

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

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

**Allowing the Peace of Christ to Arbitrate in Our Hearts,
Letting the Word of Christ Dwell in Us Richly,
and Persevering in Prayer for the Genuine Church Life**

MC Hymns: Psalm 36:8-9 (tune #367)

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:15-16; 4:2

- 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 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,

**I. We need to allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts—Col. 3:12-15;
Eph. 2:14-18; Rom. 5:1; Matt. 18:21-35:**

- Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, inward parts of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering;
- Col 3:13 Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive.
- Col 3:14 And over all these things put on love, which is the uniting bond of perfectness.
- 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.
- Eph 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity,
- Eph 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,
- Eph 2:16 And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it.
- Eph 2:17 And coming, He announced peace as the gospel to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near,
- Eph 2:18 For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father.
- Rom 5:1 Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- Matt 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?
- Matt 18:22 Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy times seven.
- Matt 18:23 For this reason the kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who desired to settle accounts with his slaves.
- Matt 18:24 And when he began to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.
- Matt 18:25 But since he did not have the means to repay, the master commanded him to be sold, as well as his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.
- Matt 18:26 Then the slave fell down and worshipped him, saying, Be patient with me and I will repay you all.
- Matt 18:27 And the master of that slave was moved with compassion and released him and forgave him the loan.
- Matt 18:28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and he took hold of him and began to choke him, saying, Repay me what you owe.
- Matt 18:29 Then his fellow slave fell down and begged him, saying, Be patient with me and I will repay you.

- Matt 18:30 But he would not; instead, he went away and threw him into prison until he would repay what was owed.
- Matt 18:31 Then his fellow slaves, seeing what had taken place, were greatly grieved and came and explained fully to their master all that had taken place.
- Matt 18:32 Then his master called him to him and said to him, Evil slave, all that debt I forgave you, because you begged me.
- Matt 18:33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave even as I had mercy on you?
- Matt 18:34 And his master became angry and delivered him to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed.
- Matt 18:35 So also will My heavenly Father do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts.

- A. The Greek term for *arbitrate* can also be rendered “umpire,” “preside,” or “be enthroned as a ruler and decider of everything”; the arbitrating peace of Christ dissolves our complaint against anyone—Col. 3:13.
 Col 3:13 Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive.
- B. Often we are conscious of three parties within us: a positive party, a negative party, and a neutral party; hence, there is the need for inward arbitration to settle the dispute within us:
1. Whenever we sense that different parties within our being are arguing or quarreling, we need to give place to the presiding peace of Christ and allow this peace, which is the oneness of the new man, to rule within us and have the final word.
 2. We need to set aside our opinion, our concept, and listen to the word of the indwelling referee.
- C. If we allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, this peace will settle all the disputes among us; we will have peace with God vertically and with the saints horizontally:
1. Through the arbitration of the peace of Christ, our problems are solved, and the friction between the saints disappears; then the church life is preserved in sweetness, and the new man is maintained in a practical way.
 2. The arbitrating of the peace of Christ is Christ working within us to exercise His rule over us, to speak the last word, and to make the final decision—cf. Isa. 9:6-7.
 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.
 Isa 9:7 To the increase of His government / And to His peace there is no end, / Upon the throne of David / And over His kingdom, / To establish it / And to uphold it / In justice and righteousness / From now to eternity. / The zeal of Jehovah of hosts / Will accomplish this.
 3. If we stay under the ruling of the enthroned peace of Christ, we will not offend others or damage them; rather, by the Lord’s grace and with His peace, we will minister life to others.
 4. This peace should bind all the believers together and become the uniting bond—Eph. 4:3.
 Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

II. We need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly—Col. 3:16:

- 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.
- A. We need to allow the word of the Lord to have the first place in us and to inhabit us so that we may experience the functions of the word of God operating within us and ministering the riches of Christ into our being:
1. The word of God enlightens us (Psa. 119:105, 130), nourishes us (Matt. 4:4; 1 Tim. 4:6), and waters us to quench our thirst (Isa. 55:1, 8-11).
 Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet / And a light to my path.

- Psa 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple.
 Matt 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."
 1 Tim 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.
 Isa 55:1 Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, / And you who have no money; / Come, buy and eat; / Yes, come, buy wine and milk / Without money and without price.
 Isa 55:8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, / And your ways are not My ways, declares Jehovah.
 Isa 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, / So My ways are higher than your ways, / And My thoughts higher than your thoughts.
 Isa 55:10 For just as the rain comes down / And the snow from heaven, / And does not return there, / Until it waters the earth / And makes it bear and sprout forth, / That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
 Isa 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; / It will not return to Me vainly, / But it will accomplish what I delight in, / And it will prosper in the matter to which I have sent it.
2. The word of God strengthens us (1 John 2:14b; Prov. 4:20-22), washes us (Eph. 5:26), and builds us up (Acts 20:32).
 1 John 2:14b ... I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.
 Prov 4:20 My son, be attentive to my words; / Incline your ear to my sayings.
 Prov 4:21 Do not let them depart from your sight; / Keep them in the midst of your heart.
 Prov 4:22 For they are life to those who find them, / And healing to all their flesh.
 Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
 Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.
3. The word of God completes, perfects (2 Tim. 3:15-17), and sanctifies us to bring us into the oneness in the Triune God (John 17:14-21).
 2 Tim 3:15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.
 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
 2 Tim 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.
 John 17:14 I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.
 John 17:15 I do not ask that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of the hands of the evil one.
 John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
 John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
 John 17:18 As you have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.
 John 17:19 And for their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.
 John 17:20 And I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word,
 John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- B. Colossians 3:16 speaks of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, "teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace" in our hearts to God:
1. One way to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly is by singing it; in addition to pray-reading the Word, we need to learn to sing-read and psalm the word of God—Psa. 119:54.
 Psa 119:54 Your statutes have become my songs of praise / In the house of my pilgrimage.

2. Psalming the word of God includes dwelling upon it, musing on it, and enjoying it, thereby giving more opportunity for the word to saturate us (v. 15); singing and psalming the word are excellent ways to exercise our spirit and to be ushered into the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:15; Psa. 47:6-7).

Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.

1 Cor 14:15 What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray also with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing also with the mind.

Psa 47:6 Sing psalms to God, sing psalms; / Sing psalms to our King, sing psalms.

Psa 47:7 For God is the King of all the earth; / Sing psalms with understanding.

3. In singing and psalming God's word, we may use any kind of melody, even a spontaneous one of our own composition; we need to build up the habit of singing and psalming the word day by day.

4. The more we sing and psalm the Lord's word, the more we give opportunity to the word to dwell in us, sink into us, and permeate us with the divine element; then spontaneously, we will live Christ—cf. John 6:57, 63.

John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

- C. Daily we need to practice coming to Christ as the living word in God's written word so that He may speak to us personally as the applied word of the Spirit for Him to be infused into us according to the following life principles—Rev. 19:13; Matt. 4:4; John 5:39-40; 6:63; 8:31-32; 15:7; Deut. 17:18-19:

Rev 19:13 And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God.

Matt 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.

John 5:40 Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

John 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples;

John 8:32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

Deut 17:18 And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write out for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the Levitical priests.

Deut 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, in order that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them,

1. We must open our entire being to the Lord for the inner shining of the divine light and the supplying of the divine life; the one who experiences the greatest amount of transformation is the one who is absolutely open to the Lord—Psa. 119:105; Prov. 20:27; Psa. 139:23-24.

Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet / And a light to my path.

Prov 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, / Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.

Psa 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; / Try me, and know my anxious thoughts;

Psa 139:24 And see if there is some harmful way in me, / And lead me on the eternal way.

2. We must seek the Lord with all our heart—119:2; Mark 12:30.

Psa 119:2 Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, / Who seek Him with all their heart.

Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength."

3. We must deal with anything that separates us from the Lord—Acts 24:16; 2 Tim. 1:3a; 1 John 1:9; cf. Ezek. 1:22, 26.
 - Acts 24:16 Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.
 - 2 Tim 1:3a I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, ...
 - 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - Ezek 1:22 And over the heads of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like the sight of awesome crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.
 - Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.
4. We must humble ourselves before the Lord, putting aside our self-confidence and self-assurance and looking to Him for His mercy and grace—Isa. 66:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:5.
 - Isa 66:1 Thus says Jehovah, / Heaven is My throne, / And the earth the footstool for My feet. / Where then is the house that you will build for Me, / And where is the place of My rest?
 - Isa 66:2 For all these things My hand has made, / And so all these things have come into being, declares Jehovah. / But to this kind of man will I look, to him who is poor / And of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.
 - 1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
5. We must exercise our spirit to pray over and with God's word and exercise our whole being to sing, psalm, and muse on His word—Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15-16; cf. Lev. 11:3.
 - Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
 - Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
 - Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.
 - Psa 119:16 I will take delight in Your statutes; / I will not forget Your word.
 - Lev 11:3 Whatever has a divided hoof, that is, has its hoof split in two, and chews the cud among the beasts, that you may eat.

D. By allowing the word of God to inhabit us, we can become a man of God filled with the breath of God so that we can be fully equipped with God's word as the divine antidote against the decline of the church—2 Tim. 3:14-17.

- 2 Tim 3:14 But you, continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from which ones you have learned them
- 2 Tim 3:15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
- 2 Tim 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

III. We need to persevere in prayer—Col. 4:2-3:

- Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,
 - Col 4:3 Praying at the same time for us also, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ (because of which also I am bound),
- A. We need to allow adequate time for prayer, which will enable us to absorb more of the riches of Christ as the all-inclusive land—1:12; 2:6-7; 4:2:
- 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 2:6 As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him,
 - Col 2:7 Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
 - Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,

1. We need to take time to absorb the Lord, contacting Him in a definite and prevailing way—Luke 8:13; Matt. 14:22-23; 6:6.
 - Luke 8:13 And those on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; yet these have no root, who believe only for a while, and in time of trial they draw back.
 - Matt 14:22 And immediately He compelled the disciples to step into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.
 - Matt 14:23 And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.
 - Matt 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
 2. To meet with God in the morning is not only to meet with Him early in the day; it is also to meet with God in a situation that is full of light; we should go to God alone, without any persons, matters, or things to distract or occupy us—Prov. 4:18; Exo. 33:11a; 34:3-4; Mark 1:35.
 - Prov 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, / Which shines brighter and brighter until the full day.
 - Exo 33:11a And Jehovah would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his companion. ...
 - Exo 34:3 And no one shall come up with you, nor let anyone be seen anywhere on the mountain, nor let the flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain.
 - Exo 34:4 So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, just as Jehovah had commanded him; and he took two tablets of stone in his hand.
 - Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.
 3. When we pray, coming forward to the throne of grace, grace will become a river flowing in us and supplying us—Heb. 4:16; cf. Rev. 22:1.
 - Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.
 - Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- B. In order to fight on God's side against Satan, we need to persevere in prayer— Dan. 6:10:
- Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel came to know that the writing had been signed, he went to his house (in his upper room he had windows open toward Jerusalem) and three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously.
1. As those who take sides with God, we find that the whole fallen universe is against us and, in particular, against our prayer; resistance to prayer lies not only outside of us but even within us—Matt. 26:41.
 - Matt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.
 2. To pray is to go against the current, the trend, in the fallen universe—Luke 18:1-8.
 - Luke 18:1 And He told them a parable to the end that they ought always to pray and not lose heart,
 - Luke 18:2 Saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city who did not fear God and did not regard man.
 - Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Avenge me of my opponent.
 - Luke 18:4 And for a time he would not; but afterward he said within himself, Even though I do not fear God nor regard man,
 - Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow causes me trouble, I will avenge her, lest by continually coming she wear me out.
 - Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.
 - Luke 18:7 And will not God by all means carry out the avenging of His chosen ones, who cry to Him day and night, though He is long-suffering over them?

Luke 18:8 I tell you that He will carry out their avenging quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

- C. We need to set aside definite times for prayer; our attitude should be that prayer is our most important business and that nothing should be allowed to interfere with it—Dan. 6:10; Acts 12:5, 12.

Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel came to know that the writing had been signed, he went to his house (in his upper room he had windows open toward Jerusalem) and three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously.

Acts 12:5 So then Peter was kept in the prison; but prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him.

Acts 12:12 And when he became aware of this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where there was a considerable number assembled together and praying.

- D. We need to remain in an atmosphere of prayer by continually exercising our spirit—Eph. 6:18; 1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:7; Col. 1:3, 9:

Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

Col 1:3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always concerning you,

Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

1. We need to pray without ceasing, to persevere in prayer, keeping ourselves intimately connected to the Lord—1 Thes. 5:17; Matt. 26:41; Col. 2:19.

1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,

Matt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

2. Even in the smallest details we need to inquire of the Lord; to do this is to persevere in prayer and thereby to live Christ—cf. Josh. 9:14; Phil. 4:7-8.

Josh 9:14 And the men took some of their provisions, but they did not ask for the counsel of Jehovah.

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers, what things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous, what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things.

IV. As we are ruled by the peace of Christ and inhabited by the word of Christ through persevering in prayer, He permeates and replaces us with Himself until all our natural distinctions have been eliminated for us to have the genuine church life—Col. 3:15-16; 4:2; 3:10-11.

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 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,

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.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE RULE OF PEACE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE NEW MAN

For the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, it must rule in us. It must be enthroned as the ruler and decider. I believe you all have experienced that Someone has been enthroned in you to rule you and make the final decisions. Let us take as an example a brother who is offended by one of the elders. In my early ministry, I would have encouraged the offended brother to love the elder and not to be offended by him. However, from experience I learned that the more I did this, the more the offended one accused me of taking sides with the elder. Eventually I learned that the best thing is simply to pray that the Lord will have mercy on the brother who has been offended. In His mercy, the Lord will come to him and cause him to set his mind on the things above so that once again he can experience the divine transmission which gives rise to the arbitrating peace of Christ. Then, ruled by the peace of Christ, the brother will admit that even though the elder might have been wrong, he himself was wrong to a greater degree. Immediately he will confess to the Lord, receive grace, and have love for that elder. Through the arbitration of the peace of Christ, our problems are solved, and the friction between the saints disappears. Then the church life is preserved, and the new man is maintained in a practical way.

The church life as the life of the new man is preserved not by mere teachings, but by setting our mind on the things above and allowing the heavenly transmission to impart the divine element into us. Then we shall have the renewing of the new man and experience the peace of Christ ruling within us. The peace of Christ is actually Christ Himself in a particular aspect. Hence, the arbitrating of the peace of Christ is Christ working within us to exercise His rule over us, to speak the last word, and to make the final decision. In the case of the brother offended by the elder, Christ's word is to love that elder, to seek him out for fellowship, and to enjoy the Lord with him. This is Christ enthroned as peace ruling, deciding, and uttering the last word.

In order to have a proper Christian walk and preserve the church life, we need the arbitrating peace of Christ. Otherwise, there will be no way for friction to be dissolved. Only the heavenly Christ, the One who is interceding, ministering, and administrating, can solve our problems and resolve the friction. If a brother and his wife set their mind on Christ in the heavens, they will experience the divine transmission. Then the peace of Christ will arbitrate in them.

In meeting after meeting and in message after message, we desire to minister Christ to the saints. As the saints see the revelation of Christ and experience the arbitrating peace of Christ, the church life will be preserved in freshness.

When the peace of Christ is enthroned in our hearts to be the unique umpire within us, we shall have peace with God vertically and with the saints horizontally. We praise the Lord that we are enjoying peace, and in this peace the church life as the new man is preserved! As the peace of Christ presides in our hearts, the renewing of the new man takes place continually. If we stay under the ruling of the enthroned peace of Christ, we shall not offend others or damage them. Rather, by the Lord's grace and with His peace, we shall minister life to others. The oneness in a local church and among the churches is not maintained by human endeavoring. It is maintained only by the arbitrating peace of Christ. The management and maintenance of the Lord's recovery are not our responsibility. All the churches and the recovery as a whole are under the arbitrating peace of Christ. In us Christ is the supplying grace and the arbitrating peace.

We need to allow the arbitrating peace of Christ to be enthroned in us first. Do not ask the Lord to exercise His sovereign rule over your wife or husband. Instead, pray, "Lord, be enthroned in me and exercise Your rule over me." If instead of praying for yourself to be ruled by the Lord, you ask Him to rule others, the Lord may say, "Let Me first set up My throne in you. Let Me rule you, subdue you, and make the final decisions for you." If we allow the enthroned peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, our married life, family life, and church life will all be preserved in oneness.

May we be encouraged to set our mind on the things above so that the heavenly transmission may bring the divine substance into our being for the renewing of the new man. Then Christ in the particular aspect of peace will arbitrate in our hearts, and the Lord will have a way to build up the new man and prepare the bride for His coming. (*Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 564-566)

IN ALL WISDOM

In Colossians 3:16 Paul tells us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly “in all wisdom.” Have you ever considered what it means for the word of Christ to dwell in you in all wisdom? If we would understand the meaning of this expression, we must differentiate between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is related primarily to the function of the mind, whereas wisdom is related to the function of our spirit. This means that if the word of Christ is to dwell in us in all wisdom, we need to exercise our spirit. If we use our mind to memorize the Word, the Word will then dwell in us in knowledge. Memorizing Bible verses is a function of the mind related to knowledge, not a function of the spirit related to wisdom. For the Word to dwell in us in all wisdom refers to its indwelling every way possible through the exercise of the spirit. Wisdom is deeper, finer, and more profound than knowledge. It comes from the exercise of the spirit.

The difference between knowledge and wisdom can be illustrated in married life. Suppose a brother’s wife is murmuring and even rebukes him. If he fights back by reasoning with her, he will exercise his mind with its knowledge. In this, there is no wisdom. But suppose while his wife is murmuring, he calls on the name of the Lord Jesus and prays. This is wisdom. To reason is related to knowledge, but to pray is related to wisdom. Pray-reading and singing may also be related to wisdom. The brother may also show wisdom by exercising his spirit to share a helpful testimony he heard recently in a church meeting. The point here is that knowledge involves the exercise of the mind, but wisdom involves the exercise of the spirit by such means as praying, pray-reading, singing, and testifying.

When Paul speaks in Colossians 3:16 of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, he does not mention reading, which is an exercise of the mind. Rather, he mentions wisdom, which implies the exercise of the spirit. What issues from the exercise of the spirit is wisdom, but what comes through the exercise of the mind is knowledge.

TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER

In this verse Paul also speaks of “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace” in our hearts to God. Here Paul does not speak of teaching and admonishing in an ordinary way, but of teaching and admonishing in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Furthermore, Paul indicates that it is by singing that we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. We may also teach and admonish by singing.

SINGING TO THE LORD

Because many of us were born into Christianity, raised in Christianity, and even constituted of Christianity, we must admit that, at least to some extent, we are still under the influence of the religion of Christianity, especially in the way we gather together for the meetings. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told that we should gather together and sit quietly, waiting for someone to start the meeting. According to the book of Psalms, when the children of Israel came together for the feasts three times a year, they began their meetings not in the temple, but at the foot of Mount Zion. As they ascended the mountain, they psalmed the songs of ascent (Psalms 120 through 134). Likewise, the church meetings should begin not in the meeting hall, but either in our homes or on our way to the meeting. The meeting should be an exhibition of our daily life, of the way we live at home, at school, or at work. The meeting should be full of singing and praising because we sing and praise the Lord day by day. I appreciate the chorus of the hymn, “This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.” But where can you find a Christian who praises the Lord all day long? Many Christians who

sing this hymn do not praise their Savior in their daily living. But our daily life should be filled with singing to the Lord.

Many of us have read the Bible for years without realizing that we can receive the Word of God by singing. Is it your practice to take a verse of the Bible not only by reading, but also by singing? Christians have been taught to study the Bible and to read it, but not to sing it. We are thankful for the recovery of pray-reading the Word. Now we must go on to sing-read the Word of God. We need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom by singing. This is not my teaching; it is the charge given by the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16.

Even though we have been reading Colossians for years, we have not paid adequate attention to taking the Word by singing. Many Christians claim to be scriptural. But instead of being wholly scriptural, they may be formal and religious. It certainly is scriptural to sing the Word of God.

We should sing the Word not only in the meetings, but especially in our daily life. In particular, we should sing the Word at home. When you are alone in your room or with others at the dining table, sing the Word of God. Singing the Word is an excellent way to exercise the spirit. To pray is to exercise the spirit, but to sing is an especially good way to exercise the spirit.

The longest book of the Bible is the book of Psalms, containing one hundred fifty psalms. This book was composed not merely for reading; it was written for singing, even for psalming. Psalming is more elevated than singing. In Colossians 3:16 Paul mentions psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Spiritual songs are usually short; hymns, of medium length; and psalms are usually longer compositions. We need to sing and psalm the Word of God. Psalming is higher, deeper, and more profound than singing.

SATURATED WITH THE WORD BY SINGING

If we sincerely desire to be saturated with the living Word so that we may live Christ, we need to follow the practice advocated by Paul in Colossians 3:16. This means that we must let the word of Christ inhabit us in a rich way, not by mere knowledge from the mind, but by every kind of wisdom from our spirit, including singing and psalming. Oh, we need to sing and psalm the Word of God! To sing the Word is better than reading it, and to psalm the Word is even better than singing it. Psalming the Word includes musing upon it and enjoying it. As we psalm the Word, we dwell upon it, muse on it, and enjoy it, thereby giving more opportunity for the Word to saturate us.

If we only read the Word, there is little opportunity for the portion we read to sink into us and saturate our being. But if we sing the Word, and especially if we psalm it, we open our being more fully to the Word and give it the opportunity to sink into us and saturate us. For example, if we sing Psalm 1, we shall enjoy the riches found in this short psalm. Let us sing and psalm the Word of God not only in the meetings. Let us come to the Word daily to sing and psalm it with our whole being. In singing and psalming the Word of God, let us exercise our voice, our mind, our heart, and our spirit.

Furthermore, I hope that from now on in the church meetings more place will be given to spontaneous singing of the Word. Perhaps in a certain meeting we shall sing or psalm the whole book of Ephesians. No doubt, if we spend an entire meeting to do this, we shall touch the riches in this Epistle.

It is surprising that in Colossians 3:16 Paul does not mention reading. Instead, he emphasizes singing. It is possible to read the Word without exercising our spirit and without contacting God. But by praying, singing, and psalming, we are ushered into the Spirit. The best way to receive the word of life and to be saturated with the element of Christ is to sing the Word.

FILLED IN SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:18-19 is parallel to Colossians 3:16. In these verses Paul says, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord." Notice that in Colossians 3:16 Paul tells us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, but in Ephesians 5:18 he tells us to be filled in spirit.

When we put these verses together, we see that we should be filled in spirit with the word of Christ. These two portions of the Word have the same goal—that we should have our spirit filled with the Word.

We may compare our spirit to an automobile needing gasoline, and the Word, the Bible, to a gas station. When we sense that we are empty, we should come to the Word to be filled. In the Word we have an inexhaustible supply of spiritual gasoline. The way to pump this “gasoline” into us is by singing and psalming the Word. If we are filled in this way, surely we shall speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We shall also discover that singing and psalming the Word are higher than pray-reading it.

The more we sing and psalm the Word of God, the more we shall be delivered from the influence of religion, the influence which causes us to come to the meetings in a formal way. Let us build up the habit of singing the Word day by day. Then our meetings will not be formal. Instead of any kind of performance, the meetings will be filled with an exhibition of our daily life. What we exhibit in the church meetings will be the way we live day by day. In particular, we shall sing in the meetings because we sing the Word daily.

Concerning the singing of the Word of God, my main burden is not that the meetings will be enriched; it is that we shall be saturated with the living Word. We shall participate in the bountiful supply of the Spirit and enjoy the riches of Christ by receiving the Word of God.

In the past I lost many opportunities to be saturated with the Word because I did not know to sing the Word. I spent a great deal of time reading and studying the Bible, filling several Bibles with notes, but I did not realize I could sing or psalm the Word. It is one thing to read Ephesians 2 and another thing to pray-read it. But once again I wish to emphasize that singing the Word is even better than pray-reading. Many of today’s Christians exercise only their mind to read and study the Word. They do not sing the Word at all, and some actually oppose the practice of pray-reading. I am confident that the more we sing and psalm the Word, the more we shall be washed by and saturated with the element of Christ.

RECEIVING THE WORD TO LIVE CHRIST

Concerning those things necessary for life, what is important is not understanding, but receiving. We may not understand very much about the water we drink and especially about the food we eat, but we need to drink and eat nevertheless. By eating and drinking we receive what is necessary to maintain life. In like manner, we need to receive the Word into us by eating it. Yes, we can eat the Word by reading it in a proper way. Furthermore, from experience we know that we can take the Word as food by pray-reading it. But now we must go on to see that there is no better way to receive the Word into our being than by singing the Word. The more we sing and psalm the Word of God, the more it will sink into the depths of our being and saturate us. If we take even a little time to sing the Word, we shall sense that we are inwardly filled and saturated with it. Then spontaneously we shall live Christ.

When the element of Christ has been infused into us by our singing and psalming the Word, we live Christ spontaneously and automatically. Sometimes we may read the Word without having any element of Christ infused into our being. But when we sing and psalm the Word, we are saturated with the divine element contained in the Word and conveyed to us through the Word. The more we sing and psalm the Word, the more we give opportunity to the Word to dwell in us, sink into us, and permeate us with the divine element. Then we shall be constituted of the element of Christ. Automatically we shall become what we eat and live out what we have absorbed. This is the way to live Christ. (*Life-study of Philippians*, pp. 354-359)

RECEIVING BLESSING FROM THE LAW AS GOD’S LIVING WORD

If our condition is normal, we should be helped and very much blessed whenever we come to the Word of God. If we do not receive any blessing, there must be something wrong with us. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16); therefore, the words of the Bible are God’s breath. Furthermore, as the

embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), the Lord Jesus is Himself called the Word (John 1:1, 14; Rev. 19:13). Thus, coming to the Word should be the equivalent of coming to God. Because the Word is the embodiment of God, it contains the riches of God. The Word of God contains all that God is. This is the reason the Word of God is so rich, substantial, living, and enlightening. All that God can be to us, the Word can be also. Provided we have no problems within us which cause a hindrance, we should receive blessing whenever we come to the Word of God.

PROBLEMS OF THE HEART

No Exercise of Heart

If you fail to receive help when you come to the Word, there is probably a problem of some kind in your heart. Your heart is not right. It may be that you have no genuine exercise of heart in coming to the Word. You read the Bible, but you have no heart for the Word. In human life it is possible to do many things out of necessity without having a heart for those things. For example, a young person may be forced to attend school, but he may have no heart for education. He goes to school only because he is compelled to do so. Likewise, although we may read the Word of God, perhaps out of a sense of duty, we may not have a heart for the Word.

A Divided Heart

Another problem you may have in your heart is the problem of a divided heart. It is possible that your heart is divided into two or three parts, perhaps even more. This may especially be true of young people. A young person may love many different things. This causes the heart to be divided. One thing occupies one part of the heart, and something else occupies another part. Suppose a young man has a heart for his studies, but also has a heart for a particular form of worldly entertainment. This will cause his heart to be divided.

If a person's heart is divided into two parts, one part for something good and another part for something evil, the evil tendency will always prevail. This seems to be a natural law or principle. In his heart a person may have two opposite intentions; he may intend both to lie and to tell the truth. The evil intention, that of telling a lie, will prevail over the good intention, that of telling the truth. Whenever our heart is divided, reading the Word of God will not help us. If we come to the Bible halfheartedly or with a divided heart, we shall not receive blessing from the Word. Whenever we come to the Bible, we must come with a whole heart and with a single heart. It is not profitable to read the Word of God in a halfhearted way.

A Lack of Heart

Another problem of the heart in relation to the Word is that of not having any heart at all for the Word. We have pointed out the problem of not using or exercising our heart in reading the Word. However, there is a difference between this and not having a heart for the Word. There are some people who seem to have no heart at all. Inwardly, they are like dead wood. No matter how much such a person may read the Bible, he will not receive any blessing from his reading, for he lacks the function through which to comprehend what the Bible is saying. He simply has no function of heart in reading the Word. This is a very serious problem. When many Christians come to the Bible, they are like dead wood, without a heart.

Coverings, Hindrances, and Frustrations

Another problem with the heart is related to things that cover you, separate you from the Lord, or frustrate your contact with the Lord. In reading the Word of God, you may cry out to the Lord and be desperate to receive something from the Lord. However, there may be hindrances or frustrations within you. There may be a certain sin that besets, captures, and possesses you. On the one hand, you love the Word of God. On the other hand, a certain sin may lie hidden in your heart, and you may not be willing

for the Lord to deal with it. Such a hidden sin will prevent you from receiving blessing from the Word. Suppose, for example, someone has offended you, and you are not willing to forgive this offense. You may not consider that your unwillingness to forgive is a sin, but it is in fact a sin. You may hide this sin, or other kinds of sins, from man, and you may even attempt to conceal it from the Lord. If you come to the Bible with such a sin hidden within you, you will not be able to receive anything from the Word, even though you have a heart for the Word. If you have a tendency toward something which does not please the Lord and at the same time desire to come to the Word, you will not be blessed by reading the Word of God.

We know from our experience that at times we struggle with the Lord, perhaps over the issue of consecration. We may not be willing to consecrate ourselves, to be subdued by the Lord, or to be convinced by Him. We may insist on holding to our opinion regarding a particular matter. Even though the Lord speaks to us again and again, we still are not willing to be convinced, because His speaking is contrary to our opinion. We cling to our concept and insist on it. Such an insistence is a veil that covers our heart. Do you think that you can receive help from the Word if your heart is covered in this way? To be sure, reading the Word when you are in such a condition will not be a help to you.

If we want to receive blessing from the Word of God, we must first deal with our heart and turn to the Lord absolutely and with our whole heart. We also need to deal with anything in our heart that is negative or that causes separation between us and the Lord. If we deal with our heart and with the negative things between us and the Lord, our condition is likely to be normal. Then it is very possible that we shall receive help from the Word.

Even if we deal with our heart and with the negative things in our heart, we may still have some complications. All of us, young and old alike, are complicated. Within us there are a number of factors which cause complications. These complications also make it difficult for us to receive blessing from the Word.

As we read Psalm 119, we see that the psalmist was right with the Lord. There was nothing between him and the Lord. I appreciate the line in the hymn, "Nothing between, Lord, nothing between." However, it is one thing to sing this hymn, but it is another thing to practice having nothing between us and the Lord. How much we shall receive from the living Word if there is nothing between the Lord and us!

If a person studies diligently for a number of years, he may receive a Ph.D. in a certain field, perhaps in nuclear physics. Although I have known a number of young people who have earned a Ph.D., I do not know many who have attained a comparable measure of understanding in spiritual matters. Some have had the Bible, a book of heavenly, divine, and spiritual science, in their hands for decades, but still they have only an elementary understanding of it. This indicates that although they have acquired a certain amount of knowledge, they have not been blessed through their reading of the Word. Earning a Ph.D. degree requires much study, but it does not require that you deal with your heart. For example, does refusing to forgive someone hinder you from earning a doctoral degree? Of course not! But such a thing can keep you from receiving blessing from the Word of God. A sister, Margaret E. Barber, used to say that even a small leaf can hide a bright star. Likewise, even a small matter can keep us from receiving blessing from the Bible.

THE NEED TO HUMBLE OURSELVES

The Bible requires more of us than any other book. The Bible demands that we humble ourselves and put aside our self-confidence and self-assurance. In coming to the Word, we need to pray that the Lord will have mercy on us. If we do not receive the Lord's mercy, something within us unconsciously may continue to cover us and keep us from the Lord's Word. Let us learn to pray, "Lord, have mercy on me. I don't want to be covered by anything, and I don't want to have anything between You and me. Lord, grant that there will be nothing between us." This should be not only our prayer, but also our attitude toward the Lord.

In coming to the Word we should not have any self-confidence. We should not presume to have the assurance that there are no problems between us and the Lord. We simply do not have the ground for this kind of assurance. Although we may not realize it, there may be still a number of problems between us and Him. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves before the Lord. The Bible says, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). If we do not humble ourselves in coming to the Word, we shall be greatly hindered in receiving help from the Word.

Some may think that as long as we love the Lord, everything will be all right. However, loving the Lord is somewhat general. We may love Him without ever having humbled ourselves before Him. Realizing that there are still apt to be negative things within us, we need to humble ourselves. If it is difficult to clean our physical surroundings in an absolute way, how much more difficult it is to clean our heart! Can you say that in cleaning your house you clean thoroughly? It is very difficult for anyone to say this. Years ago, when our youngest daughter needed minor surgery, the physician told us that he could not perform the surgery in his office. To us, the office seemed very clean. But the doctor realized that because the ceiling of his office could not be thoroughly cleansed, his office was not a proper place for surgery to be performed. When he said this, I thought that this is also true of the “ceiling” of our inward being. Because our inward ceiling is not absolutely clean, it is difficult for surgery to be performed within us. Therefore, we should have no confidence in ourselves, but humbly look to the Lord for mercy.

Recently, some of the young people have completed a special training. Although they have passed through a very good training, they should not think that everything is right between them and the Lord. They should not assume that everything has been rectified or sanctified. They still may have many problems in their heart. If we realize this about ourselves, we shall not be so confident as to think that in everything we are right with the Lord. Instead, we shall humble ourselves before the Lord and ask Him for mercy.

ENLIGHTENED BY THE WORD

If we have a humble attitude when we come to the Word, not having any trust in ourselves, we shall be enlightened. To have no trust in ourselves means that we have no reservations. Nothing remains as a problem between us and the Lord. However, if instead of having a humble attitude we still have confidence in ourselves, we shall have serious problems in receiving blessing from the Word. Perhaps you are wondering why you do not receive light from the Word, even though you have been reading the Bible regularly for a long time. The reason may be that you have too much confidence in yourself. Again I say, we must let go of our confidence, humble ourselves before the Lord, and pray that He will have mercy on us. We should say, “Lord, I do not have any confidence in myself, and I do not insist on anything. Lord, I open to You, and I ask You to have mercy on me.” If this is your attitude in coming to the Bible, you will receive blessing from the Word, no matter what portion of the Word you read. Even the first seventeen verses of the Gospel of Matthew will have something as a help for you. The crucial matter is that you humble yourself before the Lord.

A REALM OF LIGHT

Often saints testify that they see light in reading the Word. This is true. Through the Word we do receive light. But in my experience I have found that whenever I humble myself, do not insist on any opinion, and ask the Lord for His mercy, I have the sense that I come into a realm of light whenever I come to the Word. Even if I do not receive any particular light, I have the consciousness that I am in the light.

Whenever we come to the Word, we come to the light, because the Word is the embodiment of God, and God is light (1 John 1:5). When you stand under the light of the sun, you do not need to receive light, for you are already in the light. Likewise, when we come to the Word with a proper attitude, we have the sense that we are in the light and under the light and are not merely receiving

light. Then, the whole Bible in our experience becomes a book of light. No matter where we may be in our reading, we sense that the Bible is a shining light.

As the embodiment of God, the unique light, the Word of God is a shining light. This light is actually God Himself in the Word. Because the Word is the condensation of the divine light, we enter into an atmosphere of light whenever we come to the Word. This is like entering into a lighted room. When we are in a lighted room, we do not simply receive light, but we are in a realm of light.

Whether or not the Bible is shining in our experience depends on our attitude and condition. If we are humble and ask the Lord for mercy, the Bible will be to us a book of light. After reading a portion of the Word, you may not have much understanding, but you have the sense that you are in light. This proves that the Bible is the divine Word. You do not have the sense that you are in light when you read a newspaper or magazine. But if you read the Word or pray-read some verses of the Scriptures with a sincere heart and in an attitude of humility, you will be conscious of having been brought into light. Whenever we come to the Word in a proper way, we have the conviction that we have come into the light and are in a sphere of light. Then spontaneously we receive light, and we become people who are absolutely in light.

The Entrance of the Word Giving Light

In 119:130 the psalmist says, “The entrance of thy words giveth light.” The Word has an entrance. This means that the Bible has an opening, a gate. According to my experience, the bar to this gate is not on the inside, but on the outside. It is on our side of the gate. This means that if the gate is closed, we are the ones who have closed it. Whether the Word is open to us or not depends on how we deal with it. Sometimes we pray that the Lord would open the Word to us. However, when we pray in this way, the Lord may tell us that, on His side, He has already opened His Word. Now we, on our side, need to open the gate of the Word. Our experience testifies that if we have no problems with the Lord when we come to the Word, the Word will be open to us. But if we come to the Word when we have problems with the Lord, the door will be shut. This indicates that the bar to the gate is on our side. When we come to the Word and open it, then in our spiritual experience, the Word will have an entrance, an opening.

I wish to emphasize the fact that whether the gate of the Word is open or closed depends on us. We need to thank the Lord that the Word has an entrance, a gate, and that the bar of the gate is on our side. We should say, “Lord, thank You for the entrance, the opening, to Your Word.” Often in our experience we sense that, because we come to the Word in the right way, the Word has an opening. This opening seems to depend on the Lord and come from Him. However, it actually depends on us and comes from approaching the Word in a proper way. (*Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 690-697)

A VOW CONCERNING OUR PRAYER LIFE

In light of the fact that there is great resistance to praying, let us now consider in a very practical way how to persevere in prayer. Before you try to persevere in prayer, you should first make a deal with the Lord concerning your prayer life. Pray to Him in a definite way and say, “Lord, I mean business with You about this matter of prayer. I call heaven and earth to witness that from this time forth I will have a life of prayer. I will not be a prayerless person. Rather, I will be a praying person.” If you do not have such a prayer to the Lord, you will not be able to persevere in prayer. We need to say to Him, “Lord, I am desperate about this. I offer myself to You so that I may have a prayer life. Lord, keep me in the spirit of prayer. If I forget this or neglect this, I know that You will not forget it. Remind me again and again about prayer.” This kind of prayer may be regarded as a vow made to the Lord. We all need to make a vow to Him concerning our prayer life. We should tell the Lord, “Lord, I know that if I forget this vow, You will not forget it. From the very beginning, Lord, I want to clearly hand the responsibility over to You. Lord, don’t let me go. Remind me to pray.”

SETTING ASIDE DEFINITE TIMES

After we make such a deal with the Lord concerning prayer, we should set aside definite times for prayer. For instance, you may reserve ten minutes every morning. During this time, prayer must be the top priority. Our attitude should be that prayer is our most important business and that nothing should be allowed to interfere with it. If we do not have this attitude, we shall not be able to have a successful prayer life. No matter how many things we have to do each day, we can reserve at least a few minutes here and there for prayer. We may pray a little in the morning. Then again at noon, after work, and in the evening we may have other times for prayer. By setting aside definite times during the day, we may be able to have a half hour reserved for prayer.

When you are observing a set time for prayer at home, take the telephone off the hook. This will help eliminate distractions. Prayer time is not the time for telephone calls. Furthermore, you should not pay attention to those knocking at your door. The time you have dedicated to the Lord for prayer should be used only for prayer, not for anything else. Regarding this, you need to be strong and persevering.

In order to have more time for prayer, we should try to save time during the day. For example, perhaps we can reduce the time spent in personal grooming or in conversation with others. Unnecessary talk weakens our praying spirit, damages the praying atmosphere, and occupies time that can be used for prayer. The battle over prayer is continual. Probably it will last until eternity.

What I have been sharing about prayer is not mere doctrine. It comes from years of experience. As far as prayer is concerned, I must admit that I have had much failure. I do not boast of great success in my prayer life. Rather, I have suffered many failures because of the opposition of the enemy, the distractions around me, and even the hindrances within me. I have surely learned that prayer is a battle. Because it is a battle, a fight, we must persevere in it.

THE BENEFITS OF PRAYER

Persevering in prayer has many benefits. By prayer we set our mind on the things above. In fact, prayer is the only way to have our mind set on the things in heaven. When we set our mind on things above by praying, we shall not pray for trivial matters. Instead, our prayer will be occupied with Christ's heavenly intercession, ministry, and administration. Because Christ is interceding for the churches around the world, we also pray for the churches. Let the Lord take care of all the small matters in our living. Our responsibility is to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness. Since the Father knows our need, He will take care of us and meet our need.

When we set our mind on the things above during our times of prayer, we become a reflection of Christ's ministry in the heavens. Through our prayer, Christ, the Head, is given a way to carry out His administration through His Body. When we pray, we are a heavenly ambassador on earth with the extension of God's kingdom. However, when we are gossiping, we are not a heavenly ambassador at all. Only when we pray do we become an ambassador of the heavenly kingdom on earth in a practical way.

When we pray, we enter into the Holy of Holies and approach the throne of grace. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help." Prayer is the way to come forward to the throne of grace. Coming forward to the throne of grace, we receive mercy and grace to meet our timely need. When we pray, approaching the throne of grace, mercy and grace will become a river flowing in us and supplying us. How rewarding this is! Receiving the flow of grace in prayer is actually more important than having our prayers answered. Whether or not our prayer is answered is secondary. The primary thing is that grace flows like a river from the throne and into our being.

To receive this river of grace is to have our spiritual battery charged with heavenly current. The heavenly current, the divine electricity, is the Triune God as grace flowing out of the throne and into us. The supply and enjoyment this brings is unspeakable.

Christians today are weak because their spiritual batteries are not charged. Because they are short of prayer, they are short of the heavenly transmission. Again and again during the day, we need to be

charged with the divine electrical current. This surely is a reward for persevering in prayer.

Another benefit of praying is related to fellowship with the Lord. We all love the Lord's presence and anointing, and we all love to have fellowship with Him. But how can we enjoy the Lord's presence and have fellowship with Him? The only way is to pray. When we pray, we enter into fellowship with the Lord and become conscious of the fact that we are truly one spirit with Him and that He is actually one spirit with us. The more we pray, the more we experience being one with the Lord, and the more we enjoy His presence and have fellowship with Him. What a marvelous reward!

It is always difficult at first to have a proper prayer life. But if you practice this for a long period of time, it will get easier and easier, for you will realize the rewards of praying.

We have seen that for a normal Christian walk we need to set our mind on things above, have the renewing of the new man, have the peace of Christ arbitrating in us, and allow the word of Christ to inhabit us. These four matters, however, all require prayer. To practice them and to experience them, we need to pray. Prayer ushers us into the reality of these four things and keeps us in this reality.

WATCHING WITH THANKSGIVING

In charging us to persevere in prayer, Paul tells us to watch in it with thanksgiving (Col. 4:2). This indicates that if we are not thankful to God for anything, we must be lacking in prayer. All day long we need to thank God. We need to be those who continually offer thanks to Him. If we are constantly giving thanks to the Lord, do you think it will be possible for a brother to argue with his wife? Surely not! Arguments between husband and wife are a sign of prayerlessness. They argue because they are lacking in prayer. The sign of a praying person is thankfulness. If you are one who perseveres in prayer, you will always be thankful to the Lord. This giving of thanks to Him will preserve you in your life of prayer.

In 4:2 Paul does not say to persevere in prayer and to watch. He says, "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." We watch in prayer by the giving of thanks. If we continually offer thanks to the Lord, the adversary will not be able to carry us off from our prayer life. Prayer is maintained by watching in it with thanksgiving.

GRACE AND WISDOM

In 4:6 Paul says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." If we are praying people, we shall utter thanks to the Lord, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, our speech will be with grace. Out of our mouth will flow thanks to God and grace to others. In this way we shall know that we are praying people. However, if our speech is lacking in grace, we must be short of prayer. When we become aware of the lack of grace, we need to pray again and be charged with the divine electricity. Then our mouth will be filled with grace.

In 4:5 Paul says, "Walk in wisdom toward those who are without, redeeming the time." This is a result of persevering in prayer. If we pray without ceasing, offer thanks to God, and have speech filled with grace, we shall spontaneously become very wise and know how to redeem the time. In our daily living no time will be wasted. If we are filled with thanks to God and with grace toward others, we shall have the wisdom to walk in a way which glorifies God and builds up others. Then our time will be redeemed.

Concerning persevering in prayer, I wish to say once again that we need to be willing to make a deal with the Lord, even to make a vow to Him, that we shall be a praying people. If all the saints in all the churches make such a deal with the Lord, the recovery will be greatly enriched and uplifted. Furthermore, the saints will enjoy the Lord, His presence, and His instant and constant anointing. All day long, they will enjoy the smile of the Lord's face. As we persevere in prayer, the living Person of Christ becomes our experience and enjoyment. (*Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 579-584)