Nevertheless, these gifts had become factors that distracted the Corinthians from Christ. Paul wrote his Epistles because he was clear that many good things, including the God-given law, the Jewish religion, correct doctrines, human philosophy, and spiritual gifts, had become substitutes for Christ. Although these things are for Christ when they are used properly, the enemy of God utilizes them to distract people from Christ.

The apostle Paul shows in his Epistles that these things are not Christ Himself and indicates that if they distract us from Christ, they are versus Christ. While we should not think that the law is evil, we should realize that it is versus Christ. It is the same with the Jewish religion. It is good—much better than the pagan religions—but it is versus Christ. The same is true with doctrines and human philosophy. I believe that philosophy is mankind's best invention, but it is nevertheless versus Christ. Spiritual gifts also can be versus Christ. Today all these things are under the hand of God's enemy, who utilizes them to distract people from God's eternal purpose and central thought, which is to work Christ into us.

PAYING ATTENTION TO CHRIST ALONE

I am concerned that we, like the recipients of Paul's letters, may pay our attention to many things other than Christ. We need to be clear that God's intention, purpose, and desire have everything to do with Christ. Christ is the center of all things (Col. 1:17). He is the reality of all positive things (2:16-17). He is the center and circumference, the "hub" and the "rim," in God's eternal purpose, having the first place in all things (1:18). For a period of time as a young believer, I paid attention to Bible knowledge. Since that time I passed through several periods in which I focused on other matters. Now I focus on nothing but the all-inclusive Christ, who is subjective to me in my experience.

Not Paying Attention to Doctrines and Teachings

I once told a group of believers that doctrines, teachings, and scriptural knowledge, in and of themselves, do Christians little good. I emphasized to them that our need is not these things but the subjective experience of the living Christ. I told them that although I had studied the Scriptures and written many notes in my Bible, I had nothing if I did not have the experience of Christ. Doctrines and knowledge matter little; only Christ matters. The law was given by God for the purpose of conducting people to Christ (Gal. 3:24). However, the enemy of God utilized the law to distract people from Christ. In his subtlety the enemy took something that God gave for the purpose of bringing people to Christ and used it to distract people from Christ.

The doctrines in the Scriptures are descriptions, explanations, and revelations of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39). Nevertheless, people today are greatly distracted by the enemy through these very doctrines. As a result, they lose sight of Christ. A brother once questioned me concerning my knowledge of absolute grace, eternal security, and Calvinism. I told him that even if he were to know every Christian doctrine but did not have Christ, he would not have grace. No matter how "absolute" his grace was, if he did not have Christ, all he had was an empty doctrine of grace. I also told him that the amount of eternal security he had likewise depended upon how much Christ he had. If he had Christ, he had security, for Christ Himself is the security; conversely, if he did not have Christ, even if

he believed in eternal security, he did not possess genuine security. I concluded by asking him whether he knew about justification by faith. He responded that he had many books by Martin Luther on the subject and knew much about it. Again I told him that if he did not have Christ, no matter how much he believed in justification by faith, he would not possess such justification unless he experienced Christ Himself as his justification. We need to realize that it is not doctrines that matter, but Christ. All our doctrines must be for Christ, because doctrines are definitions, explanations, and revelations of Christ. If we separate biblical doctrines from Christ, we make the doctrines empty. We should never separate doctrine from Christ Himself, for Christ Himself is the reality of every doctrine.

Not Paying Attention to Philosophy and Ethics

While Christianity has many good things, it is philosophy in particular that has invaded Christianity. The teachings and ethics found in philosophy may be considered mankind's best development. Nevertheless, philosophy is not Christ.

We do not realize how much we have been influenced by human philosophy. Whether we were raised in the Far East or in the West, we have been greatly influenced by human philosophy in the realm of ethics. On the day that we received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, our first thought might have been that from that day forward we had to do good deeds. We might also have thought that as a saved one, we needed to please God. Where did we receive such thoughts? We received them from the influence of human philosophy.

Before we were saved, we were influenced greatly by human philosophy and ethics because we were taught these things from our birth. It took more than twenty years after I was saved for the influence of human philosophy to be removed from me. I am concerned that even now many of us have the thought that because we were in the world in the past, we must now be revived, come back to God, and please Him. Certainly we all need to be revived, but the inclination to be revived in order to please God may be due to our ethical concept. Ethics are very much versus Christ and distract us from Christ.

May the Lord open our eyes to see that what we need is not to be good but to have Christ as our life and our everything. We need to turn not so much from evil things to good things but from not living by Christ as our life to living by Christ as our life. We need to see a heavenly vision of God's intention to make Christ everything to us. Day by day our need is to pay attention to nothing but Christ (Matt. 17:4-5). I believe that one day the Lord will open our eyes so that we will see Christ in this way. When we receive such a vision, we will repent of many good things that are apart from Christ, such as our humility, our zeal for the Christian faith, and even our love for Christ.

Not Paying Attention to Christian Activities and Movements

In addition to teachings and philosophy, Christianity today has many activities, programs, and movements. For example, there is the movement of speaking in tongues, the movement of healing, and the so-called evangelical movement. However, the issue is not how many movements and activities we are involved in, but how much of Christ we have. Although we may attend Christian meetings daily, I am concerned that what we are receiving in those meetings is merely doctrines, gifts, ethical teachings, and activities. If we are filled with these things, we will not have much room for Christ.

BEING RECOVERED TO CHRIST HIMSELF

If we see today's situation in this light, we will turn away from these many distractions and turn to Christ. In general, our direction as Christians is away from Christ. We should have only one direction—Christ Himself. Many believers today are for many good things other than Christ. They even pursue these distracting things in Christ's name. However, although they may have Christ in name, Christ is very distant from their daily experience. Such believers "respect" Christ so much that they exalt Christ to the heavens and do not allow Him to descend into their daily situations. Many even think that by pursuing various good things, they are exalting Christ. In reality, such pursuing in the name of

Christ is devoid of the living reality of Christ's person. Many believers have doctrines concerning Christ, but they do not have Christ Himself in their experience.

I have been fighting an intense battle concerning this point. In these last days the main item that the Lord is recovering in His recovery is the genuine experience of Christ. The Lord is concerned not mainly with recovering various forms or doctrines. Rather, He as the living One wants to recover our experience of Himself as our life and our everything in our daily life.

PRAYING TO SEE THE PRESENT, LIVING, UP-TO-DATE CHRIST

I simply bring this matter to you and urge you to go to the Lord and open yourself to Him. You may tell Him, "Lord, I have heard something about You and have seen something concerning Your eternal purpose. You want to be everything to me. Lord, expose me in Your light and in Your presence. Show me where and what I am." If you are open to the Lord in this way, you will see something.

For some time I have been concerned that many of us may know many things as Christians. Everything we know can be utilized by the enemy to blind us, veil us, and inhibit us from seeing Christ. We all need to pray to see the vision of Christ being life and everything to us in our daily life. We need to apprehend the present light, the present revelation, the present vision, and the present seeing of Christ. We should never be satisfied with what we have attained in the past. We must receive new mercy and grace from the Lord so that we may be able to drop all the good things—even the best things—and stretch forward to lay hold of Christ Himself (Phil. 3:7-8, 13).

The church in Laodicea was satisfied with what it had attained (Rev. 3:17). What the saints in Laodicea possessed became a veil that covered their eyes. For this reason the Lord counseled them to buy eyesalve that they might see (v. 18). The real eyesalve is the dropping of everything that we have. If there is a handkerchief covering my eyes, the best "eyesalve" is simply to drop the handkerchief. Today we have many things that have become veils to us. As a result, many of us are under veil after veil.

Many of the things that we have were originally given to us by God. However, because these things have become old to us, they have become dead in our experience and have become veils to us. These are the things that we must drop. It is not enough to drop the evil and wrong things; we must drop even the good and right things that have become old. We are not for the "good old way." Even if something is good, it does not benefit us if it has become old and tasteless. For this reason the longer we practice the old way, the more dissatisfied we become.

What we need today is the present, living, up-to-date Christ. There is no change with Christ Himself (Heb. 13:8); however, we need a great change in our experience of Him. We must have an understanding, realization, and experience of Christ that is living, new, fresh, up to date, and present. My burden is not to give the Lord's children more doctrines and teachings; my burden is that the Lord would open our eyes and bring us into the new experience of Himself. We should not be content with what we have. We need to drop all our old experiences, drop what we have attained in the past, and retain nothing in our hands. We should simply open ourselves to the Lord with empty hands, looking unto Him for a new experience of Him as the living One. This is our great need today.

Prayer: Lord, we cry out to You that in these days You would release us from all teaching, tradition, religion, and even so-called Christianity. Lord, we need Your releasing. We commit ourselves into Your hands. Break through so that we may be set free from all these things. Lord, in these days keep us in Your vision. Eliminate all the things that veil us so that we may see You, the living One, and so that You may be revealed in us. Lord, we claim Your victory in this matter. Cause us to know and experience You in a living way in these days, even at this very moment. Bring us all into the experience of who You are. We pray this in Your prevailing name. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1964, vol. 2, pp. 81-87*)