

EXPERIENCING BEING RESCUED OUT OF THE PRESENT EVIL AGE BY THE REVELATION OF GOD'S SON IN US

BY ED MARKS

The focal point of the divine revelation is that God's intention is for Christ to be wrought into us that we might become the sons of God for His corporate expression as the Body of Christ, the new man, and consummately, the New Jerusalem. This focal point is revealed in Galatians 1:15 and 16: "When it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me." This short phrase *His Son in me* is the essence and extract of God's eternal economy, and it is what pleases God, what makes God happy. God's heart's desire is to reveal His Son in us, and He wants to do this not only at the time of our conversion to Christ but also day by day during the whole course of our Christian life. The more He is revealed in us, the more He lives in us (2:20); the more He lives in us, the more He is formed in us (4:19); the more He is formed in us, the more we will be built up into His Body (Eph. 4:16) and be prepared to be His bride in order to hasten His coming (Rev. 19:7; 21:2; 2 Pet. 3:11-12), bring Him back, and usher in the kingdom age where, as His over-coming bride, we will enjoy Him, feast on Him, and reign with Him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6). This will ultimately consummate in eternity, in which all of God's chosen and redeemed people will be His wife enjoying Him forever and ever (21:9-10).

Every stanza of *Hymns*, #538 shows the focal point of the divine revelation. The chorus and every stanza, except one, have these two words—*in me*:

- 1 It is God's intent and pleasure
To have Christ revealed in me;
Nothing outward as religion,
But His Christ within to be.

It is God's intent and pleasure
That His Christ be wrought in me;
Nothing outwardly performing,
But His Christ my all to be.
- 2 It is God's intent and pleasure
That His Christ may live in me;
Nothing as an outward practice,
But Christ working inwardly.
- 3 It is God's intent and pleasure
That His Christ be formed in me;
Not the outward forms to follow,
But Christ growing inwardly.
- 4 It is God's intent and pleasure
That His Christ make home in me;
Not just outwardly to serve Him,
But Christ dwelling inwardly.

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- 5 It is God’s intent and pleasure
That His Christ my hope may be;
It is not objective glory,
But ’tis Christ subjectively.
- 6 It is God’s intent and pleasure
That His Christ be all in me;
Nothing outwardly possessing,
But His Christ eternally.

God’s economy is “His Son in me,” that is, His Son in us. The phrase *His Son in me* is the goal of God’s economy because it implies the divine sonship for God’s expression. We may say that corporately, the Body of Christ is “His Son in me” (Eph. 1:23) and that consummately, the New Jerusalem is “His Son in me” (Rev. 21:7, 11).

Christ as the Son of the Living God Replacing the Law and Being versus Religion and Tradition

We need to be rescued, not outwardly and objectively but inwardly and subjectively, from something that the Lord through Paul calls “the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). Footnote 1 by Witness Lee on Galatians 1:4 in the *Recovery Version of the Bible* tells us that in Greek *rescue us out of* literally means “pluck us out of, draw us out of, extricate us from.” We need to be extricated from something that Paul calls the present evil age, so that God can bring us more into the focal point of His economy, which is to work Himself in Christ as the Spirit into our being by revealing His Son in us. He extricates us from the present evil age by causing us to have an inward revelation of the living Son of God. We should never belittle the need for revelation. Our desperate need is to receive more inward revelation day by day. We need to see more and more of God’s Son in us.

We may say, as Lee does in his outline of Galatians in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*, that the overall subject of the book of Galatians is “Christ replacing the law and being versus religion and tradition.” Verse 4 of chapter 1 says that the Lord Jesus Christ “gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.” As believers in Christ, our living and our serving are all for the accomplishment of one thing—God’s will—but in order to enter into the reality of God’s will, we need to see what the present, evil, religious age is. An age refers to “a part, a section, an aspect, the present and modern appearance, of the world as the system of Satan, which is used by him to usurp and occupy people and keep them away from God and His purpose” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Eph. 2:2, note 1). According to the context of Galatians, the present evil age in 1:4 refers to “the religious world, the religious course of the world” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Gal. 1:4, note 2), which at Paul’s time was the religion of Judaism with its law. Even in the present time, degraded Christendom has been “Judaized.” All the principles of that evil age from which Paul had been extricated are present today. Even though we may be enjoying and focusing on Christ as the centrality and universality of God’s economy, our natural being, our natural man, always has the tendency to focus on religion, the law, trying to be good and using other methods of self-improvement, instead of the revelation of God’s Son in us. This is exactly what happened to the Galatians. When Paul first visited them, he preached the gospel of God’s eternal economy. As a result, the Galatians treasured Paul very much. In 4:13-15 Paul speaks of the Galatians’ warm reception of him, saying,

You know that because of weakness of my flesh I announced the gospel to you the first time. And that which was a trial to you in my flesh you did not despise nor loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, indeed as Christ Jesus. Where then is your felicitation? For I testify concerning you that if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

The Galatian believers received Paul even as Christ Jesus, receiving him with felicitation. *Felicitation* implies that Paul’s being with them and preaching to them the focal point of

God's heart's desire and the meaning of the entire universe was a celebratory experience.

Their appreciation of Paul and of what he announced to them was so intense that Paul, testifying on their behalf, said that if it would have been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him, indicating that Paul's physical weakness was related to his eyes (cf. Lee, *Recovery Version*, 4:15, note 2). This indicates their great care for Paul and for what he had spoken. However, within a short time after his leaving them, the Judaizers came to the Galatian believers, distracting them from the unique focal point of God's economy and causing them to lose their focus. Paul called these Judaizers ministers of Satan (2 Cor. 11:13-15). These Judaizers were "false brothers" (Gal. 2:4), who troubled the churches by perverting, distorting, the gospel of Christ, surreptitiously bringing the observances of the law into the church in order to trouble and mislead the genuine believers in Christ (1:7; Acts 15:1). The Judaizers bewitched the Galatians into considering the ordinances of the law to be above the Son of the living God.

Paul was so concerned and burdened for the Galatian believers that he asked, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly portrayed crucified?" (Gal. 3:1). *Bewitched* here is a very strong word. Various dictionaries tell us that the word *bewitched* means "to place under one's power by magic; cast a spell over" or "to captivate people completely; to put into a trance." Regrettably, in today's situation myriads of believers have been bewitched. This is why Christian bookstores display many books on character improvement, self-improvement, and the significance of the law, presenting unending codes of dos and don'ts. But where are the books that explicate God's economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4), telling the believers that God's eternal intention is to dispense Himself and to work Himself in Christ as the Spirit into them so that they can be saturated with Him, soaked with Him, and filled with Him to be His corporate expression? We all need to pray for the Lord to save us from being bewitched. We need to realize that in the present evil age, anything that replaces Christ or distracts us from Him is an idol and is thus evil in the eyes of God (Ezek. 14:3; 1 John 5:21). Whatever keeps us away from God, from God's economy, and from Christ being worked into our being for us to enjoy Him supremely, exalt Him exclusively, and express Him uniquely—these things issue in our forsaking God as our fountain, our source, of living waters and our turning to a source other than God (Jer. 2:13).

Overcoming the Religious Course of the World by Being Brought out of the Fold and into the Flock for the Accomplishment of God's Eternal Economy

As mentioned earlier, the present evil age in Galatians 1:4 refers to the religious world, the religious course of the world, the Jewish religion, which became formal in letter, deadening in quenching the Spirit, killing in cutting off man's communication with God in life, and contending with the gospel of Christ in God's New Testament economy (6:14-15; 1:6-16; 2 Cor. 3:6; Phil. 3:2-3). At one time Paul was immersed in the religious world of Judaism (vv. 4-6; Acts 22:3-5). Philippians 3:7 says that all the things of the religious world of Judaism were once gains to him, but he counted them all as loss on account of Christ. In Galatians 6:14-15 Paul says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters." These verses show that when Paul refers in Galatians to the world to which he had been crucified, he is referring to the religious world, the religious course of the world, the Jewish religion, in which the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision was a major part.

For clarity's sake, we are talking about the Judaic system, signifying the principle of religion, and not about the Jewish people themselves. We strongly believe what Lee says in note 1 of Genesis 12:3 in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*: "From the time that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem until now, every nation, people, race, or individual who has cursed the Jewish people has received a curse, and whoever has blessed the Jews has received a blessing." We truly desire to be one with God to bless the Jewish people,

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and we exercise to love all people, but we hate the religious world and its system, which distract from the presence of God and from His economy. We also want to emphasize that whenever we speak about degraded Christendom, we are not speaking about our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. We are speaking about an evil religious system that can usurp people, occupy people, and keep them away from God and His economy.

In Galatians 1:13-14 Paul speaks of his former manner of life in Judaism: "You have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers." Not only did Paul advance in Judaism, but he also was competing to be at the top of that religious world. In verses 15 and 16 he says, "But when it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles." We need to treasure the word *but* in the Bible. Paul was striving to be the top one in his religion, *but* it pleased God, it made God happy, to extricate Paul out of that religious world by revealing His Son in him. The revelation of God's Son in Paul was an extrication from, a plucking out of, the Jewish religion. Has there not been a great "but" in your life? Genesis 6:8 says, "But Noah found favor [grace] in the sight of Jehovah." Luke 15:21 says that when the prodigal son returned to his father, he confessed his sin and said that he was no longer worthy to be called his father's son. Verse 22 begins by saying, "But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe..." The word *but* here indicates that the father interrupted the son who was speaking according to his concept; this *but* is surely a word of mercy and grace. Ephesians 2:3 points out that at one time we were children of wrath; then verse 4 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us." Once we were walking in darkness, going one way, *but* the Lord turned us by shining Himself as the divine light into us and thus revealing Himself in us. That revelation changed our direction. It was the same with Paul. He was fully in a religious system; he was enveloped in the Jewish religious world to such an extent that he was a persecutor of the church. He wanted to ravage the church of God (Acts 9:21; Gal. 1:13, 23). The worst persecution always comes from the religious world, from those like Paul, who was one of the top ones in Judaism. He was a persecutor, but he was organically changed by the revelation of God's Son in him and was transferred from being a persecutor of the followers of Jesus to being a lover of Jesus and His followers. Today, by God's mercy, we are those who love the Lord. We want to pursue Him, gain Him, and be filled with Him despite religious opposers, who, at Satan's instigation, rise up against us unreasonably to persecute and slander us.

The religious world, being formal in letter, is in contrast to God's New Testament economy. Paul contrasts the ministry of the old covenant with that of the new covenant. In 2 Corinthians 3:6 he says, "Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." In God's New Testament economy we do not minister the killing letter; we minister the Spirit who gives life. In Philippians 3 Paul is very strong when he refers to the Judaizers in his warning to "beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh" (vv. 2-3). To Paul anyone who distracted God's people from Christ, from the enjoyment of Christ, and from Christ being wrought into them was an evil worker, even a religious "dog." Paul was so strong in warning the believers about anyone who would distract them from the enjoyment of Christ to ethics, self-improvement, and following the law by trying to be good with self-effort instead of living Christ, magnifying Christ, gaining Christ, being found in Christ, knowing Christ, laying hold of Christ, and pursuing Christ (1:19-21a; 3:7-14). The purpose of Christ's giving Himself for our sins was to rescue us, to pluck us, out of the present evil age.

At Paul's time rescuing God's people from the present evil age was to release them from the custody of the law (Gal. 3:23), to bring them out of the sheepfold (John 10:1, 3, 16), according to the will of God (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-4). One of the functions of the law in the

Old Testament was to expose us, but we also need to see that the law functioned to guard us and keep us in custody until the revelation of Christ. The law, according to Galatians 3 and John 10, was a sheepfold that kept God's people until Christ came. The principal way to take care of sheep is to lead them to feed on the green pasture and to be filled with the riches of life in the pasture (Psa. 23:2; Ezek. 34:14; John 10:9). However, if it is nighttime or wintertime, the sheep need to be kept in a fold for their guarding, their protection, until the day breaks or springtime comes. In God's New Testament economy, it is "springtime." The night and the winter of religion with its law are over. It is springtime because Christ has come. He is here for us to feed on Him and to be filled with Him as the green pasture. Even the Greek word for *economy* implies a distribution of the pasture to the flock (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 1:4, note 3). In God's New Testament economy, the law is over, and Christ as the real pasture is being dispensed into us.

God's bringing us out of the sheepfold and into the flock so that we may enjoy Christ as our green pasture can be seen in the revelation of the typology in Song of Songs. Christ leads His loving seeker into her spirit, and in her spirit in fellowship with Him, she receives the revelation of how to leave the place where she is kept away from the church, in order to go forth on the footsteps of the flock (1:4-8). In Song of Songs 1:4 the seeker says, "The king has brought me into his chambers." *Chambers* in this verse signifies our spirit. The chambers are where the king dwells. Christ as our King dwells in our spirit; whatever we are, whatever we have, and whatever we do toward God must be in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 1:9; 2:29; 7:6; 8:4, 16; 12:11). When we first begin to pursue the Lord, the Lord leads us into our spirit. Perhaps many of us were led into our spirit before we even knew we had a spirit. It was as if we accidentally turned on the light switch with our elbow, and suddenly, we were in the light of the Lord in our spirit, enjoying the Lord. When we were initially saved, we may not have used the term *enjoyment*, yet we were enjoying the Lord. However, within a certain period of time, our enjoyment of Christ began to fade and dwindle.

At that point in our Christian life, although we may have been in our spirit and enjoying the Lord to a certain extent, we did not know how to maintain our enjoyment of Christ, and we did not know where the proper church was—the church according to the apostles' teaching, the church revealed in the New Testament. Instead of being in the proper church life, we may have wandered through a number of religious folds. Many of us have passed through this experience, but our hope is that many of the Lord's children will have the experience of being led out of every religious fold into the one flock of God, where we can be fed to the uttermost, enjoy Christ to the uttermost, and be cherished, nourished, and built up to the uttermost to be Christ's Body and be prepared to be His bride.

In Song of Songs 1:6 the Lord's loving seeker says, "My mother's sons were angry with me; / They made me keeper of the vineyards, / But my own vineyard I have not kept." According to the typology here, grace is typified by the mother, and her sons, the sons of grace, became angry with the seeker. Many times this happens to new believers who are in the religious fold; they might be excited about the Lord and zealous for Him with much natural energy and ability. Because of this, they are made to work as a keeper of the vineyards (the places for the believers to bud, blossom, and bloom), but they do not even know how to keep their own vineyard (to cultivate and maintain the enjoyment, growth, and fruitfulness of Christ within them). Eventually, the seeker gets "burned out" because she does not have the adequate supply of the Lord as grace, which she needs so if she is to be a good steward of the varied grace of God (Eph. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:10). This shows that the Lord's disciples first need to be trained to enjoy the Lord adequately, especially by setting aside a personal, intimate, and secret time to fellowship with the Lord in order to cultivate their inner life with Him (cf. Mark 1:35; Matt. 6:6). How can they be a keeper of the vineyards when they have not learned to keep their own vineyard?

As a result of her condition, the seeker in Song of Songs calls out to the Lord, saying, "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock? / Where do you make it lie down at noon? / For why should I be like one who is veiled / Beside the flocks of your

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companions?" (1:7). In response, the Lord tells her, "If you yourself do not know, / You fairest among women, / Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds' tents" (v. 8). The flock is the church as the place where Christ pastures, shepherds, and feeds His saints (John 10:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). We should be full of thanks that the Lord has led us positionally out of the religious fold into the reality of the one flock of God, where we are enjoying Christ as our pasture and where we are being shepherded and fed day by day. In addition to this, we can pasture our young goats, signifying our spiritual children, at the shepherds' tents, signifying the local churches.

All of this shows that the Lord's lover was initially seeking after the Lord for her own satisfaction, but the Lord's concern for His saved sinners is not just for their satisfaction but for God's eternal economy. The goal of God's economy is to save sinners to gain the churches so that the essence of these churches can become the organic Body of Christ as the precursor for the consummation of the New Jerusalem (Rom. 5:10; Rev. 1:11-12; Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2). This is a marvelous definition of God's economy, and this is the great will of God. New seekers of Christ always seek after the Lord not for the accomplishing of His great will but for their own satisfaction. Their whole being is self-centered, but they come to a point in which they are not fully satisfied, because the purpose of God is not being fulfilled in them. Our satisfaction becomes complete only when God is fully satisfied. Thus, God led the seeker out of the fold and into the flock not merely for her own satisfaction but for His eternal economy.

Our Need to See and Overcome the Four Foundational Items in Today's Degraded Christendom with Its Judaistic System

Even though we are in the flock of God according to the will of God, we still need to be rescued out of the present evil age. The present evil age, simply put, is the evil age of religion. At Paul's time this religion was Judaism with its law. In our time this religion is degraded Christendom. We need to realize that the entire strategy of the enemy is to degrade the church by "Judaizing" God's people, by mixing the New Testament economy with the religious principles of Judaism (Nee 23-29). The religious world of Christendom is a mixture of God's New Testament economy, of which Christ is the focus and present reality, with good things that replace Christ. God hates such a mixture, which is the principle of Babylon, the great harlot seen in Revelation 17 and 18. We must overcome the present evil age of today's degraded Christendom with its Judaistic system by holding to the teaching of the apostles (the New Testament) through the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4). What makes Christendom degraded is its Judaistic system, from which we need to be extricated. In Judaism there are four foundational matters—earthly promises, the law of letters, mediatorial priests, and a material temple (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Rev. 3:9, note 3). These are also indicative of four major items in today's Christendom that we need to overcome.

Earthly Blessings versus the All-inclusive Spirit as Our Unique Blessing

First, Judaism has earthly promises with earthly blessings, but in the New Testament we have the all-inclusive Spirit as the totality of the unsearchable riches of Christ as our unique blessing for us to bless others in order to issue in the fullness of God (Gen. 12:2-3; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 3:8; 1:3; Luke 12:21; Rev. 2:9; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:19). Satan's strategy against the church is to substitute earthly blessings for spiritual blessings. His strategy is to bring in substitutes of Christ, such as self-made laws, self-improvement methods, and character improvement. Signs, miracles, and even doctrines can also be substitutes for Christ. The enemy is able to use anything other than Christ Himself as a substitute for Christ. In contrast to the enemy bringing in every kind of substitute, the Lord wants to recover His being everything to us. The different teaching of earthly promises with earthly blessings corresponds exactly to the teaching of much of degraded Christendom. In this regard, the so-called health, wealth, and prosperity gospel that is so prevalent in today's Christendom is actually devilish. In addressing this matter, Watchman Nee says,

Sometimes when I preach the gospel, men ask, “Will there be any rice to eat when we believe in Jesus?” I have replied, “When you believe in Jesus, the rice-bowel is broken.” This is the church. It is not that we will gain more in everything after we believe... The church does not teach how much we shall gain before God, but how much we will be able to let go before God. The church does not think that suffering is a painful thing; rather, it is a joy.” (28)

In the New Testament every blessing that we enjoy is spiritual and eternal. In the New Testament we enjoy the Triune God, with His dispensing of Himself into us, as our unique blessing (Num. 6:22-27; 2 Cor. 13:14). Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” *Every spiritual blessing* refers to the Spirit of God as not only the channel but also the reality of God’s blessings. Our blessing in the new testament age is the Spirit (Gal. 3:14). The Spirit is the reality of the Son (John 14:17; 16:13), and the Son is the embodiment of the Father (14:9-11; Col. 2:9). Our unique blessing in the New Testament is God Himself, who is embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit. This is why the psalmist could say to God, “Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth” (Psa. 73:25).

Paul was a person who was poor in material things, but he enriched many others with spiritual riches (2 Cor. 6:10). Along with Paul, we need to see and realize that we are announcing the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel (Eph. 3:8). Every day we need to become wealthier by the riches of Christ being added to our inner being. The more of Christ that has been deposited in us, the wealthier we are in God’s sight. Luke 4:18 says that the Lord announced the gospel to the poor. To be poor means to be without God. You can have all the riches of this material world and still be the poorest person. Real poverty is to be Christless. Real wealth is to be filled with Christ as the life-giving Spirit to be our unique blessing. In Genesis 12:2 the Lord told Abraham, “I will bless you... / And you shall be a blessing.” We should all pray, “Lord, bless me with all that You are as the unsearchably rich Spirit, and make me a channel of blessing to all the saints, to the church in my locality, to all the churches, and even to the whole world.” We become a blessing by being filled with the life-giving Spirit as the reality of Christ, the living Son of God, who is the embodiment of the Father as the real riches in this universe. At Abraham’s time the physical reality of the blessing of Abraham was the good land (v. 7; 13:15; 17:8; 26:3-4). Now in the new testament age, the reality of the good land is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who is the reality of the all-inclusive Christ for us to enjoy, partake of, possess, and be filled with so that we can express Him for His glory (Phil. 1:19; Col. 1:12; 2:6-7).

Luke 12:16-20 is a sobering parable about a rich man who had many crops and much material wealth. After amassing all this wealth, in verse 19 he said to his soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; rest, eat, drink, be merry.” He had so much wealth that there was no way for him to spend it all, so he decided to build more barns to hold his riches. Regrettably, many of today’s Christians are caught up in seeking many material things in place of Christ. We should be against anything material that takes the place of Christ in our lives. God’s desire is to have something that is purely and wholly of the person of Christ. To the rich man with his many barns, God said, “Foolish one, this night they are requiring your soul from you; and the things which you have prepared, whose will they be?” (v. 20). The Lord called this man foolish, saying that *this night*, not tomorrow, not a week from now, but the very night after he said to his soul, “Eat, drink, be merry,” *this night* his soul was required of him. The Lord went on to say, “So is he who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (v. 21). Here the Lord used the phrase *rich toward God*. Lee, in note 1 on this verse in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*, says, “How precious it is to be rich toward God! This requires that we not store up treasure for ourselves.” We want to be those who are rich toward God and who enrich others with God. To be rich toward God is to be filled with the unsearchably rich Christ, and to enrich others with God is to minister such a Christ to them so that they may grow with the growth of God for the building of God (Eph. 3:8; Col. 2:19; 1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:20-22).

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The Law of Letters versus the Law of the Spirit of Life

Second, Judaism has the law of letters, but in the new testament age we have the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2; Heb. 8:10; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:20). The old testament is a code of dos and don'ts, whereas the new testament is Christ as the life-giving Spirit coming into us to indwell us as a law of life, which is an innate ability, an automatic function, and a spontaneous power. The law of the Spirit of life in our spirit is the automatic, inner operating Triune God in us (Phil. 2:13). When we enjoy Him, contact Him, fellowship with Him, converse with Him, and open to Him, He operates within us like electricity; He is "switched on" within us, and there is a law operating within us as a spontaneous power and automatic function. When this law is switched on within us, automatically, spontaneously, and even unconsciously, we overcome the law of sin and of death, and we become those who live Christ for His magnification (Rom. 7:23, 25; 8:2; Phil. 1:19-21).

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In our fellowship with or in our ministering to others, we should aspire to minister the Spirit, who gives life, not the letter of the law, which only requires of man and does not supply life to man (2 Cor. 3:6). We need to be careful that we do not provide people with a code of dos and don'ts. Giving people such a code is, in principle, to minister things according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of according to the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). The tree of life causes us to be dependent on God. We never "graduate" from life and from the spontaneous life practices of breathing, drinking, and eating. If we want to be healthy, we also need to be in light and to have a proper dwelling place. It is the same way in the divine, mystical, and spiritual realm. We need to depend on Christ continually as our spiritual breath (John 20:22; Lam. 3:55-56), our spiritual drink (1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13), and our spiritual food (John 6:57, 63; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4). Christ is also our light; He is the light of life, the light of the world, and we are the children of light, the sons of light, who walk in the light so that we actually become light in the Lord (John 1:4; 8:12; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thes. 5:5; Luke 16:8; 1 John 1:7). All of this shows that we are utterly helpless apart from God and that we need to be fully dependent on God; our living and our ministering to others should bring them into the reality of depending on God in and for everything.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of death, in contrast, issues in independence from God and even rebellion against God (Gen. 2:17). If we live and minister according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of "right and wrong," we will minister death to people, and this "ministry of death" is, in principle, to minister the written code of the law. To instruct others with our self-made laws is to be in the intrinsic essence of the ministry of death (2 Cor. 3:6-8). The Christian life is not a matter of right or wrong but of life or death. If we have the inner sense of life as we do something, this inner sense is the shining of the Lord's inner presence, and it becomes the Lord's leading to us. If we have the Lord's presence, we have everything, but if we lose the Lord's presence, we lose everything. When we do not have the Lord's presence, we have an inner sense of discomfort, discord, dryness, deadness, and depression. This inner sense is telling us to stop and turn to the Lord in full dependence on Him and in complete trust in Him.

When we are ministering the word and taking care of people, do they come to "Mount Sinai," where there is gloom and smoke and fire (Heb. 12:18)? Do they get a code of laws from us, or are they brought to the Lord as the tree of life and the law of the Spirit of life? Is life ministered into them (2 Cor. 4:10-12)? If life is ministered into them, although they may not have received a direct "yes" or "no" answer to their question, they will have the light of life and become clear as to what they should do. This clarity comes from the Lord as the light of life enlightening their mind. Such a thing can happen only because the Lord as life was ministered into them. Through our fellowship of life, we became a channel of life to them so that they may contact the Lord (1 John 5:16).

Mediatorial Priests versus All the Believers Being a Holy and Royal Priesthood

Judaism has mediatorial priests, but in the new testament age all the believers are priests to be a holy and royal priesthood (Rev. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; cf. Rev. 2:6). Due to the children of Israel's degradation in worshipping the golden calf, "Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Whoever is for Jehovah, come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him" (Exo. 32:26). All the sons of Levi separated themselves from their idolatrous brethren, denying their natural affection, and gathered themselves to Moses. The Levites gained the priesthood because of this. From that time on, there was a mediatorial class among God's people; this, however, was not God's original intention. Earlier, in Exodus 19:6, God said to the children of Israel, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In other words, God wanted every one of His people to be a priest, that is, someone who contacts God, enjoys God, is filled with God, is infused with God, and ministers God into His people. We absolutely reject both the teaching and the practice of a mediatorial class among God's children. There is no clergy, and there is no laity in God's New Testament economy.

In Revelation 2:6 the Lord said, "You hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." We must hate what God hates and love what God loves, allowing Him to make His home in our emotions. According to Lee,

the Greek word [for *Nicolaitan*] is composed of two words, one meaning *conquer* or *be victorious over* and another meaning *common people, secular people, or laity*. Thus, it means *conquering the common people, being victorious over the laity*. *Nicolaitans*, then, must refer to a group of people who esteem themselves higher than common believers. This was undoubtedly the hierarchy adopted and established by Catholicism and Protestantism. (*Recovery Version*, v. 6, note 1)

This is the clergy-laity system. Lee continues, "The Lord hates the works, the behavior, of these Nicolaitans, and we must hate what the Lord hates" (*Recovery Version*, v. 6, note 1). In the Body of Christ there is no clergy and there is no laity; there are only living, functioning, vivifying members in the Body of Christ.

First Peter 2:5 and 9 and Revelation 1:5-6 tell us that we are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, and priests to God. Do we realize what a great thing it is to have corporate meetings in which all may exercise to prophesy? The prophesying that we are speaking of here is not in the sense of predicting the future but in the sense of speaking for the Lord, speaking forth the Lord, and speaking the Lord into one another (1 Cor. 14:24, 31). Those who endeavor to practice this are standing against centuries of the entrenched custom of "one man speaking and the rest listening." When we all endeavor and exercise our spirit to speak for the Lord, this is a strong testimony of the Body that in our church meeting, there is no pastor, no clergy, and no laity but living and active members of the Body speaking for the Lord.

The recovery of the proper church meeting according to 1 Corinthians 14 is a great recovery. When everyone comes to the meeting, each one has something (v. 26), and we can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged (v. 31). We all must be those who are speaking for God. We are priests who contact God, and when we minister God, we are prophets. Prophesying is part of our priesthood.

Satan has created many substitutes for Christ, and at the same time, he tries to kill the function of the members of the Body of Christ. However, by enjoying the unsearchably rich Christ as everything to us, we become living, functioning members of the Body of Christ.

A Material Temple versus a Spiritual House

Third, Judaism has a material temple, but in the new testament age the temple is a spiritual

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house, a dwelling place of God in spirit (1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:21-22). In the Judaistic system of degraded Christendom, Satan exercises to draw us out of the spiritual world, out of the divine and mystical realm, into an earthly, physical, and tangible realm. The Lord, however, wants to recover us from things that are seen to things that are unseen (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Because many believers do not walk by faith but by sight (5:7), they think that the church is merely a physical building. They say, "I go to that church," referring to a physical meeting hall. For us to esteem any "material temple," that is, any material building, God's dwelling place and a place of worship is according to the principle of Judaism. In Judaism the worshippers and the place of worship are two different things, but in the new testament age, the place of worship is the worshipper (John 4:24; Acts 2:46; 5:42). In John 4:23-24 the Lord said, "An hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness." The true worshippers worship God in spirit, that is, in their human spirit.

Even the leavened teaching that the New Jerusalem is composed of "heavenly mansions" is a teaching in the Judaistic principle of degraded Christendom. According to the book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem is the greatest sign in the Bible. A sign is a symbol with spiritual significance (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Rev. 1:1, note 2). The New Jerusalem is a great sign, signifying the ultimate consummation of God's economy. Actually and in reality, the New Jerusalem signifies a corporate person—the bride, the wife, of Christ (21:9-10). This holy city is a mutual abode in which the Lord dwells in us as the tabernacle of God (vv. 2-3), and we dwell in Him as the temple of God (v. 22). When persons dwell in each other, as spoken of in John 14:20, this is a matter of incorporation. Thus, the New Jerusalem is a divine and human incorporation of the processed and consummated God as the Husband with His redeemed, regenerated, and transformed elect as His bride (vv. 2, 20, 23; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 21:3, 22).

The prevailing concept in Christendom is that when one dies, he goes to the Father's house, in which are many mansions. Actually, in John 14:2 the word in the Greek language for *mansions* should be translated "abodes," matching the word *abode* in verse 23. The believers are the many abodes, the many dwelling places, in the church as the Father's house. According to 1 Timothy 3:15, the church is the house of the living God. When we link 1 Timothy 3:15 to John 14:2, we see that in the Father's house, that is, in the church, there are many abodes. The church is the Father's house, and we are the many dwelling places in the Father's house, the "many abodes" spoken of in John 14:2. This is confirmed by verse 23: "Jesus answered and said to him, 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." The believers are the abodes in the church, which is the corporate house of the Triune God, in which the Triune God dwells in us and we dwell in the Triune God mutually, coinhering forever and ever. This is the ultimate consummation of the Lord's word in John 15: "Abide in Me and I in you" (v. 4). We abide in Him as our abode, and then He abides in us as His abode.

To say that the New Jerusalem is some kind of physical city composed of many physical mansions totally annuls the goal of God's New Testament economy. We need the Lord's mercy to experience His carrying us away in spirit so that we could see that the New Jerusalem is our glorious goal (Rev. 21:9-10). We are here to become the New Jerusalem, to be prepared to be His bride, which is a "city-lady," a corporate person. In Judaism there is a material temple, but in the new testament age, the temple is a dwelling place of God in spirit (Eph. 2:22). In Psalm 90:1 Moses says, "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." The Lord is our eternal dwelling place, and we will be His eternal dwelling place. To take God as our dwelling place, to abide in Him, and for Him to take us as His dwelling place, to abide in us, are the highest and fullest experience of God (91:1, 9; 92:12-13).

God's Son versus Man's Religion

God's Son is versus man's religion (Gal. 1:11-16). Concerning religion, Lee gives an excellent definition: "Religion is something formed by the human mind under Satan's instigation and inspiration in order to oppose God's economy" (*The Lord's Recovery* 17). Religion is the action of doing something for God for the benefit of people, yet being without Christ and apart from the Spirit of Christ (Gal. 5:4-5; 3:1, 5, 14, 24). To be religious is to worship God and serve God without Christ or the Spirit. Whenever we become religious, we become ensnared in the present evil age. We need to see and realize that Satan formed the religious world to keep us away from God, the will of God, and God's eternal purpose (1:4; 5:4). Satan utilizes religion to keep people from Christ and the church as God's will. As long as Satan can keep us away from Christ and His Body as the will of God, he is satisfied (Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1:18; 2:19). The religious age is evil because it keeps people from Christ and the church; nothing is more evil in the sight of God than this (Eph. 5:32; Gal. 1:4; 5:4). This religious snare deprives us of all the benefits of the indwelling Christ (1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19). Thank the Lord that religion as a world has been crucified to us, and we have been crucified to religion (6:13-14). For Paul, the present evil age was the system of Judaism; for us today, the present evil age is deformed and degraded Christendom. We need to realize how much we should be delivered from the influence of religion in the present evil age. The church is the living Body of Christ, but what surrounds us today is a religion full of traditions, organizations, performances, falsehoods, and hypocrisies. We all need to be delivered from the deformed and degraded Christendom as the present evil age.

In order to be rescued out of religion, we need to pray that the desire of our heart would become a duplication of the desire of God's heart. The desire of God's heart is to reveal His Son in us so that we may know Him, receive Him as our life (John 17:3; 3:16), and become the sons of God (1:12; Gal. 4:5-6). The focal point of the Bible is not practices, doctrines, or ordinances; it is the living person of the Son of God, who is the embodiment of the Triune God realized as the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit for us to enjoy Him, partake of His riches, and live Him (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17; Phil. 1:19; Gal. 6:18). In the eyes of God, there is no place for religion or tradition—only the living person of His Son has a place. God cares only for this living person, the all-inclusive Christ, not for anything else (Col. 1:18; 2:16-17; 3:10-11; Mark 9:7-8). We need a new "seeing" of this living person more and more and day-by-day. The more He is revealed in us, the more we see Him, and the more we see Him, the more we are extricated out of the current evil religious age, the evil religious world. We need to care for the person of the Son of God more than anything else. For this cause, every day we need to have a secret, direct, personal, living, and intimate contact with Him (Matt. 6:6; Col. 4:2). Apart from this contact with Him, this personal enjoyment of Christ, everything that comes out of us will be something of religion. Religion is when we behave ourselves apart from contacting this living person and try to improve ourselves without the living presence of the indwelling Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit. Without this living person as the reality and content of the church life, even the practice of the church life can become a tradition. The church and the church life are the Body of Christ, His fullness, His practical and living expression (Eph. 1:22-23; 3:8-11, 16-19).

Receiving the Revelation of the Living Person of God's Son in Us

Nothing is more pleasing to God than the unveiling, the revelation, of His Son in us (Gal. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 3:14-17; 4:3-6). The problem today is a lack of revelation. We should never separate experience from revelation. Without revelation we cannot have experience. Revelation and experience are intimately linked, and the extent of our revelation determines the extent of our experience. The more inward, subjective revelation we receive of the Son of God, the more He will live in us; the more He lives in us, the more He will become to us the reality of the all-inclusive land as the blessing of Abraham, the blessing of the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (Gal. 2:20; 3:14). We need more inward, subjective revelation of Christ. Christ is revealed in us, lives in us, and is formed in us

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by our practicing four things—exercising to drop our concepts, turning our heart to the Lord, paying attention to the Spirit in our spirit, and spending time in God’s Word in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer. We need to build up a habit of practicing these things for our experience and enjoyment of the indwelling Christ.

In order for Christ to be revealed in us, dropping our concepts is absolutely critical. We must set aside our concepts; every concept, whether spiritual or carnal, is a veil. The inward revelation of the Son of God is in our spirit through our enlightened mind (2 Cor. 3:14-16; 4:4; Eph. 1:17-18; Luke 24:45). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul speaks of those “in whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts.” The thoughts of these people were blinded by becoming hardened. In Luke 18:17 we are told, “Truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall by no means enter into it.” Lee’s note on this verse in the *Recovery Version of the Bible* says, “A little child, not filled with and occupied by old concepts, can easily receive a new thought. Hence, people need to be like little children and, with an unoccupied heart, receive the kingdom of God as a new thing.” If we are those living in the reality of the kingdom of God, we will not be occupied or filled with our old knowledge, our old concepts, and even our past experiences of Christ. This is why Paul exercised to do one thing: “Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward” (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul’s goal was the fullest enjoyment and gaining of Christ.

We also should continually turn our heart to the Lord. The more we turn our heart to Him, the less ground the god of this age will have in our life and in our being, and we will be under the shining of the heavenly light to receive the inward revelation of the living person of Christ (2 Cor. 3:16, 18). The god of this age blinds the thoughts of the unbelievers, but in principle, he also endeavors to blind the thoughts of believers. However, we say again, the more we turn our heart to the Lord, the less ground the god of this age has in our life and in our being. Turning our heart to the Lord causes us to be under the shining of the heavenly light to receive an inward revelation of the wonderful, living person of the indwelling Christ. Furthermore, when we turn our heart to the Lord, we overthrow all our reasonings and everything in us that rises up against the knowledge of God, so that all our thoughts are taken captive to obey Christ (10:3-5).

In order to receive the revelation of the Son of God in us, we should also care for and pay attention to our spirit. In our spirit the Spirit is shining, revealing Christ in us, and speaking to us concerning Christ (Eph. 1:17; 3:5; cf. Rev. 1:10; 2:7). Finally, we need to pray-read the Word of God (Eph. 6:17-18). The organic way to study the Bible is to read the Bible in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer. By doing this we make the words of the Bible our prayer for our own being, for others, and for the local churches. This will cause us to be full of the revelation of the Son of God and thereby become a new creation, with Christ being enjoyed by us continually as the all-inclusive Spirit (Gal. 6:14-15). Building up a habit of dropping our concepts, turning our heart to the Lord, paying attention to the spirit, and spending time in the Word in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer are practical ways to be rescued out of the present evil age by the revelation of God’s Son in us so that we may live Christ and magnify Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ to ultimately consummate in the New Jerusalem as the bride of Christ. **AFC**

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