

THE DAY-BY-DAY CHRISTIAN LIFE

by Ed Marks

The Gospel of John implicitly reveals the day-by-day Christian life. The phrase *day by day* is very critical to our living as Christians for God's purpose, and they are quoted from 2 Corinthians 4:16, which says that we should be in the process of the Lord's inward renewing "day by day." Regarding the proper daily Christian life, John shows us that Christ is not only our life but also the daily necessities of our Christian life. By *necessities* we mean that which is needed to maintain the life that we have received through our regeneration. Just as our human life must be maintained for our physical health, the divine life in our spirit must be maintained for our spiritual health. In the physical realm, air, water, food, light, and a dwelling place are basic and vital necessities. In the spiritual realm, these basic and vital necessities are the same. The marvelous thing is that all of these necessities for the maintenance of our spiritual life are Christ Himself. John reveals that Christ Himself is our real, divine, and spiritual air for us to breathe (20:22), our water for us to drink (4:10, 14; 7:38-39), our food for us to eat (6:35, 57), and our dwelling place in which we can abide (15:5). All of these items of what Christ is to us must be our day-by-day experience—we need to breathe Him, drink Him, eat Him, and abide in Him day by day, even moment by moment.

Many believers, regrettably, are unaware of this simplicity that is in Christ. They may think back to their salvation experience or to a time in their Christian life, perhaps to some kind of periodic revival, when Christ was so precious to them, and they may wonder why they are lukewarm, defeated, and fruitless today. What matters is where we are today in our Christian life. *Today* is a great word in the Scriptures. We are people of today, not of yesterday or tomorrow. Our Christ is the "today" Christ, the "now" Christ, the "moment-by-moment" Christ, who is our daily salvation. Christ is the present tense, the "I Am" (8:24, 28, 58). The Holy Spirit's importuning cry to the believers in the book of Hebrews is: "Today if you

hear His voice, do not harden your hearts..." (3:7-8). The Lord's charge to us in Matthew is: "Do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day is its own evil" (6:34). And Paul's pattern to us in Philippians is: "Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before" in his pursuit of Christ (3:13-14).

Because we are people of today, not of yesterday or tomorrow, our experience of Christ must be a daily experience, which requires a daily, moment-by-moment dependence on the Lord. This is what is known as a normal Christian life for a normal church life. Two classic books by Watchman Nee are entitled *The Normal Christian Life* and *The Normal Christian Church Life*. We want to emphasize the word *normal*. We need the Lord to save us from all abnormality in our Christian and church life. To enjoy Christ as our necessities for our daily life supply in our Christian life is normal. To function as members of the Body of Christ for the daily supply of others in our church life is also normal.

Such a normal, day-by-day Christian life for a normal church life is characterized by the following ten verses (with particular phrases highlighted in bold print):

We do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed **day by day**.
(2 Cor. 4:16, see also Psa. 68:19)

The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, /
Which shines **brighter and brighter** until the full day.
(Prov. 4:18)

The Lord Jehovah has given me / The tongue of the instructed, /
That I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. /
He awakens me **morning by morning**; / He awakens my ear /
To hear as an instructed one. (Isa. 50:4)

We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from **glory to glory**, even as from the Lord Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:18)

They go from **strength to strength**; / Each appears before God in Zion. (Psa. 84:7)

Of His fullness we have all received, and **grace upon grace**. (John 1:16)

Jehovah's word to them will be; / Rule upon rule, rule upon rule; / Line upon line, line upon line; / **Here a little, there a little**. (Isa. 28:13)

You can all prophesy **one by one** that all may learn and all may be encouraged. (1 Cor. 14:31)

How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from **house to house**. (Acts 20:20)

Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have become fruitful and inherit the land. (Exo. 23:30)

If we build up a habit of contacting and enjoying Christ as our daily necessities, these verses will become a living reality to us. Christ will be not only our life but also our life supply in divine abundance for the building up of the church as the house of the Father, the vine of the Son, and the new man of the Spirit (John 10:10; 14:2; 15:1; 16:21). Furthermore, we will be those who lay hold of the normal Christian and church life in both revelation and practicality. Our Christian life will be a life that is day by day, brighter and brighter, morning by morning, from glory to glory, from strength to strength, with grace upon grace, here a little, there a little, one by one, from house to house, and little by little.

Being Renewed Day by Day

Second Corinthians 4:16 tells us that the daily, normal Christian life is one of our outer man decaying, while our inner man is being renewed. In order to fully understand this truth and our experience of it, we first need to define *outer man* and *inner man*. The Bible reveals that man is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). Man's spirit is for contacting God (John 4:24), his soul is for magnifying God (Luke 1:46-47), and his body is for glorifying God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The soul comprises man's mind,

emotion, and will (Prov. 19:2; Psa. 13:2; Deut. 14:26). Before a person is regenerated, born again, with the life of God, his soul is his real person. Man himself is a living soul, but after regeneration another person comes into man's spirit; this wonderful person is Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). The believers in Christ have both an outer man, an outer person, and an inner man, an inner person. The outer man is composed of man's soul as the person with his fallen body as the organ through which his natural person is expressed. The inner man is composed of man's regenerated spirit (which has been joined to and mingled with Christ as the divine Spirit) as the person with man's soul as the organ through which the divine person of Christ is magnified. The Lord's desire for His believers is that they no longer take their soul, their self, as their person. He charges us to deny the self in order to follow Him (Matt. 16:24-25). Now we must take our regenerated spirit as our new person and live as a new man, a new creation.

Our outer man is the old man, which the Lord desires to consume. Our inner man is the new man, which the Lord

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desires to renew. For this renewing to take place in our daily life, we should deny the self and realize that our outer man is decaying. The Greek word for *decaying* also means "being worn out, being consumed, or wasting away." This happens through the sufferings and trials of our daily human existence. But while this is taking place, our inner man should be in the process of a day-by-day renewing. All of the things through which we pass in our daily life are for the purpose of helping us and even pressing us to turn to our spirit as our new person. As we stay in contact with the indwelling Lord Spirit in our spirit and deny the self, our inner man is being renewed through the fresh supply of Christ as the resurrection life. While the person of the soul is denied, the faculties of the soul (the mind, emotion, and will) as the regenerated spirit's organ are uplifted by being filled with the abundant life of Christ for His magnification.

For this renewing to take place, we must enjoy the Lord as our life supply day by day. We must learn to breathe Him in as the fresh, spiritual air moment by moment. In what may be considered the first meeting of the church

after the Lord's resurrection and before Pentecost, the Lord appeared to the disciples and said to them, "Peace be to you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22). The first meeting of the disciples with the Lord in resurrection was a "breathing" meeting. We should notice the words *breathed*, *receive*, and *Spirit* in these verses. The Lord breathes, we receive, and what we receive is the Spirit, the *pneuma* (Gk.), which, depending on the context, may be translated "Spirit," "wind," "air, or breath." According to the context of these verses in John 20, the Holy Spirit is the Holy Air, the Holy Breath, which was exhaled into the disciples.

Based on this realization, some Bible teachers have used the term *the pneumatic Christ*, referring to the Christ who is the *pneuma*, the Spirit, the air, the breath. "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17), and it is as the life-giving Spirit that He continually supplies us with life for our renewing (1 Cor. 15:45). We need to learn to breathe Him in day by day and moment by moment so that He may be our continual supply. This saves us from the oldness and staleness of our old man so that we may walk in newness of life and serve in newness of spirit (Rom. 6:4; 7:6). Only Christ Himself as our life supply is new; everything other than Him is old. We constantly need new *pneuma*, a new supply of the Spirit as our fresh air, to maintain our freshness in our life and service to the Lord.

We can continually receive the Lord as our fresh air by calling upon His name. Jeremiah tells us that when he was in the lowest pit, he called upon the name of the Lord, and his calling was his spiritual breathing: "I called upon Your name, O Jehovah, / From the lowest pit. / You have heard my voice; do not hide / Your ear at my breathing, at my cry" (Lam. 3:55-56). The words *my voice* and *my cry* indicate that Jeremiah's calling was audible, something spoken aloud. We need to build up the habit of calling upon the Lord's name in our daily life. Such audible calling to invoke His person by saying "Lord Jesus" in our prayers and conversations with Him is our spiritual breathing. This spiritual breathing for a daily renewing is spoken of in a classic hymn written by A. B. Simpson (*Hymns*, #255). The first stanza and the chorus say:

O Lord, breathe Thy Spirit on me,
Teach me how to breathe Thee in;
Help me pour into Thy bosom
All my life of self and sin.
I am breathing out my sorrow,
Breathing out my sin;
I am breathing, breathing, breathing,
All Thy fulness in.

This hymn should be our prayer to the Lord. We need to ask the Lord to teach us how to breathe Him in. For this we need to implore Him to help us pour into His bosom all our life of self and sin. In order to breathe in, to inhale, we must also breathe out, exhale. Both inhaling and exhaling describe what our fellowship with the Lord should be. In our set times of prayer and throughout the day, we need to exhale into His bosom all of our troubles, sorrows, cares, anxieties, problems, and feelings. We also can exhale the impurities of our inner being through the confession of our sins to Him so that we may enjoy the continual cleansing of His precious blood (1 John 1:9). This exhaling is so that we may inhale the pneumatic Christ as our fresh and new supply of life to be filled with Him. This spiritual inhaling is not only for being supplied with Him but also for being infused with His thoughts, feelings, and intents, so that we can intercede in oneness with Him for His interests on the earth. Just as Daniel opened his windows to pray toward Jerusalem three times a day, we need to open the windows of our entire, inner being toward God's goal of the New Jerusalem every day (Dan. 6:10). Such prayer for the renewing of our inner man should characterize our Christian life, not in an episodic way, but in a day-by-day way.

Shining Brighter and Brighter

If we are being renewed day by day, we will be those who shine with the divine light, which is Christ Himself. In the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (8:12). Philippians 2:15 says that we should shine as luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverted world. Our function as believers is to shine with Christ as light. "You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens" (Matt. 5:14, 16). Our Christian pathway should be like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until the full day (Prov. 4:18). "The light of dawn" indicates that our Christian living should always, day by day, be filled with the freshness of the Lord's presence as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). Christ Himself is the dawning sun in this dark age (Luke 1:78-79). Day by day in our Christian life, Christ should be like the dawn of a new day to us. We should have a new and fresh seeing of Him in His excellency and a living and vital contact with Him in His riches. Day by day we should become brighter and brighter until we reach the zenith of our shining at the end of our days. Such a daily pathway with an ever-increasing brightness in our being will hasten His coming, that is, will be unto "the full day" of His coming. With His coming in view, we want our daily life and work to fulfill the following prophetic word: "May those who love Him be like the sun / When it rises in its might" (Judg. 5:31). This is so

that we may be the overcomers who “shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43).

Jacob’s life, recorded in the Old Testament, is an excellent example of one whose pathway became brighter and brighter until the maturity of his life at the end of his days. Through many trials and God’s transforming work in him, the end of Jacob’s days became the brightest period of his life. Eventually, at the end of his life, Jacob was a transformed and mature person in life who blessed others (Gen. 47:7, 10; 48:9; 49:28), and to bless others is to overflow with God as life (cf. Num. 6:22-27; 2 Cor. 13:14). In speaking in the way of application concerning Jacob’s path growing brighter and brighter, Watchman Nee said the following:

We can see from the Bible that a Christian need not regress and decline in his old age. The three top apostles in the New Testament all shone brightly at the time of their death. When Peter wrote his second Epistle, it was close to the time of his departure from his tabernacle. But he still reminded and exhorted the brothers while he was yet in his tabernacle. In particular he said that he was an eyewitness of the Lord’s glory and power. There was absolutely no waning of the brightness of Peter’s shining. As for Paul, he said, “For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand... Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge will recompense me in that day” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). We can see from these sentences that the hope he had toward the Lord was brightly shining. With the apostle John, who wrote his Gospel, his Epistles, and the book of Revelation during his old age, this shining is most apparent. The Gospel he wrote says, “In the beginning was the Word.” The first Epistle he wrote says, “That which was from the beginning...the Word of life.” Revelation also says, “The things which you have seen...and the things which are about to take place after these things.” John wrote “from the beginning” all the way to “forever and ever.” There was no decline at all in the life of the aged John. Therefore, our old age need not be days of deterioration. The history of Solomon’s old age (1 Kings 11:1-8) should not be the history of our old age. God shows us that our old age should be days of fullness. Even though David sinned, his ending was better than his beginning; he ended by preparing for the building of the temple. Although Peter denied the Lord three times, in the end he was for the Lord. Although Mark once withdrew from the work because of difficulty (Acts 13:13; 15:37-38), he still wrote the

Gospel according to Mark, and eventually he was profitable to Paul for the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). The histories of these men show us that they all did very well in the last stretch of their journey. (*God* 155-156)

We need to pray that the end of our days would be the zenith of our shining, according to the pattern of God’s faithful servants.

Jacob should be of particular encouragement to us, because he was by nature a person of poor character. By the Lord’s mercy, however, he was a transformed person in his old age. He began his life as a clever schemer and supplanter, one who was very strong in his natural life, but from the time that he encountered God in Genesis 32, he shone brighter and brighter until the day of his death. In Genesis 32 Jacob was about to confront Esau. He was frightened because he had cheated Esau out of his birthright, and he thought that Esau was going to kill him. Because Jacob was a schemer, he divided his family, his wives and children, into two camps and sent them to go ahead of him. That night, the Lord as a man wrestled

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with Jacob until the break of dawn (v. 24). His wrestling with Jacob was for the purpose of touching Jacob’s natural life, signified by the socket of Jacob’s hip at the thigh muscle, the strongest muscle in the body (vv. 25, 32). The Lord then questioned him concerning his name because He wanted to remind him that his name was Jacob, which means “supplanter” (v. 27). God wanted Jacob to realize who he was in his natural life, but then God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, which means “one who struggles with God,” or “a prince of God.” After this contact with God, Jacob walked away lame because the strongest part of his being had been touched by God.

Jacob’s encounter with God, in which God touched his natural life, was the beginning of his transformation from a supplanter into a prince of God. Like Jacob, we are destined to live a struggling life all our days for our transformation, but in reality all of our struggles are actually struggles with God. This struggling involves both our environment, which is arranged by God, and our prayer, in which we receive God’s infusion for our inward transformation into His image. According to Hosea 12:4

Jacob's wrestling and struggling involved prayer, as "he wept and made supplication" to God. The Christian life is a life of struggling with God to be transformed by God into a prince of God. In all of our struggles, God wants to touch our natural life so that we would be crippled in our natural life with its natural ability, strength, and energy. Thus, we will learn not to trust in our natural life but in God, in Christ, in the divine life within us (2 Cor. 1:8-9). God uses many kinds of environments to train us to continually exercise to reject our natural life and live by the divine life in full dependence on Him. He will then be our energy, ability, and strength to carry out His desire.

Jacob called the name of the place where his natural life was touched Peniel, which means "the face of God," because he had seen God face to face (Gen. 32:30). In the midst of all of our struggles in our daily life, we need to seek God's face, for God's face is His presence. The Old Testament priests were charged by God to bless His people with His shining face (Num. 6:25-26). Experientially speaking, God's face is His smile. When we have the face of God, the presence of God, His smile, we are on the pathway of transformation, a pathway of becoming brighter and brighter in our inward being with Christ as light. When we receive Christ as our Savior, He comes into us to dwell in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), and He will never leave us. However, we need to realize that to continually have His indwelling person is one thing, but to be in His presence at all times is another thing. We can use the following illustration of a husband and wife who are traveling together. The wife has the husband's person wherever she goes, but if her husband is unhappy with her at any time, she loses his presence. This is because his presence is his smile, his assuring person, who is pleased with her and is fully one with her in everything. Ephesians 4:30 says that we should not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. To grieve the Spirit is to make the pneumatic Christ as our indwelling Husband unhappy. When He is grieved within us, we have not lost Him and He still lives in us, but we have lost His presence, His smile, His face.

The apostle Paul said that he forgave a certain brother "in the person of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:10). The Greek word for *person* here may also be translated as "presence" or "face"; it is literally the part around the eyes. The eyes of a person are the index of his being, telling forth his feelings, intents, and thoughts. Like Paul, we need to be those who do everything in the person, the face, of Christ, living in the most personal and intimate contact with Him. As we behold His face, we are being inwardly transformed by the infusion of His presence of glory, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6).

In the Holy Place of the tabernacle of the Old Testament, there was a table called the table of "the bread of the Presence" (Exo. 25:30), which was for the supply of the

servicing priests. This Hebrew word for *presence* may also be translated "face." This reveals that those who serve the Lord in the New Testament priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) enjoy the presence of God, the face of God, as their servicing supply. Note 2 of Exodus 25:30 in the Recovery Version says, "In our experience the reality of God's presence is the Spirit in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17), who is also the reality of Christ as the bread of life (John 6:33, 51a, 63)." Just as the priests of the Old Testament went from the table of the bread of the Presence to the light of the lampstand, we priests of the New Testament enjoy the indwelling presence of God as the bread of life, which issues in our having the light of life. God's presence means everything to us in our Christian life. If we have God's presence, we have everything. If we lose God's presence, we lose everything. It is by living daily in the presence of God, the face of God, the indwelling Spirit, that our path becomes like the fresh light of dawn, which day by day shines brighter and brighter with the light of life until the great dawn of the Lord's second coming.

Being Awakened by the Lord Morning by Morning

In order for us to daily walk in Christ as the light of life, we need to contact Him morning by morning. Isaiah 50:4 is a verse that typifies Christ in the daily instruction He received from the Father. Remarkably, this verse prophesies that the Lord Jesus would be awakened by the Father "morning by morning," so that He could hear the Father's fresh speaking and have the utterance to speak the Father's fresh message to sustain God's weary people with the divine word. Each day the Lord Jesus had a morning revival. In following the Lord's pattern, we should ask our Father to awaken us each morning to spend personal time in fellowship with Him. Every day as the first thing in the morning, we should contact Him before we do anything else or contact anyone else. No matter how busy our schedules are, nothing is more important than our personal time to contact the Lord for the maintenance of our Christian life. In this personal time with the Lord, we need to pray as Samuel did, "Speak, for Your servant is listening" (1 Sam. 3:10). As we receive fresh messages from the Lord morning by morning by spending time in the Word and prayer, we will become His messengers, His shining stars in this dark age, those who have a fresh message from the Lord for His people (Rev. 1:20). We will have an ear to hear what the Spirit is speaking "to hear as an instructed one," and we will have the divine utterances, the oracles of God, to have "the tongue of the instructed" for the supply and encouragement of all the weary ones (Isa. 50:4).

We need to emulate the psalmists, who looked forward to and enjoyed contacting the Lord in the morning. "O Jehovah, in the morning / You will hear my voice; / In the morning I will set forth my words in order

to You, / And I will watch” (Psa. 5:3). “Awake, my glory; / Awake, O harp and lyre! / I will awaken the dawn. / I will give thanks to You among the peoples, O Lord; / I will sing psalms to You among the nations” (57:8-9). “Satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness / That we may give a ringing shout and rejoice all our days” (90:14). Jeremiah enjoyed the Lord’s new mercies morning by morning because of his personal contact with God as the compassionate One. If we build up a habit of having a personal time with the Lord at the beginning of each day, we will truly realize that His compassions do not fail and that they are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). Such personal time with the Lord saves us from hypocrisy and makes us God’s hidden people who are filled with reality. This is why the Lord charges us not to pray as the hypocrites in order to be seen by men: “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” (Matt. 6:6). The words *private* and *secret* are of note. We must have such private and secret time with the Lord day by day so that we may shine brighter and brighter each day.

The Gospels show that the Lord Himself in His humanity had private and personal times to contact the Father so that He might be one with the Father in what ever He did for the carrying out of His will to establish His kingdom on earth. Two examples of our Lord’s life are very particular in revealing this.

The first chapter of Mark records that “the whole city was gathered together at the door” where the Lord was staying; this took place “when evening fell and the sun had set” (vv. 32-33). With such pressures and demanding needs upon Him, the Lord Jesus still rose early the next day: “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” (v. 35). Before we confront the pressures and heat of the day, we should follow the pattern of Christ to go out and go away to a deserted place for prayer. This means that we should separate ourselves from anything that will distract us so that we can concentrate our being on prayer. Just as Moses was shining and glowing with God when he came down from the mount after his personal time with God, we will shine with Christ every day by spending personal time with Him in order to be infused with Him. The highest profession on earth is to spend time being infused with God so that we may glow with God and shine forth God.

Another example of the Lord’s spending personal time with the Father is after His miraculous feeding of the five

thousand (Matt. 14:14-21). After such a tremendous miracle meeting, the human tendency would be for us to bask in its success and glory in what we did. But Matthew 14 tells us another story: “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. And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone” (vv. 22-23). He compelled the disciples to depart from Him, because He wanted to have more time to pray privately to the Father that He might be one with the Father in whatever He did to carry out the Father’s perfect will. Our pathway in our Christian life will shine brighter and brighter if we daily spend time “on the mountain,” with the Father, and in prayer.

By spending personal time with the Lord morning by morning, we will maintain the fire of the divine life within us and be saved from lukewarmness. Leviticus 6:12-13 says that the daily duty of the priest was to keep the fire on the altar burning: “The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it must not go out. And the priest shall burn wood on

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it every morning, and he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it and shall burn the fat of the peace offerings on it. Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.” The Lord’s command is that the fire “must not go out” and “shall not go out.” Every morning we must have a new start to keep the divine fire of life burning within us (2 Tim. 1:6). We should consecrate our lives to the Lord each morning by taking Christ as our burnt offering, the One who was absolute for God and His interests. This is the basis for our enjoying Him as our peace offering, the One who is our peace toward God and man. Morning by morning we can have a new start by consecrating ourselves freshly to the Lord for His interests and by fellowshiping with Him to be infused with Him as the God of peace (Phil. 4:9), the counterpoise to all our anxiety. In this fellowship God becomes to us “like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap” (Mal. 3:2) to inwardly burn away all of our impurities and scrub away all of our filth.

Above all, our fresh consecration to Christ and fellowship with Him morning by morning satisfies His need. Psalm 110:3 says, “Your people will offer themselves willingly /

In the day of Your warfare, / In the splendor of their consecration. / Your young men will be to You / Like the dew from the womb of the dawn.” The time before the Lord’s coming is surely a day of spiritual warfare. The Lord needs overcomers who will willingly offer themselves to Him, giving Him the full freedom to work Himself into every part of their being and to flow out of them into others for the sake of His economy.

In the eyes of the Lord our willing consecration, our offering ourselves to Him, is a matter of splendor. Although the church has become degraded, throughout the centuries there has been a line of those who have offered themselves willingly to the Lord in the splendor, the beauty, of their consecration. (Recovery Version, 110:3, note 2)

Such overcomers will be the Lord’s young men, those who maintain their newness, freshness, livingness, and vitality in the Lord for His move on the earth. According to the poetry here they also become like the “dew from the womb of the dawn.” This implies having a personal time with the Lord in the morning. When we rise up early in the morning to fellowship with the Lord, we enter into the womb of the dawn, something new of the divine element of Christ is conceived in our being, and we are made dew for Christ’s watering. Christ is watered and refreshed by us as we make a full consecration to Him each morning and fellowship with Him to be infused with Him in order to live Him for His interests on earth.

Being Transformed from Glory to Glory

As we fellowship with the Lord morning by morning, we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another degree of glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Regeneration in our spirit takes place in an instant and glorification in our body in the twinkling of an eye, but transformation in our soul is a lifelong matter. Today in our Christian life, God desires to bring our soul (our mind, emotion, and will) through the process of transformation. Transformation is a great miracle that takes place gradually within us in a day-by-day way. Transformation involves the addition of a new element, the discharge of an old element, and a resultant metabolic change. In the divine sense, transformation is the addition of the life of God to our inward being, the discharge of our natural being, and the metabolic change of our being into the Lord’s image for His glory, His expression (2 Cor. 3:18). Our being transformed from glory to glory indicates an ongoing progression of the God of glory increasing in our being. The Lord of glory as the hope of glory dwells in our spirit (Eph. 2:22), but our soul is still in an untransformed state. Our thought life, our likes and dislikes, our preferences and intents, are mostly according to our natural and old life. But if we give ourselves to live the day-by-day Christian life, we will be

transformed a little at a time. Our mind will be renewed to become the mind of Christ. Our emotions will be transformed to love Christ supremely, to love the church with self-sacrifice, and to love the other believers without preference. God will operate in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). We will become a different being, not merely a new creation in our spirit but a new creation in our mind, emotion, and will for Christ’s magnification (1:20).

This metabolic transformation takes place by a day-by-day exercise of keeping our hearts turned to the Lord. Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul, plus our conscience, which is also the leading part of our spirit (Heb. 4:12; 10:22; John 16:6, 22). It is a great thing for us to turn our hearts to the Lord at the beginning of each new day and throughout the day. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul likens our heart to a mirror. Whatever a mirror beholds is what it simultaneously reflects. When we turn our hearts to the Lord, the veil is taken away from our hearts, and we are beholding the Lord face to face to be infused with Him as the Lord of glory. Also, this beholding is our reflecting of Him in magnifying Him for others to see and ministering Him for others to be supplied. Through this process the Lord dispenses Himself into us and into others for our transformation into His image. Christ Himself makes His home in our hearts for us to be filled with His riches, resulting in His full expression (Eph. 3:17, 19).

Turning our hearts to the Lord means that we need to always maintain a “clear sky” inwardly with the Lord. There should be nothing between the Lord and us. To have a “clear sky” is to have a good and pure conscience in God’s sight. There is a marvelous typological picture of this in Ezekiel 1 with the four living creatures, which represent the Body of Christ, the corporate Christ, in coordination for God’s move. Above these living creatures is a clear sky, so clear it is likened to “awesome crystal” (v. 22). Furthermore, above this clear sky there is Christ as the man-God on a sapphire throne (v. 26). This picture reveals that in our being we need a clear sky with the throne above it. This means that there is nothing between us and the Lord and that He is enthroned within us, to have the preeminence, the first place, in every part of our being, every detail of our living, and every aspect of our service to Him (Col. 1:18). To have Christ enthroned within us is to give Him the highest and most prominent position in our life. To have a conscience without offense, a clear sky with the Lord, and to have Him enthroned within us to be the Lord of our lives brings us experientially under His throne, His headship. This throne is sapphire, which is the color blue, signifying the heavenly condition, situation, and atmosphere of the Lord’s presence. When we have a clear sky with the Lord and He is enthroned within us, we are filled with His presence, and

His wonderful presence becomes our heavenly condition, fills our situation, and permeates our atmosphere, making us the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15).

Taking care of our conscience to have a clear sky with the Lord in a day-by-day way is seen in the pattern of the apostle Paul. When Paul was defending Himself and testified in his imprisonment before the Roman governor, he declared, "I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16). To maintain a conscience without offense toward God, we need to confess all of our known sins to Him. By the word *known* we mean the sins that are made known to us in the light of His presence through our fellowship with Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). When we confess our sins, the application of His forgiveness and the cleansing of His blood are automatic. Such daily confession in our fellowship with the Lord keeps us in the most personal and affectionate contact with Him, with no barriers or insulation to our fellowship with Him. Furthermore, to maintain a conscience without offense toward man, we need to forgive those who have offended us and seek the forgiveness of those whom we have offended. Such forgiving and seeking of forgiveness are not in our natural life with its pride, but thank the Lord that we have another life in us, the divine life, and this life is a forgiving life. Only this life has the capacity to forgive "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

Day by day we need to take the Lord as our forgiving life and forgive others from our heart. It is a very serious thing for us not to forgive. The Lord tells us that if we do not forgive others from our heart, our heavenly Father will not forgive us (6:14-15). Also, if we do not forgive others today in this life, we will receive some dispensational discipline from the Lord in the next age (18:21-35). We need to receive Paul's fellowship to us in Colossians where he says, "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...and let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts" (3:13, 15). The word *arbitrate* in this verse means "to umpire" and also "to be enthroned as a ruler and decider of everything." If we have a complaint against anyone whom we have not forgiven, we lose the peace of Christ in our hearts. We need to give Christ, who is our peace, the preeminence in our heart so that He may be enthroned in our being. Then He becomes our inward

Ruler and the Decider of any controversy, circumstance, or turmoil in which we find ourselves. As the Ruler within us, He always is motivating us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). He is also telling us to be reconciled to our brother, to seek others' forgiveness (5:23-24). In order to live a normal Christian life, it must be a governing maxim to us that we say to others: "Forgive me. I'm sorry." As Romans 12:18 says, "As far as it depends on you, live in peace with all men."

Romans 12:2 further reveals that our being transformed from glory to glory is by the renewing of our mind in and for the Body life. Christ's Body is not only the goal of our transformation but also the place of our transformation. God's desire and our daily Christian life are for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:16), which is a corporate experience in gatherings of fellowship with our fellow believers. The Christian life is not an individualistic life but a corporate Body life. For this Body life, we must present our physical bodies as a living sacrifice in gatherings with other believers for Christ's

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corporate expression and satisfaction. In God's eyes, this is our "reasonable service" to Him (Rom. 12:1). As we live a corporate meeting life in fellowship with other members of Christ's Body, our minds are continually being renewed with the thoughts of God. Furthermore, as we genuinely seek the Lord in a fellowship of oneness with other Christians, we are saved from lukewarmness and maintain the state of being "burning in spirit, serving the Lord" (v. 11). To live in the Body of Christ in such a corporate way is to be in the process of being transformed from glory to glory for the Lord's ongoing manifestation through us, the members of His Body.

Going from Strength to Strength in God's House

As we keep our hearts turned to the Lord and present ourselves to God for the practice of the Body life, we are not only transformed from one degree of glory to another, but we also "go from strength to strength" in the dwelling place of God (Psa. 84:7). The Gospel of John reveals, on the one hand, that God is our dwelling place and, on the other hand, that we are God's dwelling place. God dwells

in us, and we dwell in Him. This is the mutual abode of God and man, which is the divine-human incorporation of God and man. In our experience the Lord charges us to abide in Him, that is, to remain in Him, to stay in Him. “Abide in Me and I in you” (John 15:4). If we abide in Him as our dwelling place, He abides in us as His dwelling place. Christ is the reality of God’s tabernacle and temple (1:14; 2:19-22), and through His death and resurrection the church as His living and mystical Body became the house of God (14:2; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 3:6), God’s dwelling place (Eph. 2:22), God’s temple (v. 21; 1 Cor. 3:16-17). Our entering into and enjoying Christ as the reality of God’s dwelling place is our abiding in Him so that He may abide in us as His corporate dwelling place, which is the church, the house of the living God. The more that we enter into Him, the more He makes His home in us. The Lord Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him” (John 14:23). This is a mutual abode, in which the Lord abides in us and we abide in Him. The key to our experience of abiding in the Lord in order for Him to abide in us is for us to love Him. Day by day we should turn our heart to the Lord and exercise our spirit to say, “Lord Jesus, I love You.” The more we tell the Lord that we love Him, the more we will keep His word, which is His instant and inner speaking to us in our fellowship with Him. Through our loving Him, we enter into Him to enjoy all the riches contained in God, resulting in the mutual abode of God and man. By loving Him, we can enjoy Him as our ever-increasing strength. Although we are weak and frail in our natural man, we can go from strength to strength in the power of Christ as our dwelling place. Paul said that he even boasted in weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over him (2 Cor. 12:9).

Christ is revealed in the Gospel of John as the reality of the dwelling place of God, the tabernacle of God. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” The portrayal of Christ as the reality of God’s tabernacle is a remarkable revelation and is expressed in note 2 on John 1:14 in the Recovery Version of the Bible as “the deep thought of the Gospel of John”:

The deep thought of the Gospel of John is that Christ, the incarnate God, came as the embodiment of God, as illustrated by the tabernacle (v. 14) and the temple (2:21), so that man could contact Him and enter into Him to enjoy the riches contained in God. Both the tabernacle and the temple had an outer court, a Holy Place, and a Holy of Holies. Therefore, John points out first that Christ was the Lamb (who took away sin—v. 29) offered on the altar, which signifies the cross, in the outer court of the tabernacle, and then that He was like the bronze serpent (which caused man to have life) lifted up on the pole (3:14), which signifies the cross. This shows how

Christ in His redemption was received by His believers that they might be delivered from sin and obtain life and might enter into Him as the embodiment of God, typified by the tabernacle, to enjoy all the riches that are in God. The foot-washing in ch. 13 may be considered the washing in the laver in the outer court of the tabernacle, which washed away the earthly defilement of those who drew near to God, so that their fellowship with God and with one another could be maintained. In ch. 14 those who receive Christ are brought by Him into the Holy Place to experience Him as the bread of life (6:35), signified by the showbread, and as the light of life (8:12; 9:5), signified by the lampstand. Eventually, in ch. 17, through the highest and most mysterious prayer, which is typified by the burning incense on the golden incense altar, those who enjoy Christ as life and light are brought by Him into the Holy of Holies to enter with Him into the deepest enjoyment of God and to enjoy the glory that God has given Him. (17:22-24)

As the reality of the tabernacle, Christ is the “enterable” God. We can enter into Him just as the priests in the Old Testament entered into the tabernacle through the altar and the laver in the outer court, through the showbread table, the lampstand, and incense altar in the Holy Place, and then into the Holy of Holies. According to Psalm 84, we can go from strength to strength by entering into Christ as our dwelling place on the highways to Zion. Zion is the place where God is, and in the tabernacle this place is the Holy of Holies. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, / In whose heart are the highways to Zion” (v. 5). These blessed highways to Zion are the ways into Christ as the enterable God, the ways signified by the furniture in the tabernacle, through which the priests enter fully into God in the Holy of Holies for the enjoyment of all His riches. The burnt offering altar in the outer court and the incense altar in the Holy Place are both mentioned in Psalm 84 as part of these highways. The psalmist declares,

My soul longs, indeed even faints, / For the courts of Jehovah; / My heart and my flesh cry out / To the living God. / At Your two altars even the sparrow has found a home; / And the swallow, a nest for herself, / Where she may lay her young, / O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God. (vv. 2-3)

The two altars are the bronze altar for the sacrifices and the golden altar of incense (Exo. 40:5-6). The bronze altar signifies the crucified Christ, who was offered to God as the reality of all the Old Testament offerings to take away our sin (Heb. 10:5-10). The incense altar signifies the resurrected, ascended, interceding Christ, in whom we can participate by joining Him in His heavenly intercession for God’s purpose (7:25). We believers are typified by the weak, frail sparrows and swallows, but we can enjoy the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ as our home

for our rest, peace, and protection and as our nest in which we may produce new believers and nourish them for their growth in life. When we experience the resurrected, ascended, and interceding Christ typified by the golden altar of incense, we are accepted by God in such a Christ and find a home, a place of rest, in the house of God. On the one hand, this house is Christ Himself. On the other hand, this house is the Body of Christ in the present age and the New Jerusalem as the mutual dwelling place of God and His redeemed in eternity (Rev. 21:3, 22).

The dwelling place of God is not only the individual Christ but also the corporate Christ, the church as the Body of Christ. It is in the corporate church life, in fellowship with other believers in oneness, that we experience Christ as our strength and progress from one degree of divine strength to another in our inward being. If we live an individualistic Christian life, we will not experience Christ as our strength; instead, we will become progressively weaker. We must learn to not only depend upon the individual Christ as our Head but also on the corporate Christ as the Body (1 Cor. 12:12), which in practicality is to depend upon the members of Christ's Body. In our dependence on and fellowship with other members of Christ's Body, we can enjoy Christ as our multiplied strength. The strength that we experience in fellowship with other believers is seen in Deuteronomy 32:30, which says that one of God's people can chase a thousand and two can put ten thousand to flight. Concerning this, Watchman Nee says:

Mathematically speaking, if one can chase a thousand, two should only be able to chase two thousand. But in spiritual mathematics, one chases a thousand while two chase ten thousand. The strength of two persons put together is five times that of two who are considered separately. Two is the minimum corporate number. If two persons chase the enemy separately, they will not defeat ten thousand. This is a principle: The strength of the corporate Body is very great. God cares for the corporate Body. He does not care how much strength you have or how powerful you are as an individual. As long as you are an individual and not joined to others, you can only chase a thousand. But if you are joined to others, your strength will be increased fivefold. You have to see that you are only a member. You are limited and short. You need the other members. (*Mystery* 60)

In our fellowship with other members of Christ's Body as the church, we can progress from strength to strength. It

is in such a corporate church life experience, in the strength and power of Christ, that we can experience the promise in Romans 16:20: "Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." God promises here that He will crush Satan under the feet of those who live the corporate church life. When we live a life in the corporate fellowship of the church as the house of God, Christ will build us up as His church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against us (Matt. 16:18).

Receiving Grace upon Grace

In our personal fellowship with the Lord and with our fellow believers, our Christian life is a life of receiving grace upon grace (John 1:16). Grace is not merely unmerited favor; grace is a person—Christ Himself. John tells us that the law was given but that grace came (v. 17). When Christ was incarnated, grace came to man. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, "No longer I...but Christ" (lit.). In 1 Corinthians 15:10 he said, "Not I but the grace of God." The Greek word for *grace* means "that which occasions pleasure or

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delight." Grace is Christ Himself being dispensed into us for our pleasure, our enjoyment, so that He may be everything to us and do everything in us, through us, with us, and for us. Our Christian life should be an ever-increasing enjoyment of Christ. He is our daily joy, our daily satisfaction, our daily happiness, our daily peace, and our daily rest as our daily supply to meet all of our needs, not for our goal but for His desire to build up church as the Body of Christ.

The indwelling Christ is the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29) in our spirit. Galatians 6:18 says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." The words *with your spirit* are very crucial to our experience of Christ as grace. Grace is with our regenerated spirit, not with our unrenewed mind. Our regenerated spirit is a "country" of grace whereas our unrenewed mind is a "country" of vanity. Our regenerated spirit is a country of simplicity and oneness whereas our unrenewed mind is a country of division and confusion. Every day we must decide which country we want to live in. Paul charges us not to walk as the nations do in the vanity of their mind, as those who are alienated from the life of God (Eph. 4:17-18). Instead, we should walk by the

Spirit of grace in our spirit, walk according to the spirit, and set our mind on the spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4, 6). Then our spirit will spread into our mind to become “the spirit of [our] mind,” and our mind will be renewed with the thoughts and considerations of God (Eph. 4:23).

Grace is the moving, acting, and anointing of the Spirit within us, and our spirit is the only place where we can experience grace. The way to receive and enjoy grace is to turn to the spirit, exercise the spirit, and enthrone the Lord. In Hebrews 4:16 Paul said, “Let us...come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.” Note 1 on this verse in the Recovery Version shows that the secret of our coming to the throne of grace in heaven in order to live a heavenly life on earth is our spirit:

The very Christ who is sitting on the throne in heaven (Rom. 8:34) is also now in us (Rom. 8:10), that is, in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), where the habitation of God is (Eph. 2:22). At Bethel, the house of God, the habitation of God, which is the gate of heaven, Christ is the ladder that joins earth to heaven and brings heaven to earth (Gen. 28:12-17; John 1:51). Since today our spirit is the place of God’s habitation, it is now the gate of heaven, where Christ is the ladder that joins us, the people on earth, to heaven, and brings heaven to us. Hence, whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter through the gate of heaven and touch the throne of grace in heaven through Christ as the heavenly ladder.

The throne of grace is in our spirit, and we need to receive the abundance of grace into our inward parts so that grace may reign within us for us to reign in life over Satan, sin, and death (Rom. 5:17, 21; Heb. 4:16; Rev. 4:2). The Lord wants us to be filled with Him as grace to such an extent that He becomes a throne of grace within our entire being. Thus, we are ruled, governed, controlled, and restricted inwardly, not by a code of right and wrong but by the enjoyment of Christ as the Spirit of grace in our spirit. Whenever we come to the throne of grace by turning to our spirit and calling upon the name of the Lord, we should enthrone the Lord, giving Him the headship, the kingship, and the lordship within us (Col. 1:18; Rev. 4:2). Day by day we need to honor Him by enthroning Him as our Head, Lord, and King, giving Him the first place, the highest and most prominent position, in every part of our being and in every detail of our life.

According to Revelation 22:1, a river of water of life is proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This shows that the Spirit as the river of water of life, the river of grace, flows out from the throne of grace to supply us. Whenever we fail to enthrone the Lord, the flow of grace stops. To sin is to dethrone God, for sin is lawlessness, rebellion against God (1 John 3:4). The first sin

by Lucifer was his rebellious attempt to dethrone God, to replace God on the throne (Isa. 14:12-15). This sin, which is the element of this rebellious angelic one, who is now Satan, has contaminated fallen man. As a result, in our fallen state we want self to be on the throne. We want to be the decider, ruler, and director of our lives. In our hearts we may say concerning Christ, “We do not want this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). When self is on the throne, there is no supply of grace. When self is on the throne, sin reigns in our lives. In her classic work *Life on the Highest Plane*, Ruth Paxson says,

To many Christians the most difficult thing they have to do is to consent willingly to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their whole being. They are loath to admit the necessity of the absolute dethronement of “the old man” and the perfect enthronement of the Lord Jesus. As someone has very aptly said, “I was quite willing that Jesus Christ should be King, so long as He allowed me to be Prime Minister.” But Christ shares His Lordship with no one and unless “He is Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.” (217)

We need to make Christ the center of our lives, the Lord of all within us, by giving Him the first place in all things (Col. 1:18). In this way we can be those who are continually receiving and enjoying the grace of the Lord in our spirit.

The receiving of Christ as the Spirit of grace is a lifelong, continuous matter, a matter of receiving grace upon grace. We received Christ as our grace by believing into Him, but our receiving of Him should not stop. The continual receiving of Christ as grace into our inner being is one of the most crucial things in the Christian life. Day by day a marvelous, divine transmission should be taking place in us as God supplies the Spirit of grace bountifully, and we receive the Spirit of grace continually by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:5, 2). “Faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). We should not be characterized as working Christians but as hearing Christians. We need to pray that we may have an ear to hear what the Spirit is speaking to the churches (Rev. 2:7). The proper Christian meeting is a hearing meeting, a meeting of receiving grace. We believers in Christ come together to hear God’s direct, personal speaking to us. God dispenses Himself into us by His speaking. John 3:34 says, “He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit not by measure.” Christ supplies Himself to us as the immeasurable Spirit of grace by speaking to us the word of God.

Being Constituted with the Word— Here a Little, There a Little

We can receive grace upon grace by the word of God,

and we also need to be constituted with the word of God. According to the context of Isaiah 28:13, the way that we are constituted with God's word is "line upon line, line upon line; / Here a little, there a little." In a certain sense, the Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle, with the various pieces of the divine revelation of God scattered and spread throughout its sixty-six books. A. T. Pierson, in the introduction of his book, *The Key Words of the Bible*, says, "Dr. A. J. Gordon likens Scriptural teachings to a dissected picture, the fragments of which are scattered through the Word, needing to be brought together, laid side by side, matched and jointed, that they may present one complete view of truth" (vi-vii). In order for these fragments to come together for the impartation and unveiling of vista after vista of God's eternal purpose and heart's desire, we need to build up a habit of reading the Bible daily. We should make it our lifelong practice to read the Bible every day, from beginning to end, year by year, by reading through the New Testament once a year and through the Old Testament either once a year or every two years. We need to redeem our time and spend our energy to be saturated and soaked with God's holy Word by daily reading the Word.

The Word of God has certain divine characteristics, which reveal that everything in God's heart, in God's purpose, in our Christian life, and in our church life depends upon the speaking of God. The Word of God speaks of itself as the following items:

1. The exhalation, the breath, of God—2 Tim. 3:16; John 6:63.
2. The laver with the sanctifying, living water—Eph. 5:26.
3. Milk—1 Pet. 2:2.
4. Honey—Psa. 119:103; 19:10; cf. S. S. 4:11.
5. Bread—Matt. 4:4; John 6:48-51, 57, 63, 68.
6. Solid food—Heb. 5:12-14; Job 23:12.
7. A lamp—Psa. 119:105.
8. A light—v. 130; Phil. 2:15-16.
9. An abode—John 8:31; 15:7.
10. Fire—Jer. 23:29; cf. Exo. 13:21-22.
11. A hammer—Jer. 23:29.
12. Rain—Isa. 55:10-11.
13. Snow—vv. 10-11.
14. A Sword—Heb. 4:12.
15. A Discerner, a Critic—v. 12.
16. A Mirror—Eph. 5:26; Exo. 38:8.
17. Gold and silver (riches)—Psa. 119:72, 14, 127, 162; 19:10.
18. Seed—Luke 8:11.
19. Joy—Jer. 15:16.
20. Healing—Prov. 4:20-22.

The items listed above concerning the Word of God are scattered throughout the Bible—"here a little, there a little." When we put all of these pieces together, we can see how wonderful God's Word is. All Scripture is God-breathed, according to 2 Timothy 3:16. Thus, the Scripture is the very breath of God, the exhaling of God.

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In Ephesians 5:26 the word of God is likened to the laver in the outer court of the tabernacle. We are sanctified by "the laver of the water in the word" (lit.). Just as the priests were cleansed from earthly defilement by the laver, we are cleansed, sanctified, from earthly defilement by the washing of our inner being with the living water of God's sanctifying word. God's word is also milk for us to drink, honey for us to enjoy, bread for us to eat, and solid food for our spiritual maturity (1 Pet. 2:2; Psa. 119:103; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 5:14). It is a lamp and a light for our Christian walk to direct us on our divine journey and is even our abode in which we may dwell (Psa. 119:105, 130; John 8:31; 15:7). The word of God burns within us as a fire for our purification and acts as a hammer to break up all the hardness of our heart, making the soil of our heart soft toward the Lord for His growth within us (Jer. 23:29). God's word is even likened to rain and snow to water His people and saturate them with His heavenly thoughts and ways (Isa. 55:10-11). His word is sharper than any two-edged sword to divide our soul from our spirit, thus becoming a discernor of the thoughts and intentions of our heart, a critic of anything in our mind,

emotion, and will that is not according to God's being, nature, desire, way, and preference (Heb. 4:12). The word of God is a mirror to show us our true condition, saving us from self-deception. The psalmist valued the word of God above all the wealth of gold and silver (Psa. 119:72). The Lord told us that the seed sown into the heart of man is the word of God; this seed contains the life-germ of the Triune God so that we may grow with the growth of God unto a full-grown man (Luke 8:11). According to Jeremiah, he ate God's words, and they became to him the joy and rejoicing of his heart (15:16). In the book of Proverbs God charges us to keep His words in the midst of our heart so that they can become life to us and even healing to all of our flesh (4:20-22). How marvelous God's word is!

Whenver we read the Word of God, it is important for us to turn our hearts to the Lord. According to 2 Corinthians 3:15 a veil was on the heart of the unbelieving people when they read the books of Moses in the Old Testament, because their heart was turned away from the Lord. Second Corinthians 3:16 says, however, that whenever our heart turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. As we are reading the Word of God, we must turn our hearts to the Lord to see Him, the living Word, in His written Word. Furthermore, as we contact the living Word in His written Word, He becomes the applied word to us. This applied word is the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63, 68; 2 Cor. 3:6). In John 5:39-40 the Lord said, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." This shows that it is possible to separate the written Word, the Scriptures, from the living Word, Christ. Every time we come to God's written Word, we must come to Christ as the living Word and turn our hearts to Him in prayer. When we read the Word with prayer and in an atmosphere of prayer, Christ becomes our spiritual food, the bread of life to us (6:57, 63; Eph. 6:17-18).

The psalmist in Psalm 119 charges us to meditate, or muse, upon God's word (vv. 15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148). To muse

implies to worship, to converse with oneself, and to speak aloud. To muse on the word is to taste and enjoy it through careful considering. Prayer, speaking to oneself, and praising the Lord may also be included in musing on the word. To muse on the word of God is to enjoy His word as His breath (2 Tim. 3:16) and thus to be infused with God, to breathe God in, and to receive spiritual nourishment. (Recovery Version, Psa. 119:15, note 1)

A person who muses upon God's word is likened in the Old Testament to an animal who chews the cud and has a divided hoof (Lev. 11:3). To chew the cud signifies the

genuine musing upon God's word, which is the receiving of God's word with much re-consideration. To divide the hoof means that we have a godly discernment in our daily walk to discriminate between good and evil and even more between what is according to Christ and what is not. When we receive God's word in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer and fellowship with God, and consider and reconsider it throughout the day in the presence of God, we are saturated with the thoughts of God, the feelings of God, and the light of God. Then our daily life will be a holy life for the church life, a life of sanctification in being saturated with God and a life of honor in expressing God. By spending time in the truth of God's word day by day, we will be gradually constituted with Him, the light of His presence will become brighter and brighter within us, and we will hold forth the word of life, which is to offer, present, and apply the word to others through our living and proclaiming of Christ (Phil. 2:15-16).

Prophesying One by One in the Meetings of the Church

The proclaiming of Christ, the speaking forth of Christ, and the speaking of Christ into others is our prophesying. Prophesying can have the element of foretelling, or predicting, the future, but prophesying is mainly to speak for the Lord and to speak Him forth. First Corinthians 14 charges all of Christ's believers to pursue, earnestly desire, and seek to prophesy. "Seek that you may excel for the building up of the church" (v. 12). To excel for the building up of the church is to prophesy, since "he who prophesies builds up the church" (v. 4). What a great thing it is to build up the church! The Lord prophesied, "I will build My church" in Matthew 16:18. The way that He builds His church is by His speaking in us and through us to dispense Himself into His chosen ones for His growth within them.

This also fulfills the Lord's words in John 7, where He said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit..." (vv. 37-39). The words *drink* and *flow* are the characteristics of a prophesying life, which is the normal Christian life. We drink of Christ as the Spirit to be constituted with Him so that we may flow Him out by speaking Him forth, by prophesying. Christ is the real spiritual rock, who was cleft on the cross, to flow Himself out as the living water of resurrection to be our spiritual drink (1 Cor. 10:4). According to the Old Testament type, we are to "speak to the rock...so that it yields its water" (Num. 20:8). When we call on the name of the Lord and speak to Him by conversing with Him in prayer, we drink of Him as the one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3, 13). Drinking the one Spirit constitutes us with the Spirit

to be His one Body. This spiritual drinking is so that we may flow Him out for others to drink. Prophesying is the flowing of the rivers of living water out of our spirit into others' spirits. This is the genuine ministry of the word, which is the ministry of the Spirit as the divine river that gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). We need to follow the example of the early apostles, who devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). Prayer is our drinking the Spirit; the ministry of the word is our flowing out the Spirit. He who prophesies, who flows out the Spirit, ministering God's word to transmit the Spirit, gives Christ as life to others to build up the church.

The proper church meeting revealed in 1 Corinthians 14 is a meeting where the attendants can "all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (v. 31). There is a distinct difference between a ministry meeting and a proper church meeting. A ministry meeting is a gathering in which one or a few gifted members function to perfect the other members by ministering the word of God. This kind of meeting is for the "perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). A meeting for ministry, while greatly needed, should never replace a proper church meeting. Regrettably, what is mostly seen throughout the earth are meetings for ministry, not genuine church meetings according to the revelation of 1 Corinthians 14. In a proper church meeting "each one has" a portion of Christ to present to others for the building up of the church (v. 26). The proper church meeting is not a "pulpit and pew" meeting, but a "round table" meeting, a meeting in which "each one has." A "round table" meeting is a meeting of mutuality, a meeting in which each one shares with the other attendants the Christ whom he has seen, experienced, and enjoyed through prayer and in the Word of God. The proper church meeting is not a function of the clergy to speak to the laity but a gathering of the living and functioning members of Christ's Body to speak forth Christ to one another. It is a meeting that is the fulfillment of Ephesians 4:16, which says that "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." In a proper church meeting, all the Body causes the growth of the Body, that is, all the members function to dispense Christ as life into one another to cause them to grow in life. In a proper church meeting, the gifted members function as the

joints to dispense the rich supply, and the perfected members operate according to their measures as each one part. The joints and the parts work together to prophesy one by one, to minister Christ one by one, in order to build up the church as the Body of Christ.

Such prophesying requires a prophesying life composed of three constituting elements: (1) a daily learning in the Word of God, (2) a daily seeing and enjoying of Christ, and (3) a continuous exercise of our spirit to have the fresh inspiration, enlightenment, and utterance of the Spirit. First Corinthians 14:31 says that we prophesy that "all may learn." For others to learn through our ministry requires that we must learn first. A teacher cannot teach something that he himself has not learned. Such learning is not a mere learning of the doctrines of the Bible. It is a learning to know the living Christ revealed in the Word, a learning "to know Him" (Phil. 3:10; Eph. 4:20-21). It is a learning of daily contacting the Lord in the Bible through prayer so that the light of His presence shines on the facts of the Bible to convey a heavenly vision of those facts into our being. Christ as the living Word is revealed to us

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through His written Word (Gk. *logos*), and the speaking of Christ to us through His written word is the Spirit as the applied word to our being (Gk. *rhema*). The words that the indwelling Christ speaks to us are spirit and are life for us to be supplied with Christ to live Him for His magnification as we exercise our spirit to walk by the Spirit. Day by day our prayer should be: "Lord, teach me how to exercise / My spirit now to contact Thee, / That in Thy Spirit I may walk / And live by Thy reality" (*Hymns*, #493, stanza 5). As we build up the habit to live such a life, we can be those who speak for the Lord to minister Him into others.

Such divine speaking is seen in Acts 5:20 in the charge of the angel of the Lord to Peter and the apostles to "go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." The word *this* ("this life") shows that Peter's living and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw it and pointed it out. The angelic emissary of God was charging Peter to speak the words of "this" life. "This" life is the divine life that we are presently enjoying, being filled with, and growing

with day by day. "This" life is Christ Himself in His present presence as our intrinsic person and indwelling reality. We need speak with the living words of "this" life under the fresh inspiration and instant enlightenment of the Spirit through the exercise of our spirit. This is genuine prophesying, the speaking of the Spirit in us and through us to dispense Christ into others in the meetings of the church for the building up of the church.

Meeting with Our Fellow Believers from House to House

The New Testament reveals that the meetings of mutuality to dispense Christ into one another are mostly in the homes of the believers; they are meetings "from house to house." Acts 2:46, 5:42, and 20:20 describe how the early believers met at the very inception of the church life; day by day they met in one accord and broke bread from house to house, every day the apostles taught and announced the gospel from house to house, and Paul taught the believers in Ephesus from house to house. This meeting by houses in Acts has its precursor and model in the Gospel of John, where we see the Lord meeting in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (12:1-11; cf. Mark 14:3). Martha is serving the Lord, Mary is loving the Lord, and Lazarus is testifying of the Lord. Such serving, loving, and testifying were in a home with a supper (John 12:2). How precious that a small meeting in a believer's home in fellowship with the Lord over a meal would be recorded in the sacred writings as an eternal memorial to God and as an inspirational pattern to His believers! What a privilege it is to open our homes to other believers for fellowship in and with the Lord! Such intimate, house-to-house fellowship should be practiced by us so much the more as we see the day of the Lord's second coming drawing near. Such a fellowship is a "one another" meeting in which we exhort "one another" and consider "one another" so as to incite "one another" to love and good works (Heb. 10:24-25).

In *The Normal Christian Church Life*, Watchman Nee insightfully speaks of the scriptural principle and way of the believers' meeting in their homes:

The grand edifices of today, with their lofty spires, speak of the world and the flesh rather than of the Spirit, and in many ways they are not nearly as well suited to the purpose of Christian assembly as the private homes of God's people. In the first place, people feel much freer to speak of spiritual things in the unconventional atmosphere of a home than in a spacious church building where everything is conducted in a formal manner; besides, there is not the same possibility for mutual intercourse there. Somehow, as soon as people enter into those special buildings, they involuntarily settle down to passivity,

and wait to be preached to. A family atmosphere should pervade all gatherings of the children of God, so that the brothers even feel free to ask questions (1 Cor. 14:35). Everything should be under the control of the Spirit, but there should be the liberty of the Spirit too. Further, if the churches are in the private homes of the brethren, they naturally feel that all the interests of the church are their interests. There is a sense of closeness of relationship between themselves and the church. Many Christians feel that church affairs are something quite beyond them. They have no intimate concern in them, because in the first place they have their "minister" who is specially responsible for all such affairs, and then they have a great church building which seems so remote from their homes, and where matters are conducted so systematically and with such precision that one feels overpowered and bound in spirit.

Still further, the meetings in the believers' homes can be a fruitful testimony to the neighbors around, and they provide an opportunity for witness and gospel preaching. Many who are not willing to go to a "church" will be glad to go to a private house. And the influence is most helpful for the families of the Christians. From early days the children will be surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere, and will have constant opportunity to see the reality of eternal things. Again, if meetings are in the homes of the Christians, the Church is saved much material loss. One of the reasons the Christians survived the Roman persecutions during the first three centuries of Church history, was that they had no special buildings for worship, but met in cellars and caves and other inconspicuous places. Such meeting places were not readily discovered by their persecutors; but the large and costly edifices of today would be easily located and destroyed, and the churches would be speedily wiped out. The imposing structures of our modern times convey an impression of the world rather than of the Christ whose name they bear. (169-170)

Indeed, the difference between the Christian faith and that of other religions is that the meeting place is not a physical structure but living persons. God's building is not composed of material stones but of the believers as living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). We do not "go to church"; we are the church. We do not go to a place of worship; we are the place of worship (Eph. 2:22). We do not worship God with outward rituals but in our regenerated spirit with Christ as reality (John 4:24). We are the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 3:16).

As we gather into the Lord's name in the sphere of His personal presence, He is in our midst (Matt. 18:20). As we meet from house to house in intimate "vertical" fellowship with God and sweet "horizontal" fellowship with one another, we experience His shepherding care, and the

divine love prevails among us. Such love for one another displays to the unbelieving world that we are the true disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35). Our homes should be filled with the fragrance of our love for the Lord and for one another, just as the fragrance of the costly ointment, which Mary poured out on the Lord Jesus in her love for Him, filled the house in Bethany where His believers were gathered (12:3). The Lord Jesus prophesied that wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what Mary did in that home meeting in the small town of Bethany would be spoken of as a memorial of her (Matt. 26:13). This shows that the story of the gospel is not only that the Lord loves us but also that we love Him, and in this divine love, we love one another. The Lord's love for us was for our complete salvation; our love for Him is for our full consecration. In the house-to-house meetings with one another, we are infused with God as love, and in that love we are motivated to "lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers" (1 John 3:16).

Gaining Christ as the Reality of the Good Land Little by Little

As we live a day-by-day normal Christian life in a normal church life from house to house, we gain Christ and grow in Christ a little at a time. The way that the children of Israel gained the good land was "little by little" (Exo. 23:30). The good land is an all-inclusive type of Christ. Paul said in

Colossians that we each have a share of Christ as our "allotted portion" (1:12). Here Paul was referring to the picture of each of the children of Israel being allotted a portion of the good land as their inheritance (Josh. 14:1). In the New Testament reality we have been allotted a portion of Christ as our divine inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14; Acts 26:18). The entire history of the children of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the good land is a type of the history of the New Testament believers (1 Cor. 10:6, 11). The Passover typifies Christ for our redemption and salvation to bring us out from Satan's domination and the world's usurpation, typified by Pharaoh and Egypt (5:7). The manna and the living water out of the cleft rock typify Christ for our daily supply and sustenance in the wilderness of our human life so that we may be reconstituted with Him (10:3-4). The good land signifies Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit who indwells our spirit to be our divine and mystical realm in which we walk and our divine and rich soil for us to absorb. "As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, having been rooted and being built up in Him" (Col. 2:6-7). To walk in Christ

means that He is our land, and to be rooted in Christ means that He is our soil.

We walk in Christ as our living land and absorb Him as our rich soil so that we may be saturated with His divine nutrients to grow "with the growth of God" (v. 19). God does not grow in Himself, but as we walk in Christ and absorb Christ moment by moment and day by day, He grows in us, and we grow with the growth of God within us. This growth of God within us through the daily absorption of the riches of Christ is the building up of the Body of Christ. We are God's cultivated land, rooted in Christ and absorbing Christ, and we are God's building, being built up in Christ and transformed with Christ (1 Cor. 3:9). Just as the temple was built through the enjoyment of the riches of the good land by the children of Israel, the church is built through our enjoyment of the riches of Christ.

We need to send our roots deeper into Christ day by day and little by little to enjoy Him more and more. We need to develop a "root system" in Christ, a hidden life with

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Him, in a daily way. The unseen roots hidden under the soil are the key to the health, growth, and stability of what is manifested and seen of the plant above the soil. For us to be rooted in Christ implies that we must have much unseen, secret contact with Christ, much secret enjoyment of Christ, so that we may be healthy in Christ and the beauty of Christ may be displayed through us. This is why the Lord Jesus charges us in the following way: "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" (Matt. 6:6). The words *private* and *secret* indicate an unseen, hidden life with the Lord that is not for the glory of man but for the glory of God. As we enter into our private room day by day to have a personal time with the Lord in prayer and in His word, we absorb Him little by little, and our natural life and person are gradually replaced with Christ as our life and person. "God cuts off our natural life gradually, little by little, according to the degree of our growth in the divine life...The more Christ increases in us, the more He will replace our natural life" (Recovery Version, Exo. 23:29, note 1).

Our daily Christian life in which Christ increases in us should be something consistent and normal. Just like our breathing, drinking, and eating physical food are normal, day-by-day practices, our breathing, drinking, and eating Christ should be a normal, day-by-day practice. Just as walking in the light of the sun should be our daily experience, walking in Christ as the light of life should be our daily experience. Just as living and resting in our homes is our normal enjoyment, abiding in Christ as our dwelling place should be our normal enjoyment. Enjoying Christ as these daily necessities is not a spectacular, episodic experience but a regular, day-by-day experience. A normal Christian life is not a life of periodic great revivals but a life of normal revivals day by day. Such a normal and daily revival, like the dawning of a new day with the rising of the sun, are for the dispensing of God into our being. God's intention is to daily dispense Himself in Christ as the Spirit into our being so that He may increase within us to build us up to be the Body of Christ and prepare us to be the bride of Christ, the wife of Christ, the New Jerusalem. Such a daily dispensing of God into our being is something normal, constant, ordinary, and recurrent. Concerning this, Witness Lee says the following:

We have to realize that very few spiritual things are accomplished once for all. As with our physical life, most spiritual things must be repeated again and again. For example, we need to eat, drink, and breathe for our physical life every day; we cannot graduate from these things. However, we do not need to do these things excessively; we simply need to do them in small portions over a long period of time. Likewise, the calmer our Christian life is, the better it will be. Daily we should allow the Father to dispense His life and nature into us. This can be compared to electricity, which steadily flows bit by bit into the house. If too much comes in all at once, it will be dangerous. We must see first that whatever our God wants us to do, He does not want us to do it by our own striving, but by Him. Second, whatever God gives us is not given all at once so that it becomes unbearable to us. Rather, it is given bit by bit. For this reason, we have to live a steady and normal Christian life. The less special and the more normal we are, the better. (*Deeper Study* 152)

We should not expect to have a spectacular time each day in receiving the divine dispensing. I recently spoke a word to the trainees in the full-time training concerning their daily spiritual life. I told them not to expect to have a spectacular result in their Christian life. We should forget about having something spectacular. We must learn to be satisfied with ordinary days which are filled with regular and normal practices in the divine dispensing. In the morning we should have some time with the Lord to touch Him and be revived by Him. Then we need to pass through a daily routine to get ready for work. To live a life

in the divine dispensing in a normal way will make us healthy both physically and spiritually. Whether or not we have good or bad days is not up to us; it is up to His sovereignty. He has already chosen us, and it is too late to turn back. We are blessed because the processed and consummated Triune God is within us. He is in us, not in a spectacular way but in a very ordinary way.

We should be blessed to be satisfied with ordinary days in the divine dispensing. The Triune God is certainly in us, but His being in us is not spectacular. Every day He is within us dispensing and positively strengthening and encouraging us...Our destiny is to live an ordinary life in the divine dispensing. Our Father God has destined that we live in an ordinary way under His continual dispensing. (*Divine Dispensing* 37-38)

We need to ask the Lord to grant us to live such a normal Christian life for a normal church life. Then we will be renewed day by day, shine brighter and brighter, hear His voice morning by morning, be transformed from glory to glory, go from strength to strength, receive grace upon grace, be constituted with the truth here a little and there a little, speak for the Lord one by one, practice the church life house to house, and gain Christ little by little. Then each of our days will be worth a thousand years with the Lord (2 Pet. 3:8; Psa. 84:10), He will restore to us the years that we have wasted, the years that the locust has eaten (Joel 2:25), and we will have a daily living that is a memorial to God for His eternal purpose to build up the church as the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem. **AFC**

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