

# THE PRAYER AND THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST THAT WE MUST HAVE FOR GOD'S BUILDING

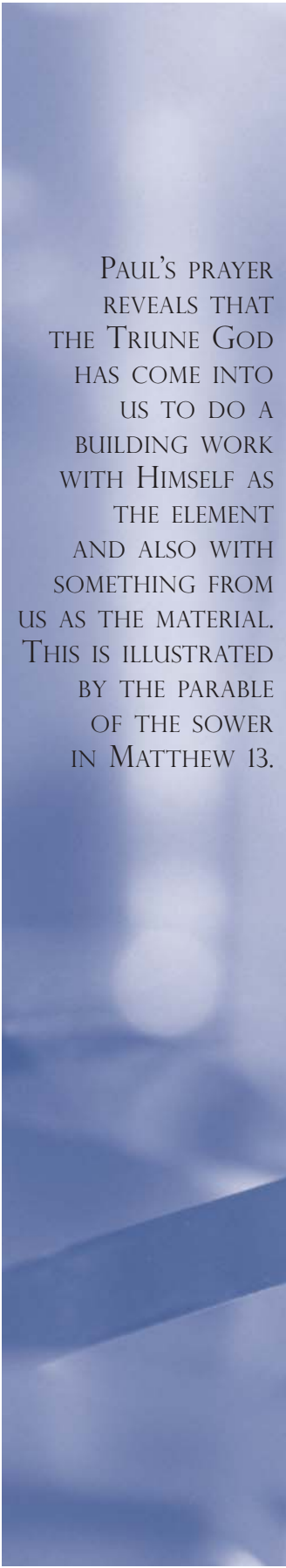
BY ED MARKS

If we have a proper spiritual understanding of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3, we will realize that we must buy the anointing Spirit as the eyesalve to anoint our eyes so that we might see God's eternal goal, God's heart's desire, and God's central thought, which are the meaning of the universe, the meaning of man, and the fulfillment of the aspiration, longing, and desire in man's heart for eternity (Rev. 3:18; Eccl. 3:11; Hag. 2:7; cf. Gen. 3:9). We buy the Spirit as the eyesalve by being poor in spirit, which is to be willing to become nothing, to be nobody, realizing that we have nothing, know nothing, and are nothing, in order to be an empty vessel available to be filled with Christ for the building up of the church. This is the real denial of the self for the best enjoyment of Christ today and the highest enjoyment of Christ in His millennial reign (Matt. 5:3; 16:18, 24-26; 25:21; 19:24; Phil. 2:5). We buy the Spirit by buying the truth as the reality of the shining word of God, buying gold refined by fire as the riches of God, and buying white garments so that we may be clothed with Christ as the weapons of light (Prov. 23:23; Rev. 3:18; Luke 12:21; Rom. 13:11-14).

God's goal, desire, and central thought are all related to His building. God's building is a divine-human person, a God-man (Gen. 2:22; Matt. 16:18; Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Acts 9:4-5, 15; John 14:23). God's building is God becoming man that man might become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. In His humanity Christ became a joining ladder, joining heaven (God) and earth (man) into one for the building of Bethel, the spiritual house of God (Gen. 28:12-17; John 1:51; Rom. 1:3-4). God became man through incarnation (bringing heaven to earth), and man becomes God through regeneration and transformation (joining earth to heaven). God's building in the Gospels is the individual God-man, Jesus, who is the tabernacle and temple of God (John 1:14; 2:19). God's building in Acts and the Epistles is the new man, the church, as the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh, the house of the living God, and the masterpiece of the Triune God (Acts 9:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Eph. 2:10, 15, 21-22; Col. 2:19; 3:10-11). God's building in Revelation is the ultimate, consummate, great corporate God-man, the New Jerusalem, the "bride-building," the eternal mutual abode of God being built into man as the tabernacle of God and of man being built into God as the temple of God (21:2-3, 9-10, 22). God is building Himself into man and building man into Himself for the building up of the church as the house of God for His expression and as the kingdom of God for His dominion to fulfill His original intention for man (Gen. 1:26; Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17; John 14:23; Luke 17:21; Dan. 2:35, 44).

## **Paul's Prayer for God's Goal, God's Desire, and God's Central Thought concerning His Building**

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:16 through 21 is his greatest prayer, since it is a prayer for our subjective experience of the central work of God. God's goal, God's heart's desire,



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IN MATTHEW 13.

and God's central thought concerning His building need to be our goal, our desire, and our central thought:

That He [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

The heart of the divine revelation is Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Ephesians is the heart of the heart of the divine revelation, and the heart of Ephesians is Ephesians 3:16 through 21. Thus, we may say that Ephesians 3:16 through 21 is the heart of the heart of the heart of the entire Bible. Paul's prayer here depicts his spirit, attitude, prayer, and faith. This should likewise be the spirit, attitude, prayer, and faith of believers who serve the Lord for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ.

**P**aul's prayer reveals that the Triune God has come into us to do a building work with Himself as the element and also with something from us as the material. This is illustrated by the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. The Lord sows Himself as the seed of life into human hearts, the soil, so that He might grow and live in them and be expressed from within them (v. 3). The seed is sown into the soil to grow with the nutrients of the soil. As a result, the produce is a composition of elements from both the seed and the soil (v. 23). We have within us certain nutrients created by God as a preparation for His coming into us to grow in us. God has created the human spirit with the human nutrients along with the human heart as the soil for the divine seed (cf. 1 Pet. 3:4). The rate at which we grow in life depends not on the divine seed but on how many nutrients we afford this seed. The more nutrients we supply, the faster the seed will grow, and the more it will flourish (Matt. 5:3, 8; cf. Ps. 78:8).

If we remain in our soul, in our natural man, there will not be any nutrients for the growth of the divine seed, but if we are strengthened into our inner man and if we pay attention to our spirit and exercise our spirit, the nutrients will be supplied, and Christ will make His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:16-19; Rom. 8:6; 1 Tim. 4:7). If we would have the Lord as the seed of life grow within us to be our full enjoyment, we need to open to the Lord absolutely and cooperate with Him to deal thoroughly with our heart (Matt. 13:3-9, 19-23). Our heart should not be hardened by the worldly traffic on the wayside; it should not have hidden rocks, such as hidden sins, personal ambitions, selfish desires, and self-pity, and it should be freed from the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches. Then our heart will be the good earth in which Christ as the seed of life can freely grow and make His home. On the one hand, God strengthens us with Himself as the element; on the other hand, we afford the nutrients. Through these two, God in Christ carries out His intrinsic building—the building of His home—in our entire inner being.

In "Living in and with the Divine Trinity," Witness Lee likens the Triune God to an organic "machine" that needs an operator:

Christ's making His home in the believers' hearts was initiated not by the Triune God but actually by the apostle Paul. The Triune God may be likened to a big machine, of which Paul was the operator. His prayer "turned the wheel." We have to learn one lesson, that is, that there is a high principle in the entire universe. This principle is that God wants to do something, but He will only be the "machine," and He needs someone to be the operator...Whatever the apostle Paul did was done in a representing way. He was a representative of the entire Body of Christ. Now the operator of the universal "machine," the

Triune God, is the church, the Body of Christ...The church operates, but the “machine,” the Triune God, carries out.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the three “parts” of this universal “machine,” and the Body is the operator. The Father is the source, the Spirit is the means, and the Son is the aim, the goal. According to Ephesians 3, the operator asks the “machine” to strengthen the operator through a channel. The Spirit as the channel does the work within us to strengthen every part of our being into the inner man so that the goal, the aim, the Son, might make His home within all the parts of our heart. (*Collected* 320-321)

If we pray the prayer in Ephesians 3 on a regular basis, it will give the Lord the way to strengthen us into the inner man and the freedom to make His home in our hearts in order to obtain the church as the fullness of God. Our inner man is our regenerated spirit with God’s life as its life. This implies that we need to be strengthened into our spirit through the Holy Spirit every day. Our inner man, our spirit, should be the strongest part of our being. We need to be examples of people who exercise their spirit (1 Tim. 4:7; cf. 1 Cor. 2:15) and who are continually strengthened into the inner man.

Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul—our mind, will, and emotion—plus the main part of our spirit—our conscience. The power with which we are strengthened is God’s resurrecting power, His ascending power, His subjecting power, and His heading-up power, as described in Ephesians 1:19 through 23. With this fourfold power God the Father strengthens us through His Spirit into the inner man so that Christ can spread out from our inner man to make our hearts His home. This is the power that raised Christ from the dead, that seated Christ at the right hand of God in the heavenlies, that subjected all things under His feet, and that gave Christ to be head over all things to the church. This fourfold power operates in us (vv. 19-23), and with such a power God strengthens us for the building up of the church.

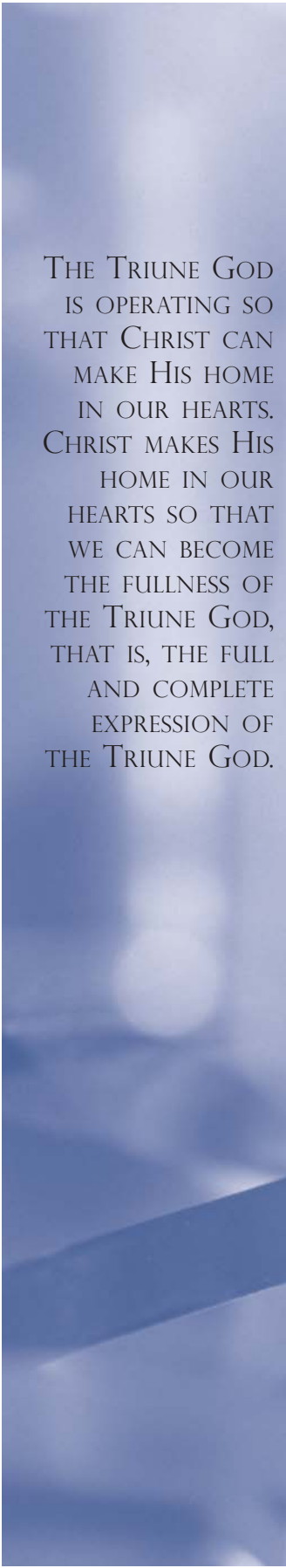
The word *power* in Greek is *dunamis*, from which the word *dynamite* is derived. We can be so strong in our self that we need to be “blasted” out of the self into the inner man. God is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think according to the *dunamis* that operates in us. He strengthens us into our inner man with resurrecting, ascending, subjecting, and heading-up power so that Christ may spread out from our inner man into all the rooms of our heart, which are our mind, emotion, will, and conscience. The issue of this strengthening is Christ making His home in our hearts.

*Hearts* in Ephesians 3:17 is an important word; it implies that Christ can be sensed in us and that we can respond to Christ dwelling in us. Our heart is the organ of our feeling and emotion, and it is where Christ makes His home in us. Paul never neglected the need to work Christ into man; he was obsessed with the matter of Christ increasing in us, which was his central concern because it is God’s central concern. Here the word *obsessed* is used in the positive sense, meaning “to have the mind preoccupied with a single emotion or topic.” Paul was preoccupied with this matter; it became his spirit and attitude. When he wrote Ephesians 3:16 through 21, he transcended even the universe. His prayer brings us into God’s central thought, God’s central work, God’s heart’s desire, and God’s ultimate goal, which are to work out the New Jerusalem by building up the church as the Body of Christ.

Paul prayed that we would be strengthened into the inner man with the result that Christ would make His home in our hearts and thereby occupy, possess, permeate, and saturate our whole inner being with Himself. Our heart is the totality of our inward parts, the center of our inward being, and our representative with regard to our inclination, affection, delight, and desire; thus, when Christ makes His home in our hearts, He controls our entire inward being and supplies and strengthens every inward part with Himself. The more Christ spreads within us, the more He settles down in us and

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makes His home in us, occupying every part of our inner being, possessing all these parts, and saturating them with Himself. When Christ spreads into our hearts, He becomes our person. We need to take Christ not only as life in our spirit but also as the person in our hearts. If we take Christ as our person, allowing Him to spread into our hearts, the person living in our hearts will not be the self but Christ (Gal. 2:20).

When Christ is in our feeling and is real in our hearts, we will be rooted and grounded in His love (Eph. 3:17). In such a condition, as Paul says in verse 18, we apprehend with all the saints the breadth, length, height, and depth. These four dimensions added together equal Christ in His immeasurableness. His dimensions are the dimensions of the universe, and by our being strengthened into the inner man, this unlimited Christ becomes our personal universe. The result of all of this is that we will know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ and be filled unto all the fullness of God (v. 19). We should be clear as to what we take as our goal. Is it merely an increase in the number of new believers, or is it an increase in Christ? We should be like Paul, totally obsessed with the increase of Christ in God's people. This does not mean, however, that we should not care for the increase in numbers; it means that our ultimate concern is the increase of Christ in us and the increase of Christ in the ones for whom we care. We should focus on this matter to such an extent that we hardly know what else to pray. This should be the spirit, attitude, prayer, and faith of one who serves the Lord.

The Triune God wants to build Himself into and make His home in all our hearts. The desire of God's heart and God's goal are to work Himself into us for His full and complete expression, which is the fullness of God. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:16-21 concludes with our being filled unto all the fullness of God, which is the highest definition of the church. In *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Witness Lee says,

If we get into the depths of Ephesians 3:19, we shall see that the fullness of God is the church. The highest definition of the church is that the church is the fullness of God. In verse 21 Paul says, "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus." According to the context, the church in verse 21 is the fullness of God in verse 19. When in our experience we are filled unto all the fullness of God, the church comes into being in a practical way. It is at such a time that Paul says, "To Him be the glory in the church." This glory is the expression of God. Hence, in the fullness of God there is the expression of God. The fullness of God is the church as God's expression. (2272)

Following this, Witness Lee says,

Being filled unto the fullness of God is the outcome of the deeper, higher, and richer experiences of Christ described in Ephesians 3...In the New Testament the fullness is the expression through the completeness of the riches. This is the reason that in 3:8 Paul speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ and then in 1:23 and 4:13, of the fullness of Christ. As we enjoy the riches of Christ, these riches are assimilated into our being metabolically. Then they constitute us into the fullness of Christ, into the Body of Christ, as His expression. Therefore, the fullness of Christ in 1:23 is the very fullness of God in 3:19. The fullness of God is the issue of the believers' being constituted metabolically through their experience and enjoyment of the riches of Christ. (2273)

In Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 we also see a beautiful coordination of the three of the Divine Trinity to produce His beautiful fullness, His beautiful expression. The Triune God is operating so that Christ can make His home in our hearts. Christ makes His home in our hearts so that we can become the fullness of the Triune God, that is, the full and complete expression of the Triune God. God the Father as the source strengthens us through the Spirit as the means so that Christ the Son as the aim can make His home by building Himself into our hearts. When this happens, we become the fullness, the expression, of the Triune God for His glory in the church.

In Genesis 24 there is a marvelous typological portrait of this experiential truth. Abraham signifies God the Father, Isaac signifies God the Son, the servant signifies God the Spirit, and Rebekah signifies us as the bride. Just as Abraham sent his servant on an errand to gain a bride for his son, God the Father has sent God the Spirit on an errand to gain a bride for His Son. All of Isaac's wealth was dispensed to Rebekah for her beautification, and Rebekah was brought to Isaac with Isaac's wealth for his glorification. In the same way, all of Christ's wealth, which is the riches of His glory, is dispensed into the church for her beautification. Then the church returns to Christ with Christ's wealth for His glorification. Ephesians 3:21 says, "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen." God strengthens the saints according to the riches of His glory, and after this glory is wrought into them, it returns to Christ along with the strengthened saints. The ultimate goal of the dispensing of the riches of Christ to the church is the full expression of the Triune God. This should be the spirit, the attitude, the prayer, and the faith of the believers who are servants of God.

### Paul's Spirit, Attitude, Prayer, and Faith

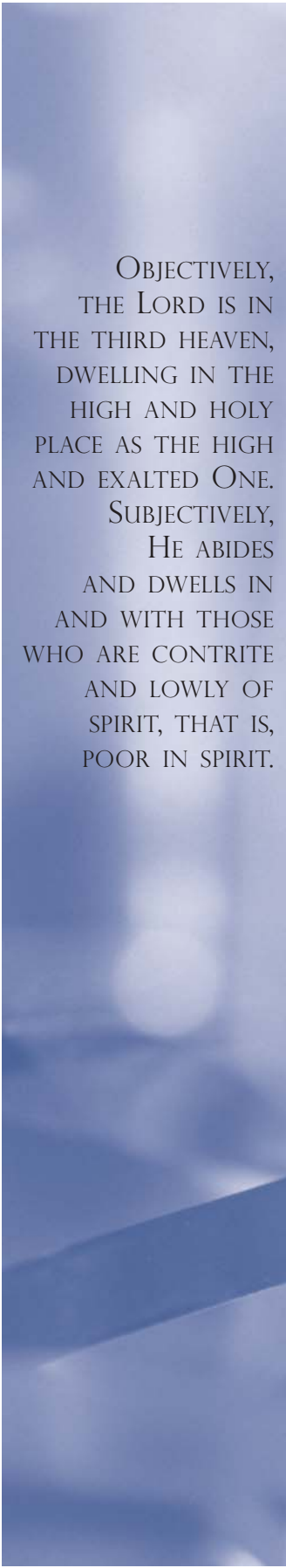
Paul's spirit, attitude, prayer, and faith—what he saw, what he was filled with, what he said, and what he cared about in his heart—were related to the vision of God being manifested in the flesh and being mingled with man in order to build the church with Christ as the material so that the church would be filled with Christ. We should cooperate with Christ so that we can work Christ into others and build Christ as the material into others in order that they may become a spiritual temple for the expression, the fullness, of the One who fills all in all. God's desire is to build Himself into our being by making our hearts His home. This is why we need to learn to minister the builded God and the building God into others. The builded God is the God who has been built into our constitution. In order to minister the builded God and the building God into others, we first need to be constituted with God, and for this we need to pray, "Lord, make this my spirit, attitude, prayer, and faith."

Paul was so burdened for Christ to make His home in our hearts that he said, "I bow my knees unto the Father" (v. 14). Paul knelt to pray because something weighed on him from within, causing him to bow his knees unto the Father. Paul was obsessed with Christ indwelling us for His full, complete, and corporate expression. His mind and emotions were preoccupied positively with the single topic of Christ building Himself into our being. It is essential that everyone who serves the Lord sees a vision of God's central thought to work Himself into us in order to make us His fullness, which is for His glory. We need to pray, "Lord, duplicate Paul's spirit, attitude, and inner mood in me."

Because Paul was concerned that the Ephesians might think that what he prayed for in verses 16 through 19 was too difficult to accomplish, he expressed his faith by immediately following with verses 20 and 21: "But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen." God is able to do superabundantly above not only what we ask but also what we think. If we even think about Christ making His home in a certain brother, He will do superabundantly above what we think according to the power that operates within us.

The full meaning of the phrase *to Him be the glory in the church* is seen in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem, the holy city, the bride of Christ, is the complete manifestation of God's glory (Rev. 21:10-11), and the church today should be a miniature of the New Jerusalem. This is the spirit, attitude, prayer, and faith with which we should serve the Lord. In this way our service in the church will be great and glorious, and the brothers and sisters will be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19; cf. Gal. 4:19). Our inner man, our spirit, and our heart—conglomerate of our inward parts—are the key to God's building and to our becoming the fullness of God.

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### Being Poor in Spirit for God's Building

Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." Man is a tripartite being composed of a spirit, a soul, and a body (1 Thes. 5:23). Our spirit is an organ created by God for us to contact God and worship God (John 4:24). To be poor in spirit is to be emptied, unloaded, in our human spirit (the innermost part of our being) so that we may realize and possess Christ as the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. To be poor in spirit is to have a learning spirit, a spirit of needing help, a spirit of a disciple. A disciple of Christ is one who is always learning Christ in the way of receiving more revelation of His supreme preciousness and of subjectively gaining more of Him day by day (Eph. 4:20; Phil. 3:8-9).

In Luke 18:17 the Lord said, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall by no means enter into it." Children are not filled with and occupied by old concepts. They are able to receive new thoughts, and they are dependent on their parents for needed help. If we are truly poor in spirit, our inner being is empty, open, able, and ready to receive and be renewed with the new thoughts of Christ from His Word. If we are truly poor in spirit, we will also have a spirit of "needing help" from God as our Father, from Christ as our Head, from the Spirit as our Comforter, and from the members of the Body of Christ. The more we go on with the Lord and grow up into Him in all things, the more we realize that we are utterly helpless apart from Him. Apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

To be poor in spirit means that our inward attitude is one of acknowledging that we have nothing, know nothing, can do nothing, and are nothing. The apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:3, "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Isaiah 57:15 says, "Thus says the high and exalted One, / Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: / I will dwell in the high and holy place, / And with the contrite and lowly of spirit, / To revive the spirit of the lowly / And to revive the heart of the contrite." Objectively, the Lord is in the third heaven, dwelling in the high and holy place as the high and exalted One. Subjectively, He abides and dwells in and with those who are contrite and lowly of spirit, that is, poor in spirit. How amazing it is that the One who inhabits eternity also inhabits the inner being of those who humble themselves before Him and love Him with reverence! If we experience any failures in our Christian life, our lowliness and contrition give Him the way to revive us. We can pray as David did: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, / And renew a steadfast spirit within me... / Restore to me the gladness of Your salvation, / And sustain me with a willing spirit" (Psa. 51:10, 12). Those who are poor in spirit have a willing spirit for their service to Him and to His church for the sake of His economy. They do not serve out of duty but out of delight. They do not serve in their own strength but in the strength of their King.

Isaiah 66:1-2 says,

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? / 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.

These verses reveal that God's desire is for man to be His house, His home, His living temple. God wants to build Himself into us and build us into Himself so that we become His home and He becomes our home for the mutual abode of God and man (John 14:23; 15:5). For us to be God's habitation, His dwelling place, it is necessary that we be those who are poor in spirit and who tremble at His word. We need to be those who treasure the Lord's speaking to us, having a reverence for His holy Word and allowing it to dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16).

Our spiritual progress depends on our hunger for the Lord and for His word. Being hungry means that we are genuinely poor in spirit by forgetting the things that are behind, even our past experiences of Christ, and that we are stretching and pressing forward to gain more of Christ day by day (Phil. 3:8-12). We should be afraid of self-contentment, self-satisfaction, and satisfaction with things of the past. Luke 1:53 says, "The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty." Those in the church in Laodicea thought that they were rich in Christ, but the Lord's assessment was that they were poor in Him (Rev. 3:17). We should pray that we would be among "the hungry," those whom the Lord fills with the good things of Himself as the bountiful Spirit (Phil. 1:19). Otherwise, we will be sent away empty, without gaining any of His spiritual riches or without having His divine element added to our being. Spiritual stagnation is the result of indifference to one's own spiritual lack, and all failure and decadence are the result of complacency. Deuteronomy 4:25 says that the children of Israel would eventually be those who "languished in the land," the good land of their inheritance. The word *languished* in Hebrew implies "the loss of spiritual freshness, and the blunting of original impressions, produced by force of custom, or long residence in the same spot" (Lee, Recovery Version, note 1). As we spend personal time with the Lord, we should be exercised to be emptied in the depths of our being and open to Him, giving Him the way to cause us to walk in newness of life and serve Him in newness of spirit (Rom. 6:4; 7:6).

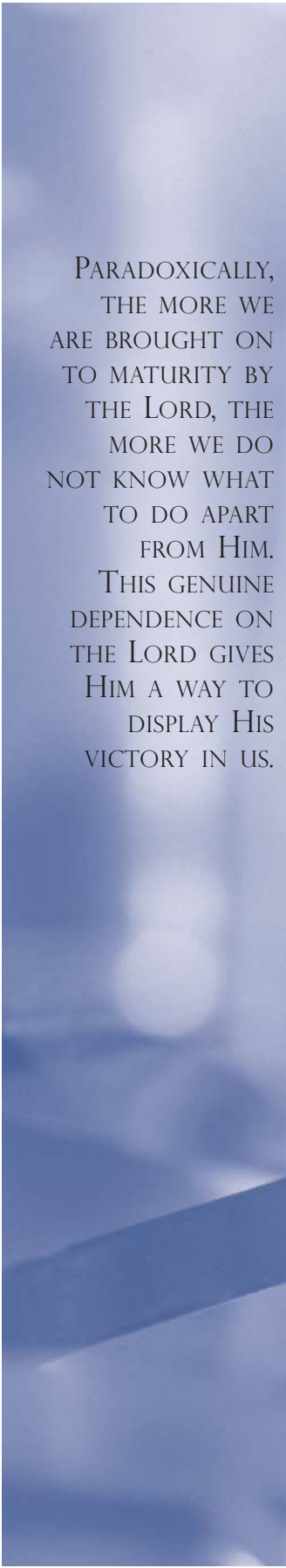
**T**he history of the children of Israel, recorded for our admonition, shows that we can never depend on our past victory to be our present strength. The book of Joshua records that the children of Israel had a great victory at Jericho. When they followed the Lord's instructions to march around Jericho, the walls came down. The next city they encountered was Ai, and Joshua sent some men to spy out the situation there. When the spies came back, they said to him, "Not all the people need go up; let about two or three thousand men go up and strike Ai" (7:3). However, when the men went out to battle, they ended up fleeing before the men of Ai and were soundly defeated. The underlying reason for their defeat was that they relied on the past victory over Jericho to be their present strength. In the destroying of Jericho, no fighting was needed, but at Ai the children of Israel lost the presence of the Lord. "Instead of asking God what they should do against Ai, they forgot God and knew only themselves. Israel acted on their own, without seeking the Lord's direction and without having the Lord's presence" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 3, note 1).

The spiritual lesson to be learned from this account is that we, the people of God, should always be one with our God, who is not only among us but also in us, making us men with God—God-men. As God-men, we should practice being one with the Lord, walking with Him, living with Him, and having our entire being with Him...This is the way to walk as a Christian, to fight as a child of God, and to build up the Body of Christ. If we have the Lord's presence, we have wisdom, insight, foresight, and the inner knowledge concerning things. The Lord's presence is everything to us. (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 4, note 1)

We cannot go on without a new knowledge of the Lord and a new vision of Him. In using the phrase *new knowledge*, we do not mean merely new, objective knowledge. We need a new, precious, subjective knowing of the Lord in both revelation and experience. When Paul said that he counted all things as refuse because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, he was referring to his revelation of the supreme preciousness and super-eminence of Christ (Phil. 3:8). When Paul expressed the desire "to know Him" (v. 10), this was his desiring to know the Lord in experience according to the vision that he had received of the Lord. Day by day, we need to know the Lord in a new way. Because Paul was poor in spirit, the Lord made him a minister and a witness not only of the things in which Paul had seen the Lord but also of the things in which the Lord would appear to him repeatedly (Acts 26:16). Paul was continually on a quest to know Christ subjectively and to receive fresh, new visions of Christ. We need to follow this pattern in our Christian life.

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DISPLAY HIS  
VICTORY IN US.

Whenever we exclaim, “I cannot make it,” our progress has begun. Then God is easily able to create within us a desire for Him. When we realize that we are sick and in need of the Lord as our Physician, and when we realize that we cannot make it in ourselves and by our own strength, we become desperate for the Lord. Then we realize that we are utterly helpless in ourselves and need to be in constant, intimate fellowship with Lord. As we pursue the Lord, two words will become more and more precious to us: *utterly helpless*. When we realize that we are utterly helpless, the resurrected Christ becomes our all-sufficient grace tabernacling over us. When we realize that we are utterly helpless, we can say with Paul, “When I am weak [according to the flesh in my natural man], then I am powerful [according to the Spirit in my inner man]” (2 Cor. 12:10).

In 2 Chronicles 20 a great enemy was about to destroy Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. In a very poignant scene Jehoshaphat called on all the people to seek Jehovah, “and all Judah stood before Jehovah with their little ones, their wives, and their children” (v. 13). In this desperate situation Jehoshaphat prayed, “O our God... We have no strength before this great multitude that is coming against us, and we do not know what to do; but our eyes are upon You” (v. 12). This is real prayer that displays a man who is poor in spirit, a prayer that gives the Lord the way to come into our situation. If we know what to do, we do not need the Lord. However, the less we know what to do, the more we need Him. Paradoxically, the more we are brought on to maturity by the Lord, the more we do not know what to do apart from Him. This genuine dependence on the Lord gives Him a way to display His victory in us.

**W**e should remember that God gives difficulties to us, or allows them, in order to dig more deeply in us so that He can fill us more with Himself. God causes all persons, matters, and things in our environment to empty us of every preoccupation that is within us so that we can have an increased capacity to be filled with Him. Toward the end of Jacob’s life, he was a relatively transformed man, but when he lost Joseph, he lost the treasure of his heart. Although he later regained Joseph, this tragedy caused his whole being to be absolutely open and empty toward God. Jacob became an open vessel whom the Triune God could fill to the brim with Himself as life; this is so that Jacob would fully express God and reign in life. Whenever we become empty, the Lord will fill us. Spiritual progress is a matter of being continually emptied out and continually filled up. In our Christian life we need to be those who are always hungry for the Lord yet continually being satisfied by Him.

In 2 Kings 4 the prophet Elisha came to a widow who was being pursued by creditors. She had only a little jar of oil. Therefore, Elisha told her, “Go and borrow vessels outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels, and not just a few. Then go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all those vessels; and each one you fill set aside” (vv. 3-4). She did what he said and started filling the vessels. Verse 6 says, “When she had filled the vessels, she said to her son, Bring me another vessel. But he said to her, There is no other vessel. And the oil stopped.” This story shows, in typology, that we need to be “empty vessels” that can be freshly filled with the Lord—vessels that are filled with the God of mercy, honor, and glory (Rom. 9:21, 23). In order to be poor in spirit, we need to tell the Lord, “Lord, I want my whole being to be open to You. Empty me of my past experiences and of everything of the past. I want to receive You in a fresh and new way.” When we pray in this way, He will fill us with Himself as the Spirit, and we will overflow with Him for His expression. This is the experience of living in the blessedness of the reality of the kingdom of God in order to enjoy and be filled with Christ as the reality of the kingdom of God for the fullness of God, the expression of God.

### **Being Pure in Heart for God’s Building**

The kingdom people—those who are continually being gained by God, have fellowship with God, and are ruled by God for His building—are not only poor in spirit but also



pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). A pure heart is a heart that loves God and wants God. Besides God, it has no other love, inclination, or desire. The psalmist was able to say to the Lord, "Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth / My flesh and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever" (Psa. 73:25-26). When our hearts are saturated with God and when Christ makes His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17), we simply have a heart "to love God, to seek God, to live God, and to be constituted with God" (Lee, Recovery Version, Jer. 32:39, note 1).

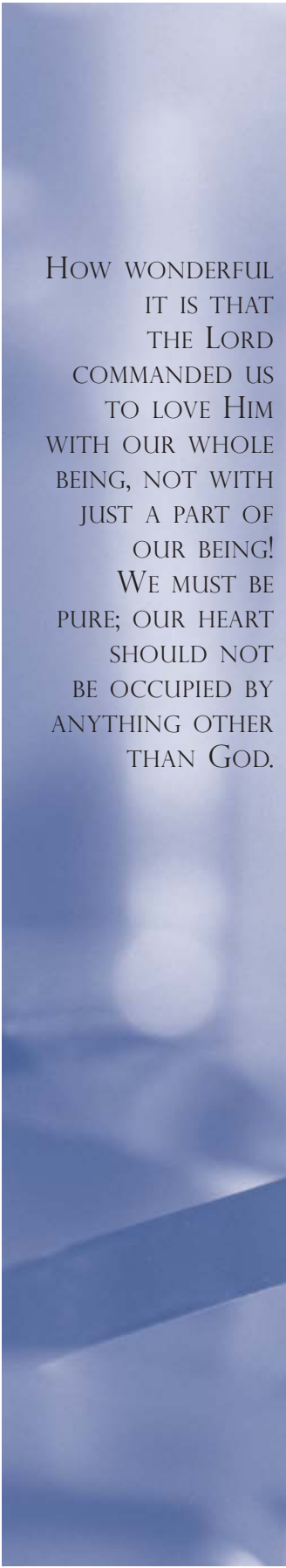
**O**ur heart should be single for God so that we are fearful of nothing except offending Him and losing His presence. In Psalm 86:11 the psalmist prays, "Make my heart single in fearing Your name." We should pray this prayer, telling the Lord that we want to revere Him, to hold Him in the highest regard and respect, and to consult with Him in everything that we do. We should pray, "Lord, I want You to be my Head, my Lord, my Master, and my King. I want You to direct every area of my life." Our goal and our aim in life should be God Himself. This is what it means to be pure in heart. To have a pure heart means that our heart is single, seeking nothing but the Lord Himself, so that Christ may grow in us without frustration (Matt. 13:19-23). In everything we do, we should not seek anything but the Lord Himself. We should seek nothing in addition to God or along with God. We are here for Christ Himself so that He may grow in us without frustration.

As we have seen, Matthew 13 shows that the Lord, typified by the sower, went out to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom into men's hearts, that is, into their inner being, which is typified by the soil. There is no problem with the seed. There is, however, a problem with the condition of the soil. In this passage we have four conditions of the human heart: hardened, rocky, thorny, and good. It is important that we pray to the Lord that He would not allow our heart to become like the hardened wayside but would instead allow it to be soft toward Him. Our heart should also be saved from having rocks, which are hidden sins, personal desires, self-seeking, and self-pity. These are rocks from which we must be saved so that the Lord can be deeply rooted in us. It is crucial that we have personal, secret, and affectionate times with the Lord, which no one sees, so that Christ's roots would sink deeply into our heart. We also need to be saved from the thorns—the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches—so that our heart can be the good soil.

"To be pure in heart is to be single in purpose, to have the single goal of accomplishing God's will for God's glory" (Lee, Recovery Version, 5:8, note 1). First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." We need to do everything to the glory of God. If we are pure in heart in seeking God, our reward will be that we see God (Matt. 5:8). Seeing God equals gaining God so that we may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead (2 Cor. 3:18). We should say to the Lord, "Make my heart single for You. I want You to be my only goal. I do not want any other goals. I want to be single in purpose, Lord. Infuse me with Your will. I want there to be in my heart a desire to accomplish Your will for Your glory." The reward is that we see God, which is gaining God. As we see God, we are deified, which is to be made like Him in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

The more we see God, the more we abhor ourselves. This was Job's experience. In Job 42:5-6 he said, "I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You; / Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes." The more we see God, the more we spontaneously hate ourselves, repenting and confessing our sins. Like Job, we all need to have this kind of genuine experience. If we see the Lord, we will see that the things and objects of this world are trash (Phil. 3:7-8; cf. Jer. 15:19). Paul said that he counted all things as refuse, as trash, that he might gain Christ; he furthermore said that he had suffered the loss of all things on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. We need to pray, "Lord, open my eyes to see Your peerless worth and Your preciousness." The more we see the Lord, the more we will see that all the things of this world are vanity.

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Having this kind of seeing is critical for our serving and our ministering the Lord to others. In Jeremiah 15:19 Jehovah said, “If you bring out the precious from the worthless, / You will be as My mouth.” This means that if we see the preciousness of the Lord, everything other than the Lord—all the things of this world—will be absolutely worthless, and the Lord will make us His spokespersons on this earth. We will be His mouth. This means that we will be His prophets speaking for Him, dispensing Him into people to open their eyes to see that there is nothing in this universe more precious than Christ.

**S**piritual progress is the increase of the element of God in us and the decrease of things within us that usurp God’s place (1 Tim. 4:15; Col. 2:19). As long as there is one thing, one event, or one person that takes possession of us, there is something in our heart usurping the place of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:2, 4; Mark 12:30; Prov. 4:23). Sometimes one event can take possession of us. Perhaps something troublesome happened to us, and since then, it has taken possession of us. It occupies us, and as a result, there is no room in us to be filled with God.

Second Timothy 3:2 and 4 tell us that in the last days people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure. However, in these verses there is a fourth kind of lover mentioned: lovers of God. We want to be God-lovers, not self-lovers, money-lovers, or pleasure-lovers. In Mark 12:30 the Lord said, “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.” Concerning this verse, M. E. Barber prayed to the Lord, thanking Him that He had commanded her to love Him. How wonderful it is that the Lord commanded us to love Him with our whole being, not with just a part of our being! We must be pure; our heart should not be occupied by anything other than God (Matt. 13:19-23).

Our spiritual progress depends on the degree to which our heart is turned toward God (4:17; 2 Cor. 3:16; cf. 2 Kings 23:25). To repent not only relates to our mind, meaning to have a change in the mind; to repent is to turn from all things other than God to God Himself. Because our spiritual progress and growth in life depend upon the degree to which our heart is turned toward God, we should pray, “Lord, I want my heart to be fully turned to You all day today. I want my heart to be fully turned to You.” If we pray in this way, the Lord has a way to grow in us. Second Kings 23:25 says that there was no king like Josiah, who turned to Jehovah with all his heart, soul, and might. We need to turn to the Lord in this way. May we consider all these matters in prayer before the Lord.

The more a person is in the word of God, the purer that one becomes (Psa. 12:6; 119:140; John 17:17). Every word in the Bible is pure. Psalm 12:6 says, “The words of Jehovah are pure words, / Silver refined in a furnace on the earth, / Purified seven times.” Psalm 119:140 says, “Your word is very pure, / And Your servant loves it.” If we want to have a pure heart and be blessed, we must spend much time in the Word. Our human heart is not pure; rather, it is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9). In the universe only God, who is Christ, and His word are pure (Rom. 9:5). This is why we must abide in God’s word to be His true disciples (John 8:31) and pray every day according to the apostle Paul’s pattern: “Father, strengthen me with power through Your Spirit into the inner man so that this pure Christ can make His home in my heart through faith and so that I can become a living member of the church as the Body of Christ, which is the fullness of God.” 

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